



EVALUATION OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE in UKRAINE FUNDED BY THE DISASTER EMERGENCY FUND

FINAL REPORT

20 August, 2024

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

BOND	British Overseas NGOs for Development
CATI	Computer-Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CAWI	Computer-Assisted Web Interviewing
CD	Country Director
CfS	Cash for Shelter
CfU	Cash for Utilities
CHS	Core Humanitarian Standards
CRM	Complaint Response Mechanisms
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DEC	Disaster Emergency Committee
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
FSP	Financial Service Provider
GAD	Gender, Age and Diversity
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
I/NGO	International/Non-Governmental Organization
JERU	Joint Emergency Response in Ukraine
KII	Key Informant Interview
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research and Learning
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
MSC	Most Significant Change
NFI	Non-Food Item
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PSHEA	Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse
RGA	Rapid Gender Analysis
SoP	Standard Operating Procedures
SPC	Sumy Public Circle
ToR	Terms of Reference
UAH	Ukrainian Hryvnia
UN	United Nations
UNDSS	United Nations Security Management System
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

Relevance:

5	<i>Outstanding Performance</i>
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- The project was designed based on the scoping missions and needs assessments conducted by JERU and local implementing partners (IPs) and guidance and priorities provided by clusters and working groups, along with other secondary resources published by other humanitarian actors, such as CARE's Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine, for both identifying the target group, activities and locations. The local IPs also consulted with community leaders and local authorities to ensure that the activities could address the needs of project beneficiaries.
- The project utilised several methods to facilitate participants' knowledge and awareness of project activities, including information dissemination through local authorities, local humanitarian hubs, village councils and community leaders. Information was disseminated through word-of-mouth as the project adopted a community-based approach, social media platforms, including Facebook, Telegram and Viber groups of local IPs, and community events.

Key Recommendations:

- Maintain the localisation approach by leaving the lead to the local IPs in terms of coordinating with the local authorities.

Effectiveness:

3	<i>Good overall performance but with some minor shortcomings</i>
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- Internal coordination between JERU and its implementing partners, including Sumy Public Circle, Posmishka, and We Are Brothers We Are Ukrainians, was characterised by consistent and open communication through regular meetings and a collaborative problem-solving approach. Despite occasional challenges, such as security issues and reporting discrepancies, the partnerships maintained strong coordination and mutual support throughout project implementation.
- External coordination was built and maintained closely by both JERU and its local IPs. While local IPs had very strong coordination and collaboration with local authorities, including administrations, humanitarian hubs, schools and kindergartens, and representatives of Education departments at the local level, JERU has shown a closer relationship with the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms, including the Cash Working Group, Shelter/NFI, Protection and MHPSS Cluster, at both HQ and regional levels.
- Despite the efforts by local IPs to adhere to standards for disability-friendly environment including the provision of necessary doors, ramps, and indoor toilets, there was a significant lack of suitable infrastructure across service venues. Many locations, particularly those used for activities, such as schools and kindergartens, lacked basic amenities like indoor toilets, and were not equipped

to accommodate persons with disabilities, which posed substantial access and hygiene challenges.

- The majority of the observed activity locations were inadequately prepared for emergencies, lacking essential safety measures such as first aid kits, clear evacuation plans and signs, and accessible bomb shelters. Only one of the three locations had a comprehensive evacuation plan and shelter facilities. Additionally, none of the sites provided indoor toilets, hygiene items, or private spaces for breastfeeding, which are crucial for ensuring safety and comfort during emergencies.
- The Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) proved to be a vital intervention for the target communities, addressing immediate needs and stabilising their financial capacity. The flexibility of MPCA allowed beneficiaries to allocate funds according to their most pressing needs, such as food, medicine, and safe accommodation, which prevented some community members forced to return to unsafe areas and reduced the risk of protection issues, thereby contributing to overall community safety and stability. Some community members felt more hopeful and reconsidered their self-harm thoughts upon receiving MPCA as addressing their needs and stabilising their finances have shown them that there is support available, which increased their hope for the future.
- The psychosocial support (PSS) mechanisms established during the project, including art therapy and psychoeducation, have demonstrated significant positive impacts on participants' emotional well-being. The unstructured nature of the PSS activities was highly appreciated by PSS participants as a flexible and tailored approach enabled more targeted support.
- PSS activities improved both female and male adults and children's well-being, skills and resilience, including practical techniques for stress management, which have been particularly effective not only for their individual mental well-being but also for inadvertently strengthening community bonds. Participants reported increased trust, cooperation, and a sense of belonging, which were critical during times of crisis. This enhanced social cohesion helped foster a supportive environment, reducing isolation and promoting collective resilience. These improvements in community dynamics can lead to more robust communal responses to future challenges, highlighting the importance of continued investment in social infrastructure.
- Across project participants, there was awareness of the FCRM mechanism, including available channels, how to raise feedback or complaints, how it is investigated, and the results. Mainly, project participants learn about FCRM through multiple channels, including during their registration and implementation of activities, Viber and Telegram groups, trust boxes, hotlines, and traditional ICT materials such as brochures and leaflets. Although children's knowledge about FCRM was found to be high, mainly raised by psychologists, the child-friendly methods were not seen as mainstream among local IPs but only by Poshmishka.

Key Recommendations:

- Ensure that relevant staff members of local IPs check and refresh the hygiene items in the toilets, including soaps and toilet papers, before activities.

- Ensure that a contingency plan, including proper action points for staff members and participants and signs, is operationalised. Moreover, make sure that necessary equipment, such as first aid kits and fire extinguishers, is in place in all venues where project activities are implemented.
- Encourage local IPs to participate in the relevant UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism meetings and share their up-to-date data to ensure the necessary efforts are reflected in the field and facilitate better planning of joint humanitarian mechanisms in Ukraine.
- Develop a more comprehensive and detailed plan for activity schedules in close coordination with local IPs as per their respective locations and unique challenges, including options to be considered in sudden activity location changes, granting several options applicable to necessary standards, including safety and bomb shelters, accessibility and disability-friendly design.
- Mainstream child-friendly feedback and complaint mechanisms, including child-friendly forms for their feedback, among local IPs. Equip psychologists with the FCRM mechanism, including training and workshops, to ensure that children’s feedback and complaints are taken into consideration through the necessary policies and procedures.

Efficiency:

4	<i>Very good overall performance with few shortcomings</i>
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- The project budget was meticulously prepared and aligned with the project's needs, ensuring sufficient financial resources and timely implementation of activities without budget-related concerns. The JERU team's thorough planning and donor flexibility in budget revisions allowed for adaptability to evolving needs, with smooth handling of budget reallocations and timely payments to local IPs.
- Local implementing partners and JERU extensively used monitoring and information management findings and data to inform decision-making and improve the quality-of-service provision, including MPCA, Winterisation, and PSS support. The data enhanced the responsiveness of project activities to participants' needs.

Coherence:

4	<i>Very good overall performance with few shortcomings</i>
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- The project was found to be in line with the strategies, priorities and guidance provided by the local authorities and Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism, including Cash Working Group, Shelter/NFI, MHPSS and Protection Clusters, which helped JERU and local IPs to minimise duplication/overlapping of services with other humanitarian actors and ensured the complementarity of the services provided.

Key Recommendations:

- Continue to follow strategies, priorities and guidance provided by the local authorities and Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism in the upcoming phase of the project.

Sustainability:

4	<i>Very good overall performance with few shortcomings</i>
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- The project strengthened the capacity of local IPs by identifying and addressing critical gaps in organisational structures and processes and enhancing systems aligned with international standards. Furthermore, targeted trainings, comprehensive support in logistics and financial aspects, and collaborative strategic planning increased the partners' ability to deliver services more effectively, manage larger-scale operations, and improve overall organisational efficiency.
- The project team ensured the sustainability of the project with further Phase 2b, consisting of integrated PSS and livelihood activities, including agriculture and micro-business grants, in the same area of implementation. This aim was to provide longer-term support and ensure that communities could sustain economic activities to address their necessary needs even after the project ended.

Key Recommendations:

- Consider cash-for-agriculture under Phase 2b, as many participants were found allocating the MPCA support as smallholder farmers, which can mitigate the food security risks in the communities.
- Consider integrating cash for protection and PSS activities with livelihoods, including microgrants, vocational training and job placement activities, particularly in the ICT sector, which offers remote opportunities such as single parents and persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses.
- Set up a community garden where participants can learn about farming and gardening, as gardening itself is a tool for PSS, it has been shown to have therapeutic effects, reducing stress and promoting relaxation. Organise a weekly farmers’ market where participants can sell the products they’ve grown. (Community marketplace)
- Consider the provision of vocational training and job placement activities, particularly for sectors that could be employed remotely, such as ICT. Offer specific venues that include workspaces with necessary technical equipment and resources along with child-friendly spaces.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

The JERU (Joint Emergency Response in Ukraine) programme funded by the DEC (Disaster Emergency Committee) aims at addressing immediate needs of the affected populations with a particular focus on a GAD (Gender Age Diversity), household consumption and income limitations. In the efforts to provide assistance, the JERU provides flexible cash transfers such as MPCA (Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance) and Cfs (Cash for Utilities), based on the recommendations outlined in CARE’s 2023 RGA (Rapid Gender Analysis). The phase 2a has been implemented through the local partners Sumy Public Circle and Poshmishka. Moreover, AVSI has referred their beneficiaries benefitted from PSS and education services to JERU for MPCA services as a result of the MoU signed by both parties in order to provide a tailored, comprehensive assistance.

Acknowledging the winter season and its associated challenges, the project encompasses assistance for the winterisation needs, facilitated through targeted cash transfers for meeting the heating expenses that is calculated according to the prices offered by different heating sources. Multipurpose cash assistance was provided to facilitate access of vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities or injuries, those suffering from chronic illnesses or serious medical conditions, persons 60+/elderly persons, women and children at risk, single-headed households, including female-headed households and households led by single parents/caregivers with their primary basic needs between 01 April 2023 and 31 August 2023.

In addition to the cash transfers, the project aims to address distress stemming from the conflict through mobile PSS (Psychosocial Support) teams that provide both for individuals and groups. Group activities include expressive activities such as art therapy, emotional regulation, and psychosocial training for adults, while activities for children are customised according to their age group.

Table 1 Phase 2a and Phase 2b Project Description

Phase	Outcome	Achieved
Phase 2a	Outcome-A: Immediate needs of 15,000 crisis-affected individuals (approx. 4,286 HH) in western and eastern Ukraine are covered through MPCA	A total of 19,281 individuals across 7,847 households have been provided with multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA). Within this group, 11,781 individuals from 4,560 households were supported for three months under the DEC project. Additionally, 7,500 individuals from 3,287 households benefited from support combined from various donors.
	Outcome-B: Immediate winterisation needs of 8,750 crisis affected individuals (approximately 2,500 households) are covered through labelled cash transfers (Shelter).	A total of 3,654 households received cash for utilities to support heating costs in private and hosted accommodation between November and January. The total number of individuals reached, approximated based on an average household size of 3.5, was 12,789. Moreover, a total of 1,272 households received cash for winter clothes, targeted at those needing to replace belongings lost during displacement. The total number of individuals reached, approximated based on an average household size of 3.5, was 4,451 for this activity.
	Outcome C: Immediate winterisation needs of 2,850 Households (approx. 7,410 crisis affected individuals) in east and south Ukraine are covered through labelled cash transfers (Shelter).	A total of 2,821 households (6,866 individuals) were fully covered by DEC-funded cash-for-utilities support to meet their utility needs during the 2023-2024 winter period, including 1,429 households in Sumy (target: 1,400), 1,343 in Zaporizka (target: 1,400) and 49 in Mykolaiv (target: 50). Each household had received a total of 15,690 UAH (approximately 400 EUR) via the financial service provider MoneyGram (either through

Phase 2b		direct bank transfer or at pick-up locations), distributed in three installments of 5,230 UAH between October 2023 and February 2024.
	Outcome D: Psychosocial Support is provided to 1,720 individuals in eastern and southern Ukraine (Protection).	854 individuals received PSS support through group of individual support by trained Psychologists and Facilitators. These PSS activities were provided by JERU’s respective partners, Sumy Public Circle and Poshmishka in Sumska and Mykholaivska

1.2. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF EVALUATION

The primary aim of this evaluation was to evaluate the project's overall relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and sustainability in vulnerable communities in eastern Ukraine. The evaluation was conducted across the implementation oblasts (Sumska, Zaporiska, and Mykolaivska), with a particular emphasis on Sumska Oblast in the Northeast of Ukraine, where multipurpose cash, winterisation cash, and psychosocial support were provided. This evaluation also assessed the effectiveness and quality of implementation across both phases of 2a and 2b of the project. It sought to determine if the project successfully achieved its intended objectives and delivered the planned results while identifying and analysing the successes, challenges, and lessons learned throughout implementation.

While this evaluation focused on Phase 2, it was also built upon the previous evaluation for Phase 1 of the project that was conducted¹. While relevance and coherence, efficiency, and effectiveness were cross-cutting criteria used for both evaluations, the first evaluation considered impact as the additional and last criterion, while in this evaluation, Scruples and JERU teams decided to measure sustainability instead of impact. Similarly, a qualitative method was used in the previous evaluation, both desk review and key informant interviews. However, the extent of the data collection activities was significantly higher in this evaluation as FGDs, MSCS’ and Field Observations were conducted additionally.

The evaluation focused on assessing the effectiveness, suitability, and timeliness of the Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) provided between June and August 2023, winterisation assistance and psychosocial support between October 2023 and March 2024. Moreover, the evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the complaints and response mechanisms utilised in the project, focusing on the awareness and utilisation of available Complaints and Response Mechanisms (CRM) among program participants throughout the project's implementation. Data collection primarily involved gathering qualitative data to complement the quantitative data already collected as part of the project monitoring process. To gather comprehensive insights, feedback was gathered from various stakeholders, including beneficiaries and local partners. Their perceptions regarding the relevancy and effectiveness of the project were assessed. Additionally, the evaluation provided data and insights to refine programmatic strategies and inform future project designs. To define the scope of this final evaluation, Scruples employed OECD-DAC criteria. The Core Humanitarian Standard (CHS) served as the central framework for this evaluation, guiding the assessment of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability.

¹ Meraki Labs, Final Evaluation: A2015 Ukraine Response.

The evaluation exercise was carried out in three main Oblasts of implementation:

- Sumska Oblast: MPCA, winterisation cash and psychosocial support
- Mykolaivska Oblast: Psychosocial support
- Zaporizhzhya Oblast: MPCA and winterisation cash assistance
- Kharkiv: Psychosocial support, only KIIs. In addition, PSS activities conducted by We Are Brothers were assessed in Kharkiv through KIIs only to gather some perspectives from the partner

Below were the specific objectives mentioned in the ToR:

- Evaluate the achievement of objectives outlined in the log frame for Phase 2 of the DEC project, focusing on outputs, outcomes, and goals as Phase 1 was previously evaluated.
- Analyse factors influencing the attainment or non-attainment of objectives, including positive and negative, intended and unintended consequences.
- Assess the participation of women and men in project activities.
- Document lessons learned and formulate actionable recommendations for future emergency-related projects in Ukraine.
- Utilize selected commitments from the CHS to evaluate the quality and accountability of the intervention.
- Incorporate cross-cutting thematic focuses on protection, disability, safeguarding, diversity and inclusion, and localisation into relevant evaluation criteria.

2. METHODOLOGY

The final evaluation was designed based on a qualitative approach that includes qualitative data collection through key informant interviews (KIIs) with JERU staff, team members of the partners, stakeholders/cluster/working group representatives, field observations as well as most significant change stories (MSCs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with the project participants. The final evaluation intended to assess the project against the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria², while in the context of humanitarian assistance, considering Core Humanitarian Standards³. The evaluation questions focused on assessing the project's strengths and weaknesses according to the DAC criteria, identifying to what extent the project outputs/outcomes were achieved and how targeted participants benefitted from the project. It did not seek to replicate or verify existing monitoring findings but to triangulate them as required and add value by focusing on the project's higher-level and longer-term aims, achievements, and issues.

The design of this evaluation ensured that the overall tool design, sampling approach and data analysis meet the international standard, considering the British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND) Evidence Principles⁴. Throughout this assignment, the evaluation team was committed to the "Do No Harm" principle and following these guidelines for data collection around data protection, confidentiality, and collecting data from study participants. The evaluation team followed participatory and GAD (Gender, Age, Diversity) approaches from the design to the report writing processes.

2.1. Desk Review

² <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/daccriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.html>

³ <https://www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/>

⁴ British Overseas NGOs for Development (BOND). Evidence Principles. 2018.

The Scruples Research evaluation team carried out an extensive review of all relevant documents before starting the fieldwork. Necessary data/information was recorded for further verification, and triangulation, along with identifying gaps in secondary data, were also noted. The document review enabled the evaluation team to accurately select the site’s selection/geographies, participant type and procedures for data collection, in collaboration with JERU team. The review also allowed the evaluation team to appropriately design the evaluation tools.

2.2. Key Informant Interviews

KIIs were meticulously prepared considering participants and their roles/information in the project in accordance with evaluation questions. The questions in the interview forms were designed to answer each of the OECD/DAC criteria and guided through semi-structured interview protocols with the questions developed based on the evaluation matrix. The KII question template was predominantly composed of 10-15 open-ended questions that lasted approximately 60 minutes. Depending on the interviewee’s choice, **30 KIIs** were conducted in English, Ukrainian and/or Russian. Please refer to **Annex 3** for the detailed KII list.

2.3. Focus Group Discussions

A total of **10 in-person FGDs** were conducted with project participants. The evaluation team arranged appropriate venues offered by JERU’s local implementing partners (IPs). Semi-structured FGD guides were implemented, and FGDs were limited to 90 minutes to prevent participant fatigue. The FGDs gathered information about the participants’ views of the JERU project and how the activities covered their needs and satisfaction levels. FGDs for the MPCA and winterization were conducted in female and male mixed groups with female field researchers, as the number of female participants was higher due to the martial law. Regarding the FGDs for PSS participants, female groups were moderated by female researchers, while male groups by male field researchers. Please see the detailed table of FGDs per location and group:

Table 2 FGD Distribution

Location	Gender	Assistance Provided	Project Phase	Number of FGDs	Participants	Modality	Partner
Zaporizhzhia	Female and male adults (18+)	MPCA	Phase 2a	1	2 female and 3 male adults	Offline	Poshmishka
Sumska	Female and male adults (18+)	MPCA	Phase 2a	1	4 female and 3 male adults	Offline	Summy Public Circle
Sumska	Female and male adults (18+)	Winterization	Phase 2b	1	4 female and 2 male adults	Offline	Summy Public Circle
Zaporizhzhia	Female and male adults (18+)	Winterization	Phase 2b	1	3 female and 4 male participants	Offline	Poshmishka
Mykolayivsk	Female adults (18+)	Psychosocial support	Phase 2b	1	2 female adults	Offline	Poshmishka

Mykolayivsk a	Male adults (18+)	Psychosocial support	Phase 2b	1	4 male adults	Offline	Poshmishka
Mykolaivska	Children (12-17)	Psychosocial support	Phase 2b	1	7 girls and 4 boys	Offline	Poshmishka
Sumska	Male adults (18+)	Psychosocial support	Phase 2b	1	7 male participants	Offline	Sumy Public Circle
Sumska	Female adults (18+)	Psychosocial support	Phase 2b	1	6 female participants	Offline	Sumy Public Circle
Sumska	Children (12-17)	Psychosocial support	Phase 2b	1	3 girls and 3 boys	Offline	Sumy Public Circle

2.4. Most Significant Change Stories

The Evaluation Team utilised the participatory approach of MSC stories as part of the evaluation, which allowed us to comprehensively understand the project’s impacts and outcomes and formulate insightful lessons to guide future initiatives. 3 MSC stories, 1 PSS beneficiary from Sumska and 2 PSS beneficiaries from Mykolayiv were conducted with female project participants. These collected stories were presented to the FGD participants at the end of the discussions, enabling them to select and/or rank the story(ies) they think are the most significant and explain why they made this selection. This helped the evaluation team in explaining how the change comes about with processes and causal mechanisms and in what situations/contexts.

2.5. Field Observations

Scruples Research conducted **3 on-site visits** to the PSS activities operated by the DEC and the JERU initiative in Mykolayiv to observe and record to what extent the psychosocial support activities were implemented in line with the CHS and the criteria defined for the protection mainstreaming. The field observation checklist comprised an inventory of behaviours and protection monitoring criteria that the field monitor marks or checks if the activity, the staff there and the quality of the services were seen to demonstrate compliance with the protection monitoring criteria.

2.6. EVALUATION LIMITATIONS

- The evaluation team experienced challenges in finding male participants for the FGDs and MSCs due to the martial law as many are conscripted. For those who are not conscripted either fears from the possible conscription upon their registration to the services or stigma also affected participation, particularly for the PSS activities. Therefore, the number of male participants in FGDs were limited compared to female FGDs. Moreover, MSCs were conducted with only female participants who benefited from PSS services.
- Some participants did not show up in FGDs although they confirmed their participation initially. Therefore, some FGDs had to be conducted with limited participants as last minute replacement was challenging by both research team and partners.
- As MPCA activity was conducted during the phase 2a of the project, it was challenging for the evaluation team and partners to gather MPCA beneficiaries to the FGDs. However, the evaluation team and partners overcame these difficulties by closely communicating and encouraging MPCA beneficiaries to participate in FGDs, which were successfully conducted. For

- the future evaluations, it is recommended that JERU team considers and anticipates better timing to eliminate these challenges.
- Field observations were conducted only during the PSS activities provided to older persons as PSS activities with children were already completed for phase 2b.
 - As JERU’s partnership with We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians started later in 2024, only KIIs were conducted in Kharkiv by the evaluation team as the number of beneficiaries reached by them was very limited and safety and security concerns were significant. KIIs aimed at providing a general understanding on the partnership and implementation of activities by We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians, within this limited time frame.
 - The high turnover rate among JERU’s project team members limited the data obtained by JERU’s informants and analysis as a result, as there was almost no team members who continues to work since the beginning but instead, many participated at the beginning of phase 2b.

3. FINDINGS

3.1. RELEVANCE

5	<i>Outstanding Performance</i>
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Finding 1: The project was designed based on the scoping missions and needs assessments conducted by JERU and local implementing partners (IPs) and guidance and priorities provided by clusters and working groups, along with other secondary resources published by other humanitarian actors, such as CARE's Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine⁵, for both identifying the target group, activities and locations. The local IPs also consulted with community leaders and local authorities to ensure that the activities could address the needs of project beneficiaries. As a result of these efforts, the project was successful in implementing appropriate and relevant responses to the national and local context in Ukraine.

Prior to the project design, JERU has conducted several joint multisectoral needs assessments in different oblasts, including Poltava, Sumy, Kharkiv, Dnipro, and Zaporizhzhia, with MdM, PIN, and JERU’s local IPs to ensure an evidence-based approach. Moreover, an initial scoping mission to Kirovohrad, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia and Poltava was conducted in 2022, which aimed to identify future target locations for programmatic assessments, understand security and infrastructure conditions and confirm future operational base locations through consultations with local authorities, civil society organisations (CSOs), INGOs operating in the areas, and visited humanitarian hubs in each oblast. The scoping mission was followed up by an assessment in Zaporizhzhia, Poltava, and Dnipro, which aimed at building on the scoping mission to elaborate more on the core needs of the most vulnerable and identification of local partners. According to these assessments and field visits, MPCA was noted by 51% of the IDPs and the general population as the top need. The cash was reported to be mainly used to cover food, utility bills, and health-related expenses. This was supported by the evaluation results of Phase 1, along with this evaluation focused on Phase 2.⁶

⁵ CARE International, Rapid Gender Analysis, Ukraine, 2023. https://www.care-international.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/RGA_Ukraine_2023_ENG.pdf

⁶ Meraki Labs, Final Evaluation: A2015 Ukraine Response.

This was echoed by the informants of local IPs, who reported significant efforts to conduct needs assessments not only at initial phases but also regularly—once every three months—to ensure that the project activities respond to the evolving needs of the project participants. According to informants, local IPs were actively involved in the project's design phase through their assessments conducted in their respective implementation areas and regular consultations with local administrations, community leaders, village heads, and project participants, including adults and children. Supported by the JERU team, local IPs took a leading role in the design phase rather than just participating. They were given flexibility as their contextual knowledge and understanding were found significant in designing the project activities based on the actual needs in the field. This enabled local IPs to identify precise locations and target groups based on changing needs, such as the location where there was a significant presence of IDPs and people with disabilities. This flexibility facilitated the effective targeting of essential areas and populations.

All these considerations were successful at uncovering the actual needs and challenges experienced by the project participants, as per informants and project participants. The MPCA support was critical for addressing their housing, utilities, and medical needs. It offered life-saving support, facilitating the stabilisation of their finances across participants in Mykolayiv, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia. According to FGD participants, particularly those who were elderly and with disabilities, reported that MPCA was complementary to their highly limited pensions and disability allowances, easing their access to their needs, particularly medications, as well.

"As Ukrainians, the war has definitely affected us. Prices have gone up, but we are getting by. Thanks to the MPCA support, everything is much better now. We really needed help, which gave us hope and support. I was going through a tough time and was relieved when the project team stepped in to assist us."

(Violetta, Woman, FGD, Sumy)

A similar approach was adopted for PSS activities as well. The JERU team emphasised the PSS priorities of the MHPSS cluster and chose geographical locations based on their recommendations, along with severity maps. Therefore, JERU's PSS activities were found to be in line with the MHPSS cluster's priorities and strategies and part of the minimum service package of MHPSS interventions during emergencies by the Cluster, through targeting the most vulnerable, including single women, pregnant or lactating women, persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, children, etc., operating in recommended locations and conducting priority PSS activities including individual PSS sessions and art therapy, as per informant. This was appreciated by the project participants who joined FGDs across locations, highlighting the significant need for PSS support as a result of the mental and emotional hardships they have experienced since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. All FGD participants revealed experiencing constant anxiety due to the safety and security threats, limited resources and their unforeseeable future, particularly during the initial phases of the war. Therefore, PSS activities were highly relevant to their psychosocial and emotional needs, improving their well-being significantly.

"Absolutely. Take the village, for example. With no transport or travel connections and no bus service currently available, it's incredibly hard for anyone to get there on their own, much less spend any time there. So, having psychological help come to us is nothing short of a miracle."

(Victoria, Woman, FGD, Sumy)

Moreover, children who participated in FGDs in both Sumy and Mykolayiv revealed a similar sentiment that they were constantly asked their opinions on the topics they would like to learn or games they would like to play, which ensured the flexibility and adaptability of the activities to participants' evolving needs. This finding showed that the activities were tailored based on the children's needs and preferences, increasing their active participation and satisfaction with the project team and activities.

Finding 2: The project activities were successful in addressing the needs of the target group, including people with disabilities or injuries, those suffering from chronic illnesses or serious medical conditions, persons 60+/elderly persons, women and children at risk, and single-headed households, female-headed households and households led by single parents/caregivers. The locations were identified in consideration of the potential risks and challenges that could prevent the project participants from accessing services in close coordination with local IPs, authorities, community leaders, and project participants.

According to local IPs, their decades of presence in these communities facilitated a deeper understanding of the community dynamics but also the individual needs of community members as well. This individual-level, two-way communication with community members supported JERU and its local IPs to identify the most vulnerable groups, including but not limited to people with disabilities or injuries, those suffering from chronic illnesses or serious medical conditions, persons 60+/elderly persons, women and children at risk, and single-headed households, female-headed households and households led by single parents/caregivers and understand their comprehensive, unique needs. This helped the project identify the target groups in their respective locations, which were verified by the assessments, consultations, and guidance from the Clusters and Working Groups.

"We are familiar with the communities. We regularly communicate with village heads, educational institutions, local administrators and community members. Therefore, we know where and when the help is needed. This is how we created the vulnerability criteria, and we followed it for beneficiary selection."

(KII, Sumy)

This enabled the project to address the needs of different community members with various vulnerabilities. Inclusion was not achieved only by targeting these vulnerable groups but was also complemented by the different methods that facilitate their access to these services, including mobile teams for registration. Moreover, the provision of services by the facilities in these underserved and hard-to-reach areas supported the project in addressing the needs of community members with different vulnerabilities. Factors such as limited physical ability, financial capacity, transportation, and infrastructure resulted in the isolation of many community members within the target group. Therefore, facilities in these areas provided an opportunity to increase peer-to-peer communication for both adults and children, improving their mental and emotional well-being.

Furthermore, these locations for the project activities were chosen based on several critical factors along with the assessments and consultations. According to local IPs, the presence of many IDP children hosted in IDP shelters who have limited access to education was one of the main reasons for the selection of Kharkiv and Sharivka. Moreover, the local IPs assessed the activities carried out by other humanitarian actors and ensured that no activities overlapped to maximise the most efficient and effective allocation of resources. Despite these well-thought-out selections, the project team encountered several challenges related to the locations. Security issues were a significant concern, as per KIIs in both Sumy, Zaporizhzhya,

Mykolayiv and Kharkiv. For instance, due to an attack on the Kharkiv region, the team had to relocate three out of four project sites for more recent PSS activities (June 2024) in Kharkiv as reported by key informants of We Are Brothers, We Are Ukrainians. One location, initially in Khotimlia, was abandoned after a missile attack destroyed the building, including the office where project materials were stored. This incident not only disrupted the project activities but also led to the loss of valuable data. Additionally, operational challenges arose due to the changing safety landscape. However, the project's flexible nature allowed location changes in response to safety concerns, ensuring the continuation of activities despite the evolving security situation. This adaptability was crucial for maintaining the project's momentum and reaching the targeted beneficiaries in new, safer locations.

Finding 3: The project utilised several methods to facilitate participants' knowledge and awareness of project activities, including information dissemination through local authorities, local humanitarian hubs and community leaders, while some groups, such as persons with disabilities and elderly persons, approached through mobile teams to ease the registration process.

The project aimed to increase knowledge and awareness among community members through a multi-faceted approach. The project collaborated closely with local authorities to ensure that information about the activities reached the target audience. Information was disseminated through various channels, including the local administration's Telegram channels, Viber chats for parents, and social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Information about new activities or changes in activity schedules was disseminated regularly using these platforms. Traditional methods such as leaflets, booklets, banners, and advertisements in frequently visited places like grocery shops were also used. Community networks were utilised to encourage parents and children to spread the word about the activities, along with a hotline available for inquiries, facilitating direct communication with potential participants. According to local IPs, information dissemination by word-of-mouth through community networks was the most impactful in increasing knowledge and accessibility.

Many participants shared similar experiences, learning about the project activities through community representatives, information disseminated by local administrations, and particularly word-of-mouth from other community members. Additionally, informational materials were distributed to teachers, who conveyed the details to parents. These parents further spread the word to their families and neighbours, increasing awareness at the community level through a community-based approach. Telegram groups also played a crucial role, providing vital information to high-risk groups, including the elderly and disabled. This was further supported by phone calls and group messages to ensure widespread awareness. Similarly, some project participants learned about the activities via Telegram channels, village councils, friends, and IDP centres, demonstrating a comprehensive approach to information dissemination through direct communication and community networks.

“Through the telegram channel. We lived in a village in the first year of the full-scale war where the project team came and the village council called us and told us, and that's how we found out.”

(Nelia, Woman, FGD, Zaporizhzhia)

Information dissemination and in-person registration in the humanitarian hubs, which were generally located in the central locations of the cities, were found to be among the most important factors that

increased the awareness of participants. As per local IPs, information dissemination campaigns/outreach implemented by the local IPs in these humanitarian hubs drastically increased participants' awareness and knowledge of project activities. Moreover, these hubs constantly shared up-to-date information about the participants' current needs and challenges, whereabouts, and future plans, which helped project team members implement more targeted response.

3.2. COHERENCE

4	<i>Very good overall performance with few shortcomings</i>
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Finding 1: The project was found in line with the strategies, priorities and guidance provided by the local authorities and Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism, including Cash Working Group, Shelter/NFI, MHPSS and Protection Clusters, which helped JERU and local IPs to minimise duplication/overlapping of services with other humanitarian actors and ensured the complementarity of the services provided.

JERU and local IPs provided a base for the identification of activities, locations and target group through assessments and consultations in the area of implementation which was detailed through the strategies, priorities and guidance provided by the local authorities and Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism, including Cash Working Group, Shelter/NFI, MHPSS and Protection Clusters. This approach helped JERU and local IPs to minimise duplication and overlapping of the services provided by different humanitarian actors. JERU team consulted with the relevant Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism, particularly Cash Working Group and Shelter/NFI Cluster for the MPCA and winterisation top-up and MHPSS and Protection Clusters for PSS services, to ensure that similar services were not provided by the other humanitarian actors within the same area of implementation. Moreover, the target groups for both MPCA, winterisation top-up and PSS activities were identified through the vulnerability criteria and prioritisation recommended by these clusters and working groups, as per key informants of JERU and local IPs.

For instance, the amount of the MPCA was considered through the guidance of the Cash Assistance Working Group in Ukraine, which was 2,220 UAH per person each month over a period of three months. According to the UN representatives, JERU team closely coordinated during the design of MPCA activities and followed all necessary guidance given by the Cash Working Group, supporting MPCA action through joint priorities and strategies in close collaboration with other working group members as well. Moreover, the MPCA support was crucial as it was implemented in areas that were hard to reach and lacked support, as a limited number of humanitarian actors were targeted in these locations to implement similar activities. The winterisation top-ups, in addition to MPCA, were critical in addressing further needs of the most vulnerable MPCA participants, which was also in line with the Shelter Cluster's strategy, as per the UN representative. Similar perspectives were reported by the project participants, finding MPCA activities relevant to their needs and challenges.

Similarly, PSS vulnerability criteria, including single women, pregnant or lactating women, persons with disabilities and chronic diseases, children, etc. was identified based on the recommendations made by the MHPSS Cluster as per local IPs, which was supported by the cluster representatives. Child protection minimum standards⁷ were respected and integrated into the services provided to children, as per informants from Poshmishka. Also, they have regularly participated in Child Protection Sub-Cluster

⁷ Global Protection Cluster, Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2019. <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/publications/258/policy-and-guidance/guidelines/minimum-standards-child-protection-humanitarian>
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meetings, not only at the national level but also regional and local levels to have up-to-date information, coordinate with other humanitarian actors to avoid duplication and report their activities. This helped JERU and local IPs to understand newly launched programs and projects by other humanitarian actors in the area of implementation and facilitated the collaboration between the local IPs and those organisations through referral mechanisms to ensure a comprehensive and holistic support has been provided to the project participants.

According to informants from Poshmishka, the "Five Competences" program, recommended by the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, was also integrated into activities. This government-created methodology focused on enhancing life skills, building resilience, and managing stress. It emphasized non-violent communication and helps individuals reconnect with old friends and form new relationships, crucial for those affected by conflict. The program aimed to foster resilience, improve stress management, and provide self-help strategies during emergencies, such as bombings or armed conflicts, thereby aiding in the adaptation and integration into new life circumstances.

3.3. EFFECTIVENESS

3	Good overall performance but with some minor shortcomings
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Finding 1: The kick-off of the project activities was found timely for Sumy Public Circle and We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians, while Poshmishka started the activities after a month's delay. However, once the activities were started, there were very minor delays, generally due to safety and security issues, as revealed by many FGD participants reporting a high level of satisfaction with the timing of the assistance. This timely delivery was crucial for addressing their immediate needs through MPCA and winterisation and supporting their mental and emotional well-being as a result of PSS activities.

The kick-off of the project's activities was timely for Sumy Public Circle, and We are Brothers We are Ukrainians, whereas Poshmishka encountered a month of delay. According to informants, the project's timeframe was set from October to June 30th, but the actual implementation began only in early December. During November, the team was still being assembled, and there were issues with securing cars and drivers, which contributed to the delay. By December, all necessary permits were obtained, the team was fully recruited, and work commenced. Essentially, October and November were dedicated to preparing for the project's launch. However, upon the start, a few delays were experienced due to the safety and security risks and threats, which were echoed by JERU and all local IP informants.

Among local IPs, We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians experienced the most delays, as Kharkiv was one of the locations with the highest security risks, highlighting changes in locations as the main result. However, Sumy Public Circle and Poshmishka also experienced similar safety and security challenges in Sumy, Mykolayiv, and Zaporizhzhia to a lesser extent.

However, as per project participants, these minor delays and issues did not impact their perspective on the timing of the project activities, which were found to help them navigate through challenging periods effectively. While the precise timing of winterisation support was found to be perfectly aligned with their seasonal needs, it also allowed them to cover their increased electricity costs, field needs, and seeds for the sowing season. The participants reported similar perceptions of the MPCA support. According to female FGDs in Sumy and Zaporizhzhia, the MPCA support was delivered way before they expected, which took approximately three weeks, which is considered fast and efficient. Although most of the MPCA and

winterisation top-ups were delivered on time, even mainly earlier than the expected timeline, some minor delays were also experienced in implementing them due to the technical issues in bank transactions, etc., as per informants. These delays were promptly addressed, ensuring that the participants received the necessary support without significant disruption.

Similarly, engagement in PSS support has taken a short time after their registration, reflecting the prompt actions taken by the JERU and local IPs according to informants and project participants. Moreover, sessions were also conducted in a timely manner, with some delays experienced due to safety and security reasons. Some of the activities had to be rescheduled or delayed in times of heightened security and safety risks. However, cancellations or delays were discussed among JERU and local IPs, and necessary actions were taken quickly, including immediately communicating such issues to project participants.

Furthermore, some participants suggested further considerations regarding the activity timeline. According to some female FGD participants in Mykolayiv, activities starting around 4.00 pm were challenging for those with tight schedules. On the other hand, parents who have not engaged actively in the labour market reported finding the activity timeline appropriate, showing the need for further adjustments, particularly for parents and caregivers in the labour force. Moreover, the short duration between some sessions made the digestion of newly acquired information difficult for some participants, suggesting further consideration regarding the free time left to participants in between.

Finding- 2: Although all partners aimed to follow certain standards, such as inside toilets, bomb shelters, and disability-friendly designs, the lack of infrastructure within the area of implementation, as the activities were implemented in hard-to-reach areas, limited the options they have shifted to in case of such emergencies. Moreover, constant shelling and attacks have damaged a significant number of buildings, leaving no options that the local IPs could follow.

Certain standards were tried to be followed by the local IPs, including inside toilets, bomb shelters, and disability-friendly environments, such as the necessary doors and ramps. However, there was a limited infrastructure in terms of the availability of such venues. Therefore, some of the venues that provided participants with services still lacked the infrastructure, particularly for persons with disabilities. In some instances, activities were held in locations such as schools or kindergartens that lacked basic amenities like indoor toilets, which posed significant access and hygiene issues as per Sumy Public Circle, Poshmishka and We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians. The evaluation team verified this through its field observations. For instance, there was no wheelchair ramp, doors enabling wheelchair entry and exit and lift/elevator for their easy access within the premises were unavailable across the three observation points in Mykolayiv. Of the three activity locations visited, only one had an available evacuation plan, a sufficient bomb shelter, and a strategy with clear signs in the facility. Furthermore, all locations lacked first aid kits to ensure on-time response to emergency situations, as well as a private room or space for breastfeeding. Additionally, there were no indoor toilet and hygiene items, such as toilet paper, water, soap, washbasin, etc., in any of the observed locations.

Moreover, registration sites in Zaporizhzhya and Sumy were on the upper floors without lift access, which presented constant challenges, as per informants. Although local IPs generally arranged locations through coordination with local authorities, in administrative buildings, even the infrastructure in those were highly challenging. Furthermore, these were not experienced only during the registration phase but also in the delivery of the assistance. For instance, those facing transportation barriers for registration were equally hindered in accessing ATMs to withdraw MPCA support. Although JERU and local IPs continue to

seek solutions, including in-person visits for both registration and assistance for those with limited physical ability and less digital literacy, most of the process remains digital, posing challenges in accessing registration and receipt of the assistance. Despite these challenges, PDM indicated no major issues with market accessibility or item availability, though some items, like hygiene products, were either scarce or priced above the average cost in the minimum expenditure basket. Transportation also remained a challenge for accessing PSS activities; although the project tried to select easily reachable locations within communities, it created barriers for those who were bedridden or had severe mobility issues. These challenges highlighted the broader issue of inadequate infrastructure and accessibility in Ukraine for people with disabilities, which the project had to navigate with limited options, which was echoed by many key informants, also highlighting that a limited number of persons with disabilities, particularly children, benefited from these activities.

"It is hard to find a fully accessible place with inside toilets, bomb shelters, and a disability-friendly design. We are working in villages, so there are no real bomb shelters here—only the simple ones."

(KII, Kharkiv)

Finding 3: In both Mykolayiv, Zaporizhzhya, and Sumy, FGD participants, including MPCA, winterisation, and PSS support, agreed that they felt comfortable and welcomed during the activities, citing a supportive and respectful environment in which confidentiality was respected, efficient processes, and the positive impact of the tailored PSS support.

Participants expressed a strong sense of comfort and gratitude throughout their engagement in MPCA, winterisation, and PSS activities. Although some felt unfamiliar at their first engagement, it took a very short time to feel part of the activities, particularly PSS, as the psychologist's efforts fostered trust through open communication quickly. Many report feeling seen and heard, noting that JERU and local IPs not only promised but also delivered through activities. Female and male FGD participants felt free to choose whether to participate and the type of PSS activities they participated in, which turned activities into a stress-free and safe space for many. Tailored support based on participants' unique needs, which the psychologists prioritised, increased participants' comfort and encouraged their active and meaningful participation. Although the number of male participants in PSS activities was found to be limited due to the fear of conscription and stigma, as per informants, male participants were comfortable and welcomed after participating in activities. This showed the fact that the difficulty was more of engaging male participants at the beginning, while after their engagement, the high level of satisfaction came naturally as a result of the quality of services, positive and welcoming attitude and approach towards them by the staff members. As per the JERU informant, the engagement of male participants was supported through more information dissemination activities, particularly highlighting the confidentiality rules that were followed to decrease the fear of conscription, which was considered effective to a certain extent.

Adults and children participating in FGDs shared similar perspectives. In Mykolayiv and Sumy, children expressed feeling very safe and comfortable while participating in the activities. All participants unanimously agreed that the environment was welcoming. Communication was smooth and comfortable with staff members, further underscoring the cheerful ambience created during the activities.

"I'm thinking about the other sessions I took before joining Posmishka, where it seemed like when I spoke, they either didn't understand me or understood in a completely different way. But here, it felt different. I didn't feel the need to say anything, just to ask later for it to be kept a secret. In Posmishka, I felt heard."

The psychologists supported us and emphasised confidentiality, reassuring us that we didn't need to mention names if we didn't want to."

(Oleksii, Man, FGD, Mykolayiv)

The attitude and behaviour of staff members were found to be caring, friendly, and polite, highlighting their constant concern for the children's comfort and willingness to adapt the activities based on their preferences. Moreover, confidentiality was respected at all times, which actually bridged the trust between psychologists and project participants.

"They were so caring and polite and always interested in how we were feeling, whether we were comfortable, and if we wanted to change something in our communication. We could suggest some other topic if we didn't feel comfortable with this one, but we didn't like it. They were always ready to adjust to us."

(Maria, Girl, FGD, Mykolayiv)

This was observed by the field researchers throughout the field observations conducted during the PSS sessions with elderly project participants in Mykolayiv. According to researchers, all psychologists started their activities by greeting participants with joy, which immediately improved the mood of the participants. Name tags were distributed to the participants before the start of the activity. Careful listening, engaging with participants through their names and giving enough space for every participant in order to ensure equal active participation were highlighted. While participants were given the flexibility to choose the activities they would like to join during the session, none of the participants refused to participate; instead, they engaged very actively in group activities. At the end of each session, psychologists summarised the key points to be taken, informed participants about other available activities and completed the activity.

While psychologists provided high-quality services by putting enormous efforts into their work, some had technical challenges, mainly working with traumatised children and children with PTSD, as per local IPs. Considering that they were also significantly impacted by the war, an additional support mechanism could be highly useful for their personal well-being and professional skills. Already considered by one of the local IPs, Poshmishka reported providing supervision sessions among psychologists working under the project since February 2024 to ensure that psychologists have a platform to share their experiences and feelings, exchange knowledge and analyse complex or unfamiliar cases, which resulted in improved well-being and professional skills, as per local IP. Therefore, mainstreaming supervision sessions among local IPs implementing PSS services was found to be highly crucial. These supervision sessions are preferably moderated by an experienced psychologist or mental health professional with group moderation and supervision skills. Moreover, a background in emergency trauma counselling could be a significant added value.

Finding 4: The project successfully achieved several key outputs across multiple phases, notably surpassing many of its initial targets, echoed by the informants of JERU and local IPs. Key factors influencing outputs included high demand for services and security and logistics issues, which were effectively managed through adaptive planning and close coordination with local IPs.

The project successfully achieved several key outputs across phases 2a and 2b. A total of 11,781 individuals received MPCA under the DEC funding, complemented by an additional 7,500 supported

through various donors for phase 2a. In terms of winterisation efforts, the project significantly exceeded expectations by assisting 17,240 individuals, compared to the initial target of 8,750 for phase 2a. Additionally, during phase 2b, 6,869 individuals were reached out of the 7,410 targeted for winterisation. According to JERU and local IP informants, MPCA targets were the only ones that were not overachieved under the DEC funding as a result of the limited budget allocated compared to the significant and constant need. Moreover, the project teams faced significant challenges primarily related to tracking and distribution. According to informants, early phases lacked thorough follow-up on who received the transfers, leading to discrepancies. According to key informants, the transfers were not followed up with Red Rose in the initial phases, which led to missing information on some payment failures of MPCA for some of the project participants. This was realised later on, right before the closure of Phase 2a. However, these payments were not made as the phase came to an end. Also, the team reported that more rigorous monitoring was implemented. Additionally, informants reported that transaction issues were a recurring problem, especially in areas with restricted access. Complaints resolution was slow, often due to multiple stakeholders involved. Similar technical issues were also experienced in winterisation top-ups, such as transaction limits and multiple transfers needed to complete payments. These were effectively managed by sending corrected amounts upon identifying errors, ensuring participants received their entitled assistance.

In the realm of psychosocial support (PSS), the project achieved a notable impact by assisting 1,720 individuals, surpassing the targeted 1,350 for phase 2b. One factor that resulted in the overachievement of PSS targets was the high demand and need in the respective areas of implementation, which also created pressure on the team members of local IPs, particularly in the initial phases of PSS activities. Moreover, logistical challenges due to safety and security risks, such as changes in locations, caused delays, but they were addressed through the precise and intense planning and execution of activities, echoed by both JERU and local IPs.

Finding 5: The project successfully achieved several key outcomes across multiple phases, and project activities were highly effective in addressing the needs of the project participants by providing MPCA, winterisation, and PSS support. Across all project participants, including adults and children, activities were found to meet the immediate needs of the project participants, including basic needs and winter-specific needs, and enhance their psychological and emotional well-being.

As per all adult and child participants in this evaluation, the project was highly effective in addressing project participants' needs and challenges through MPCA, winterisation, and PSS support across all local IPs. The MPCA support was reported to be effective in providing project participants with their individual immediate and necessary needs as a result of its flexible nature, as per project participants.

Similar to the PDM results, many allocated the MPCA support to cover their essential expenses, such as food, medicine, and safe accommodation, which was crucial for those displaced from conflict zones like Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, as per JERU informants. Similarly, the majority of MPCA and winterisation top-up participants also expressed high satisfaction as per PDM results. For instance, 86.10% of respondents reported being "Very satisfied" with the cash received from the MPCA program, while an even higher percentage of 88.72% expressed the same level of satisfaction with the Winter Cash program.⁸

⁸ JERU, PDM Dashboard: MPCA and Winter Cash_1006.

This assistance was especially appreciated in regions with limited livelihood opportunities, and many recipients were older adults with limited pensions. Echoed by the FGD participants, the MPCA allowed them to stabilise their financial capacity due to the sudden displacement, enabling them to address their needs according to their priorities and decision-making process as the MPCA has given them the necessary flexibility. This also facilitated economic activity in local markets, as beneficiaries spent their cash locally, indirectly supporting small businesses and the local economy, similar to the evaluation results of Phase 1.⁹ When participants were asked whether the assistance provided was sufficient to support their household in covering essential needs, 57.63% of respondents indicated that it was fully adequate, while an additional 31.53% of respondents noted that the assistance was mostly sufficient, showing satisfaction with the sufficiency of the amount provided as per PDM results.

According to local authorities, MPCA support also provided an important opportunity for IDP households, who have very limited financial capacity, to rent safe and secure accommodation in their new locations. Many households considered returning to these non-government-controlled areas due to their financial capacity, which could pose significant safety, security and protection risks. Therefore, MPCA had a life-saving impact on many, enabling them to rent safe and secure accommodation and mitigating these risks, including gender-based violence and potential child protection risks.

MPCA support was reported to be highly effective in improving project participants' psychosocial and emotional well-being. According to some participants, displacement, loss of surroundings and livelihoods, and limited financial capacity significantly impacted their psychosocial and emotional well-being. The unforeseeable future, along with loss, was found emotionally exhausting and led to suicidal ideas, as per FGDs. However, these participants reported dropping the suicidal ideation upon the receipt of MPCA support. The MPCA was not only considered to bring financial, psychological and emotional relief but also increased their feeling of hope and resilience, as there was support available when they needed it.

"It was exactly the right time. I told you; I don't even know how... They took it in one hand and gave it to me in the other. Honestly! I wish someone had seen me then. I cried a little when I received the text that the money had been credited. Because the situation was just so difficult and hopeless. I was thinking of suicide seriously as there was no hope left."

(Igor, Man, FGD, Sumy)

Preparing for winter was a significant concern, with firewood and coal in short supply, according to FGD participants in Sumy. Many female and male participants emphasised the necessity of firewood for heating homes and public buildings, such as schools, which traditionally relied on substantial amounts of coal and firewood to remain operational throughout the winter. According to FGDs, obtaining firewood and coal had become increasingly difficult due to the war, disrupting traditional supply chains. Moreover, the lack of coal from the Donbas region exacerbated the situation. The high cost of firewood and the bureaucracy in securing permits for cutting wood added to the community's struggles. Many participants noted that even when firewood was available, it was often insufficient and required multiple loads to meet the needs of a single household. The absence of these resources posed a severe threat to the community's well-being and safety. Therefore, winterisation support was seen as highly crucial by most female and male FGD participants, which was provided as top-up support for the MPCA participants with further vulnerabilities, including providing utilities and heating materials essential for families struggling

⁹ Meraki Labs, Final Evaluation: A2015 Ukraine Response.

with damaged/inadequate shelter and resources. Echoed by the local authorities, winterisation was a significant relief for many vulnerable households, particularly in the winter season, as the expenses significantly increased.

Psychosocial support services provided by Sumy Public Circle and Poshmishka were a crucial component of the project, showing significant improvement in psychological and emotional well-being in both female and male adult and child project participants across locations. The activities included art therapy, psychoeducation, and various group sessions designed to help individuals manage stress and trauma. According to FGD participants, the feeling of being seen, heard, remembered, and supported was one factor that increased the effectiveness of the PSS activities. PSS support and the environment it has created enabled them to create a community that provided them with a sense of normalcy and stability during these challenging times. Furthermore, PSS activities were found to reinforce participants' faith and hope in future, fostering a sense of hope and resilience. Activities were found further effective in helping participants to cope with their trauma of displacement and loss. The presence of PSS professionals provided much-needed emotional support, enabling participants to process their experiences and find ways to move forward. The PSS activities helped many participants understand the connection between mental state and health, leading to better emotional regulation during stressful times and improved communication with children and colleagues.

"As a dad with a working wife, I spend much time helping my child with schoolwork. This has been helpful, especially when my child started first grade and got used to school. At home, moms usually take care of most things, so it can be tough when I have to get my children to sit still, comb their hair, bath them, or feed them. But asking questions, talking to psychologists, and getting support makes it easier. Four months later, still using these techniques make a significant difference."

(Arsen, Man, FGD, Mykolayiv)

For instance, one of the techniques taught during the sessions in Mykolayiv, the "palm technique," was found highly useful in calming them and their children in stressful situations, and it became a part of their daily routine in managing stress and anxiety. Therefore, many participants requested further curriculum on these practical approaches and tips instead of theoretical information provision. After completing each session, participants reported feeling happier and more hopeful, increasing their resilience. Almost all adult participants echoed feeling better equipped to handle stressful situations without resorting to previous, less effective coping mechanisms.

"Before participating in PSS activities, I had difficulties sleeping. Like I wasn't able to sleep at all. But after the PSS sessions, a relief arrived at my door. Sometimes, I sleep so relaxed that I miss going to a shelter during my comfortable night's sleep. (Laughs)"

(Anastasia, Woman, FGD, Mykolayiv)

The participants mentioned no specific challenges while participating in activities, highlighting the high satisfaction rate. Only some participants reported having connectivity challenges who participated in activities remotely, decreasing the quality and meaning of their participation and learning. Moreover, many participants recommended outside activities for themselves and their children, which is expected to increase the effectiveness of activities when the security situation allows.

According to the project's adult and children participants, the activities were highly effective and useful in improving their psychosocial well-being, coping mechanisms and peer-to-peer communication skills. The flexibility and adaptability of the PSS activities were particularly effective in meeting the evolving needs, as per project participants, JERU and local IP informants.

"I believe my mental state would have been worse without this program. It has helped me realise that I can be polite and reserved. Without the project, I wouldn't have noticed these traits in myself. Most importantly, my condition would be worse. This program has also instilled confidence in our strength and unity as a family. When I see the girls on the street, I know that if anyone needs help, we will come together and support each other. This sense of community—our village, our group—has made us feel significant. The thought of losing someone is very sad, but this experience has brought us closer. We communicate and understand each other better, seeing our similarities despite our differences. I notice it in our greetings, our hugs, and our smiles. We never complain when we meet, not even about the rain or power outages. We've become closer, always greeting each other with a smile."

(Natalya, Elderly Woman, FGD, Mykolayiv)

Finding 6: Art therapy was found to be the most effective, useful, and interesting PSS activity by both adult and child participants across locations, highlighting its significant impact on their psychosocial and emotional well-being. This was followed by playing board games and engaging in physical exercises and activities such as "postcards" and the lottery for children participants.

Art therapy was found to be the most useful, engaging, and in-demand activity among both adult and child participants of FGDs. Adult participants reported relief in sharing their emotions and experiences, understanding their impacts, and how to regulate them through art therapy sessions. The children gave a similar perspective in art therapy, echoed by Sonia, *"We modelled a cactus and stars. It was interesting. I liked it so much."*

Following the art therapy, children reported playing board games and engaging in physical exercises as one of their most favourites in both Mykolayiv and Sumy. These activities were popular because they provided a blend of joy, social interaction and communication with their peers, and a break from the routine. Ilona particularly enjoyed playing board games and exercising, noting, *"We would go out into the corridor, repeat after each other the figures we were standing in. It was very fun and interesting. I hope you'll come next time, and we can have a fun start together."* She emphasised how these activities made her feel happy and clear-headed, enhancing her ability to communicate and connect with others. Playing board games such as 'Monopoly' increased their mood and resulted in positive feelings. A similar perspective was echoed by Oleksandr along with many participants of FGDs for the board game called 'Dipsy' and sports games to his friends, noting that the atmosphere was comfortable and the activities helped improve communication. *"I drew a cheerful man with the sun above him. I recreated how we played. It helped with communication; it became easier to communicate."*

Despite mixed feelings about drawing activities for many, some also found it uncovered their creativity and released their stress as a good break from distance learning, which many girls and boys highlighted as highly stressful. Meanwhile, mimicry was found to be the most challenging activity by most children

participants, as many felt embarrassed to show their faces trying, which could be expected as the natural result of adolescence.

Finding 7: Across project participants, there was awareness of the FCRM mechanism, including available channels, how to raise feedback or complaints, and how it is investigated and results. Mainly, project participants learn about FCRM through multiple channels, including during their registration and implementation of activities, Viber and Telegram groups, trust boxes, hotlines, and traditional ICT materials such as brochures and leaflets.

The JERU and local IPs followed and respected an FCRM mechanism with the necessary standard operating procedures. Feedback and complaints were consistently collected and managed efficiently through various channels, ensuring beneficiaries were well-informed about their rights and methods of sharing their opinions and feedback. Overall, 1067 complaints were raised officially. While 52% of those were about MPCA, the remaining 46% were about winterisation top-ups, PSS being only 1,4%. However, all those complaints were resolved, and there were no identified pending/open during this evaluation. While 75% of these complaints were solved and closed within 15 days, the remaining 24% were found to be taking longer, mainly about the payments of MPCA and winterisation top-ups, including changes in beneficiary data or distribution modality, which often take longer as third parties are heavily involved.

Information about the FCRM mechanism was widely disseminated through in-person communications, social media platforms, trust boxes, and ICT materials, including leaflets and brochures with hotline information and QR codes.

Female and male FGD participants in both Mykolayiv, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia were highly aware of and knowledgeable of the FCRM mechanism. In many cases, local IPs team members informed them during their registration for the services or at the beginning of the activities. This was followed by the communication groups set up via social media platforms like Viber or Telegram to provide immediate contact with relevant staff members. These groups allow for both general announcements and private messages, facilitating a more personalised approach to handling issues. Despite the availability of these channels, there was a noticeable preference for resolving concerns privately rather than in public or general forums. Trust boxes were placed in facilities which were verified by the researchers of this evaluation during the field observations. Hotlines were also known as common. Although beneficiaries were encouraged through these methods to raise their feedback or complaints, pre-post tests and PDMs were also utilised to reinforce the regular feedback by the project participants. However, no FGD participants stated that they were sharing feedback or complaints through the FCRM mechanism, indicating that they did not run into any issues, that they did not feel comfortable using it or that there is an inherent preference for handling issues informally through in-person communications. Additionally, feedback and complaints were found more during the payment periods of MPCA and winterisation support due to the potential technical issues with their payments, while there were very few for PSS activities. Although team members of JERU and local IPs aimed at addressing these feedbacks and complaints in 14 days, the MPCA and winterization-related ones generally took more than 14 days, as solving technical issues with multiple stakeholders had taken time.

Efforts were made to ensure the feedback mechanisms were inclusive and accessible to all groups, including children, as per JERU and local IPs. For instance, Poshmishka developed an FCRM form with emoticons to ensure the mechanism was also child-friendly. These efforts were found in the children who participated in FGDs, showing significant knowledge and awareness of the mechanism. Children

participants highlighted in-person communications and using social media platforms such as Telegram and Viber. Psychologists were found to be the main focal point naturally identified by children to share their opinions, feedback and complaints. This could be attributed to the rapport built by the psychologists with children, making them feel safer and open to sharing.

Finding 8: Internal coordination between JERU and its implementing partners, including Sumy Public Circle, Posmishka, and We Are Brothers We Are Ukrainians, was characterised by consistent and open communication through regular meetings and a collaborative problem-solving approach. Despite occasional challenges, such as security issues and reporting discrepancies, the partnerships maintained a strong level of coordination and mutual support throughout project implementation.

JERU and local IP informants reached a consensus on the strong coordination between JERU and its implementing partners, Sumy Public Circle, Posmishka, and We Are Brothers We Are Ukrainians. Regular communication channels, including online meetings, emails, and phone calls, were established from the outset of each project, ensuring that all partners were well-informed and aligned on objectives and activities. Jeru was always found presenting at events and responsive to the day-to-day challenges partners experienced as a result of safety and security issues. Daily and weekly communications through online meetings supported partners in obtaining necessary technical support and discussing activity planning, illustrating the high level of engagement. Although there were some challenges regarding the partners' capacities, particularly on reporting, constant feedback and support by the JERU team eased the reporting processes and improved the capacity of local IPs, as per several informants.

As per informants, remote coordination posed difficulties for some local IPs, complicating communication and understanding of certain tasks. In cases of occasional miscommunications, the JERU team has taken the initiative to have immediate communications to resolve these communication incidents, which enabled both JERU and local IPs to maintain this spirit of strong collaboration.

3.4. EFFICIENCY

4	<i>Very good overall performance with few shortcomings</i>
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Finding 1: The project budget was meticulously prepared and aligned with the project's needs, ensuring sufficient financial resources and timely implementation of activities without budget-related concerns. The JERU team's thorough planning and donor flexibility in budget revisions allowed for adaptability to evolving needs, with smooth handling of budget reallocations and timely payments to local IPs.

The project budget was found to be well-prepared and aligned with the project's needs from the outset, ensuring the availability of sufficient financial resources across local IPs and JERU team members. According to the JERU team, the planning phase of the project was thoroughly considered, including the necessary human resources, number of activities and events, and even refreshments to be distributed, which contributed to the timely implementation of the project activities without any budget-related concerns.

"The children had everything they needed on time. Every child who came to classes had full access to all the materials and resources provided under the project. We are incredibly grateful to JERU for making this possible."

(KII, Kharkiv)

Moreover, the flexibility in budget revisions enabled JERU and local IPs to adapt the response according to the evolving needs in the field. According to JERU informants, any requests for budget reallocations were handled smoothly, focusing on maintaining flexibility and responsiveness to partners' needs. Additionally, no delays were experienced in payments to the local IPs. According to JERU and local IPs, the payment was made by JERU right after receiving the payment from DEC to the local IPs, which allowed partners to conduct the activities on time with necessary resources and materials available. The financial reports from partners were generally submitted on time and were promptly reviewed, ensuring continuous funding flow.

Finding 2: Monitoring and information management findings and data were extensively used by local implementing partners and JERU to inform decision-making and improve the quality of service provision, including MPCA, Winterisation, and PSS support. The data enhanced the responsiveness of project activities to participants' needs.

Monitoring and information management findings significantly informed decision-making and improved project implementation by local implementing partners and JERU. According to local IPs, their monitoring approach included individual interviews and real-time feedback during various activities such as financial assistance registration and PSS events. This direct engagement allowed them to adapt and refine their processes based on immediate feedback from project participants. Moreover, local IPs revealed that their monitoring efforts aimed to understand the effectiveness of their activities and better plan future phases. For example, a case assessment during a fuel distribution project helped them identify specific needs, which informed subsequent planning. Furthermore, monitoring activities enabled local IPs to keep accurate records and structure reports better. However, not all feedback on monitoring was positive. One informant of local IP reported concerns about the implementation of monitoring activities by the JERU team, noting that they were not informed before the monitoring activities conducted by JERU, suggesting the need for further collaboration in monitoring activities.

“Sleep: how can you sleep normally because of these anxieties when you don't know where it is going to bomb, whether there will be a bombing or not? And I'll repeat it: fear for my grandchildren. Just like before, before the war, when you went to bed, fell asleep and got up. Well, I'm not talking about any illnesses or anything like that. But this emotional state, the psychological state, left a very serious imprint. You don't get enough sleep; you don't get enough sleep, and then you feel bad. And so on.”

(Nina, Elderly Woman, MSCS, Sumy)

3.5. SUSTAINABILITY

4 *Very good overall performance with few shortcomings*

Finding 1: The project activities strengthened local capacities, including financial capacity and community members' psychosocial and emotional well-being. They also improved trust and cooperation within communities and increased resilience and awareness among beneficiaries.

According to the informants from local authorities, PSS activities fostered psychosocial and emotional resilience among children, who learned to manage their emotions and maintain a positive outlook despite the challenges of war. This sentiment was echoed by informants of JERU and local IPs, who noted increased awareness through psychoeducation and emotional stability among program participants. The

trust established through interactions during the activities brought a sense of security and belonging, increasing self-confidence and communication skills among community members, as per local IPs in Kharkiv.

Although MPCA is seen as a temporary intervention due to its nature, local IPs and project participants revealed its longer-term impact on enhancing financial stability, improving access to the local economy, and contributing to the local economy. According to local IPs, financial assistance allowed many participants to address their necessary needs, cover essential expenses, and stabilise their living conditions. Moreover, limited financial capacity forced many IDP families to return to non-government-controlled areas, putting their lives at high risk. Thanks to MPCA, many were prevented from making these decisions, which pose significant risks, as per local authorities. MPCA enabled them to find safe accommodation and access to their basic needs, including food, non-food and hygiene items, and medical needs.

“For IDPs, the triggers are often related to daily survival struggles. Imagine going to the store with your family at home, unable to buy basic necessities. You stand there, wishing you could buy a kinder chocolate for your child, but it costs 60 hryvnias, which you need for essentials like laundry powder, buckwheat, or shampoo. The rent adds even more pressure. This constant financial strain causes immense psychological stress. When people don't receive the funds they are counting on from projects like ours, it can push them back to the occupied territories. This despair is a terrible reality for many, not just in our community but in any community facing such hardships.”

(KII, Zaporizhzhia)

MPCA and winterisation support have been found to substantially increase the resilience of the participants and their family members by alleviating the financial burdens and providing the necessary support to address their immediate basic needs, along with minor repairs, heating, and utilities, particularly during harsh winter conditions. It has stabilised the financial capacity, which resulted in improved emotional and mental well-being and potential dependency of participants on high-interest loans, echoed by many project participants across Mykolayiv, Sumy and Zaporizhzhia.

On the other hand, the PSS activities have had an equally impactful effect on fostering emotional resilience among the participants. As stated by Oleg from Zaporizhzhia, the emotional uplift provided by these activities, especially during stressful periods like the New Year, has been invaluable. The participants engaged in various activities that not only offered psychological relief but also improved their practical skills for managing stress and emotional challenges. Many participants reported their relief and comfort after openly expressing their emotions during these activities. Furthermore, participants revealed that the practical tips and skills they have learned and improved during the activities became part of their daily routines, increasing their ability to face daily challenges with greater confidence and resilience.

According to children participants of FGDs, they learned the importance of expressing their emotions and utilising calming techniques to manage daily stress and challenges. Approaching conflicts with a calm and clear mind is vital to prevent escalation, a realisation made even by those who initially attended classes just for fun. Adopting these techniques helped children turn their social interactions into positive experiences by decreasing their anxiety and stress, helping them focus on the present, and reducing negative thoughts. While only a small number of children participants did not find the activities

significantly impactful, the majority believed that these techniques and practical tips would be instrumental in their lives, including emotional regulation under challenging times in the future.

Finding 2: The project strengthened the capacity of local IPs by identifying and addressing critical gaps in organisational structures and processes and enhancing systems aligned with international standards. Furthermore, targeted trainings, comprehensive support in logistics and financial aspects, and collaborative strategic planning increased the partners' ability to deliver services more effectively, manage larger-scale operations, and improve overall organisational efficiency.

Partnership with JERU has significantly strengthened the capacity of its partners by addressing and filling critical gaps in their organisational structures and processes. The capacity-building activities offered by JERU, including trainings, enabled local IPs to handle brand-new activities which they did not have experience of, such as MPCA. Furthermore, regular meetings/workshops on monitoring and FCRM mechanisms and practical hands-on support in setting up and using these mechanisms.

According to local IPs, the training sessions delivered on specific technical aspects such as Gender-based Violence (GBV), PSS and general principles and standards of humanitarian aid were critical in adapting and improving their service delivery, particularly PSS activities. They mentioned that JERU's guidance helped their organisation manage more extensive operations across multiple locations, thereby gaining valuable experience handling diverse cases and structuring their work more effectively. According to local IPs, JERU's coordination and strategic planning meetings were also instrumental in enhancing their operational capacities.

Local IPs notably increased their understanding of humanitarian requirements and donor constraints, thereby improving their proposal development, budget management and financial reporting skills. This is also expected to increase their further engagement with international donors.

The local IPs were also provided with the Prevention of Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse by JERU, which was reported to increase local IPs' understanding and capacity. Moreover, as per informants, necessary policies and procedures were in place and followed by both JERU and local IPs. However, when local IPs were asked about child safeguarding policies and procedures, many lacked the knowledge of the presence of a policy and the relevant information on the concept of safeguarding. This finding highlighted the necessary need for child safeguarding policy, practice and knowledge among local IPs staff members.

Finding 3: External coordination was built and maintained closely by both JERU and its local IPs. While local IPs had very strong coordination and collaboration with local authorities, including administrations, humanitarian hubs, schools and kindergartens, and representatives of Education departments at the local level, JERU has shown a closer relationship with the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms, including Cash Working Group, Shelter/NFI Cluster, MHPSS Cluster, at both HQ and regional levels.

JERU's coordination with external actors was structured and involved multiple levels of engagement. At the national level, JERU's team participated in cluster meetings, including the Cash Working Group, MHPSS Cluster, Shelter/NFI Cluster, Protection Cluster, Child Protection Cluster and Education Cluster at regional and national levels to ensure the project's alignment with the standards, priorities, and strategies through up-to-date information. However, the level of coordination with the UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism of local IPs varied, with some actively participating and others needing more support to understand and engage in the coordination processes. While Mykolayiv and Kharkiv were the locations

where local IPs were involved in the coordination mechanism, the level of engagement was found to be highly limited in Sumy.

While the coordination with local authorities and administrations, humanitarian hubs, schools and kindergartens, and local education departments was mainly led by the local IPs, JERU also maintained a level of engagement with these authorities through MoUs to facilitate operations, ensuring that both local and oblast levels were informed and supportive of their activities. Local IPs collaborated closely with village leaders and councils to ensure the approval and coordination of the project activities. Moreover, local authorities provided logistics support, such as electricity and safe space for activities, through this close coordination between the local authorities and local IPs. Furthermore, local IPs crowned their close relationship with local authorities through Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs), including IDP support centres, centres for extracurricular education, and village councils.

This coordination also increased the timeliness of the project activities, as approvals from the local authorities were easier to obtain through this close coordination. For instance, regular coordination with the representatives of the local administrations and departments of education to conduct PSS activities enabled local IPs to obtain permissions and conduct activities on time.

Additionally, the JERU team introduced local IPs to Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms through information sharing and constant encouragement, which also increased their engagement with international and national humanitarian actors. This engagement not only aimed to facilitate information sharing but also reflected the collaborative efforts of JERU and its local IPs throughout the project into the joint response mechanism. Moreover, this engagement minimised the potential overlap and duplication of services by actively coordinating with other members of the Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanisms, according to both JERU and local IPs' informants. However, some informants reported room for improvement, showing the need for more structured engagement, particularly in activity-information-sharing practices.

Finding 5: The project team ensured the continuity of the project with further Phase 2b, consisting of PSS and livelihood activities, including agriculture and micro-business grants, in the same area of implementation. This aim was to provide longer-term support and ensure that communities could sustain economic activities to address their necessary needs even after the project ended.

The project ensured its continuity through further negotiations with DEC until the end of February 2025. In the continuity of phase 2b, the project decided to offer livelihoods activities integrated with PSS support, including support for smallholder farmers and micro business grants. These activities aligned with this evaluation's findings, as many project participants were found to allocate some amount of MPCA for their small-scale agricultural activities, including purchasing seeds and fertilisers, expected to transition to more sustainable results. Moreover, agricultural activities, including equipment and resources for protecting harvests and livestock during winter, are expected to mitigate food security risks, improve the mental and emotional well-being of targeted community members in the longer term, and ensure healthy physical, psychological and emotional development of children in these families as a result of better access to their basic needs in a self-sufficient and sustainable manner.

Integrating livelihoods activities with PSS is crucial for the project's sustainability in the longer term. Livelihoods activities, such as vocational trainings, micro-business grants and agricultural support, provide financial stability and foster a sense of purpose and agency among community members. This financial

empowerment not only addresses immediate needs but also reduces dependency on humanitarian aid. Coupled with PSS, which enhances emotional resilience and coping mechanisms, these activities can significantly improve overall well-being. Particularly, improved skills in tackling stress, anxiety and day-to-day challenges are expected to improve relationships with themselves, their family members, including partners and children, and their friends, which will strengthen their coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, these combined efforts build community cohesion and trust, which are essential for collective resilience. Additionally, improved psychosocial and emotional well-being is vital for their effective engagement in the labour force as well. The integration of livelihoods and PSS ensures that interventions address both economic and psychological aspects of well-being, creating a more comprehensive support system that empowers individuals and strengthens communities against future shocks. This dual approach is not only beneficial for immediate relief but also pivotal for long-term recovery and development.

Additionally, integrating PSS into livelihoods activities will allow the project to reach a greater number of people in need of support in a safe and non-stigmatized way. This integration enhances the social, soft, and other life skills of participants, equipping them with vital coping mechanisms to handle work-related psychosocial stressors. The skills acquired through integrated MHPSS not only help individuals manage challenges at work but also in other aspects of life, both in the short and long term. Moreover, these components assist participants in anticipating, mitigating, and managing unexpected stressors related to their livelihoods, ultimately making work more manageable and productive.

As many IDPs in Ukraine were displaced from industry-heavy areas to more ICT and services-based local markets in the Western parts of the country, the professional skills of these displaced community members were mismatched with the local markets in their new locations.¹⁰ While supporting agriculture was found crucial in preventing food security risks together with more financial stability, developing new skills for the community members in these ICT and services sectors are necessary for a longer-term sustainable approach. Therefore, consideration should be given to potential vocational training programs to reequip these community members in a way that enables them to actively engage in their new local markets. While the area of implementation is hard to reach, which might bring issues around electricity and internet connectivity, these necessary resources, including technical equipment, could be provided by the local IPs in venues or centres. These venues could also offer child-friendly spaces which enable the participation of single parents in these livelihoods activities while their children are safe and occupied with beneficial activities for their healthy development. This approach could be adopted in close coordination with local authorities and the private sector, particularly those providing remote work opportunities, such as coding, marketing and sales, data analysis and business development.

As JERU and its local IPs implement several more joint projects together, apart from DEC funding, the JERU team, through its sustainability approach, ensures constant support in these communities. For the activities that could not be offered in the following phase and other project activities, JERU and local IPs team members adapt the Inter-Agency Referral Mechanism to make sure project participants are referred to the services offered by other humanitarian actors in the area of response. This referral mechanism was found to be followed by local IPs, referring project participants to the other humanitarian actors providing

¹⁰ CARE International, Rapid Gender Analysis, Ukraine, 2023. https://www.care-international.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/RGA_Ukraine_2023_ENG.pdf

the specific services to ensure that project participants were supported through tailored support for their comprehensive and unique needs.

"Oh, I won't even begin to describe what could have happened if this project wasn't here. Most likely, things would have continued as they were with this war. Anyway, this support is incredibly significant. Those in need have come forward, some even taking individual sessions. I know children were gathered there and were so happy to attend. In another village, they also gathered. This project is essential, especially now. It's crucial. We need guidance to help people stay calm and distracted. I'm telling you, this is like a balm for the soul. These activities were a true relief. My husband and I have communicated with others, and they were also pleased with everything. They said they could attend more if possible. However, some people have work or other commitments and can't always make it. But for me, I would drop everything and go, eagerly waiting for 11 o'clock as if it were a holiday."

(Alexandra, Elderly Woman, MSCS, Mykolayiv)

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. RELEVANCE

1. Maintain the localisation approach by leaving the lead to the local IPs in terms of coordinating with the local authorities.

4.2. COHERENCE

1. Continue to follow strategies, priorities and guidance provided by the local authorities and Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism in the upcoming phase of the project.

4.3. EFFECTIVENESS

1. Continue to implement activities in disability-friendly designed facilities, including a wheelchair ramp at the entrance with a sufficient-sized door, a lift inside the building and indoor toilets, where available. As the options were found to be very limited due to the limited resources and infrastructure, local IPs could consider relocating registration and implementation of activities to the ground floor to minimise the reliance on elevators and reduce barriers for those with mobility issues. Moreover, manual lifts or portable stair climbers could be a practical alternative to improve their mobility.
2. Ensure that relevant staff members of local IPs check and refresh the hygiene items in the toilets, including soaps and toilet papers, before activities.
3. Ensure that a contingency plan, including proper action points for staff members and participants and signs, is operationalised. Moreover, make sure that necessary equipment, such as first aid kits and fire extinguishers, is in place in all venues where project activities are implemented.
4. Develop a more comprehensive and detailed plan for activity schedules in close coordination with local IPs as per their respective locations and unique challenges, including options to be

considered in sudden activity location changes, granting several options applicable to necessary standards, including safety and bomb shelters, accessibility and disability-friendly design.

5. Design and facilitate supervision sessions delivered to the psychologists of local IPs, through an emergency trauma response expert regularly to provide a platform for psychologists to exchange their experiences and knowledge, release negative emotions and feel supported, and share opinions on challenging cases on how to support project participants in a best possible way.
6. Consider a different PSS activity schedule for adult participants actively engaged in the labour force, mainly after working hours. Ensure that there is a sufficient break between PSS activities to enable participants to digest newly gained information.
7. Increase the weight of art therapy activities for both adult and child participants during the further implementation of phase 2b to increase the interest and impact of the PSS activities. Include more practical approaches and tips in the PSS activities delivered to adult participants, particularly about further emotional regulation and stress management for themselves and their children.
8. Mainstream child-friendly feedback and complaint mechanisms, including child-friendly forms for their feedback, among local IPs. Equip psychologists with the FCRM mechanism, including training and workshops, to ensure that children's feedback and complaints are considered through the necessary policies and procedures.
9. Encourage local IPs to participate in the relevant UN Inter-Agency Coordination Mechanism meetings and share their up-to-date data to ensure the necessary efforts are reflected in the field and facilitate better planning of joint humanitarian mechanisms in Ukraine.

4.4. SUSTAINABILITY

1. Improve partners' understanding and capacity on Child Safeguarding as a concept, standards and principles, as many local IP team members were found to have limited information through training, including case studies and workshops. Adopt a hands-on approach for the partners lacking the necessary policies and procedures.
2. Implement cash-for-protection activities, particularly for project participants at risk the most, including those who are considering returning to non-government-controlled areas, and with suicidal thoughts, through a referral mechanism between PSS and cash for protection team members.
3. Consider integrating cash for protection and PSS activities with livelihoods, including microgrants, vocational training and job placement activities, particularly in the ICT sector, which offers remote opportunities such as single parents and persons with disabilities and chronic illnesses.
4. Consider cash-for-agriculture under Phase 2b, as many participants were found allocating the MPCA support as smallholder farmers, which can mitigate the food security risks in the communities.

5. Set up a community garden where participants can learn about farming and gardening, as gardening itself is a tool for PSS, it has been shown to have therapeutic effects, reducing stress and promoting relaxation. Organise a weekly farmers' market where participants can sell the products they've grown. (Community marketplace)
6. Consider the provision of vocational training and job placement activities, particularly for sectors that could be employed remotely, such as ICT. Offer specific venues that include workspaces with necessary technical equipment and resources along with child-friendly spaces.

1. ANNEXES

1.1. EVALUATION MATRIX

OECD criteria	Sub-criteria	Evaluation questions	Data collection audiences					
			Target beneficiaries		Stakeholders			N/A
			Adult caregivers	Children (12-17yo)	JERU staff members	Partners' staff members	External stakeholders	Field Observations
Relevance	Relevance of the intervention to the project context	How relevant is the project to the context of Ukraine?			X	X	X	
		Was the programme designed based on the most crucial needs that emergency crisis humanitarian support can provide?	X	X	X	X	X	
		How relevant is the project to the needs of project stakeholders?			X	X	X	
		How needs-based, context-adapted adapted and capacity-conscious was the design of the project?	X	X	X	X	X	
		How appropriate was the JERU programme design and implementation structure?			X	X	X	
	Outreach and inclusion	How responsive were project activities to the needs of different targeted groups, concerning gender, people with disability, refugees, and host community members, given their physical and emotional challenges, through MPCA, winterization cash, cash	X	X	X	X	X	X

		for utilities and PSS services?						
		How accessible was the programme to different segments of the targeted population, including persons with disabilities, elderly individuals, and marginalised groups? (Outreach)	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Relevance of the intervention to beneficiaries	How relevant is the project to the needs of beneficiaries?	X	X	X	X	X	
		How relevant is the MPCA element to the needs of beneficiaries?	X		X	X	X	
		How relevant is the Winterization element to the needs of beneficiaries?	X		X	X	X	
		How relevant is the Cash-for-utilities element to the needs of beneficiaries?	X		X	X	X	
		How relevant is the PSS element to the needs of beneficiaries?	X	X	X	X	X	
	Monitoring	To what extent were monitoring and information management findings and data used to inform decision-making and the improvement of programme implementation by the JERU?			X	X		
	Feedback and Complaint Response Mechanism (FCRM)	Were there any complaints and feedback mechanisms relevant to the context?	X	X	X	X		
		What channels were available for different groups?	X	X	X	X		X

		To what extent are programme participants aware of the FCRM, understand how to use it and feel comfortable in using it.	X	X	X	X		
Coherence	Relevance and complementarity of the intervention to the project context	How is the design and implementation of the JERU programme aligned with the DEC's Ukraine strategy in Ukraine?			X			
		How well does the project complement other JERU interventions?			X			
		How well does the project complement other non-JERU interventions?			X	X	X	X
		To what extent was the design of the project in line with the harmonised approaches and minimum standards for interventions as laid out by the Cash Working Group and Protection Clusters of Ukraine?			X	X	X	
	Partnership and Localisation	How effective was the internal coordination between JERU and its local partners?			X	X		
		What was the added value of WHH and CWW teams to the local partners, including localisation efforts?			X	X	X	
	Project Coordination with External Actors	To what extent did the JERU foster collaboration and coordination between relevant actors?			X		X	
		To what extent did the JERU foster collaboration and coordination between its partners and international stakeholders, including clusters and task force groups?			X	X	X	
		How effective was the external coordination between the local and national stakeholders, WHH, CWW and DEC?			X	X	X	

Efficiency	Relevance of the intervention to the project context	How timely has the project been implemented?			X	X		
		How cost-effectively has the project been implemented?			X	X		
		How well organised has project implementation been, including management structures and modalities?	X	X	X	X		
	Relevance of the intervention to clients and beneficiaries	How appropriate/suitable are project locations and activities?	X	X	X	X	X	
		How adaptive has the project been in response to challenges and risks?			X	X	X	
Effectiveness	Relevance of the intervention to the project context	How have beneficiaries engaged with intervention services?	X	X	X	X		
		To what extent have project objectives been achieved?			X	X		
		To what extent have output indicators been met?			X	X		
		How complementary are the services across the project?			X	X		
	Effectiveness of the project	How effective were the MPCA, winterization, cash for utilities and PSS activities?	X	X (Only PSS)	X	X	X	
		To what extent did the project integrate the considerations between livelihoods and other sectors (protection, WASH, health, education, NFI, FSL and advocacy)?			X	X		

	Relevance of the intervention to beneficiaries	How satisfied are beneficiaries with project staff members?	X	X	X	X		
		How safe and comfortable do beneficiaries feel when engaging with the project?	X	X	X	X		
		How have beneficiaries engaged with intervention content?	X	X	X	X		
		How do beneficiaries feel after engaging with the intervention?	X	X	X	X		
	Selection Criteria	How have the selection criteria been identified?			X	X	X	
		To what extent were the programme participants informed of the selection criteria or participation?	X	X	X	X	X	
	Gender Mainstreaming	To what extent did the programme activities considerably streamline a gender perspective, taking into consideration power dynamics?	X		X	X	X	
Impact	Relevance of the intervention to the project context	How has the project's MPCA contributed to the beneficiaries' access to basic immediate needs?	X		X	X	X	
		How has the project's winterisation contributed to the beneficiaries' access to immediate winterisation needs?	X		X	X	X	
		How has the project's cash-for-utilities contributed to the beneficiaries' access to immediate winterisation needs?	X		X	X	X	
		How has the project's PSS contributed to the beneficiaries' access to necessary psychosocial	X	X	X	X	X	

		support?						
		To what extent has the project contributed to the achievement of impactful results (both intended and unintended)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - MPCA - Winterisation for immediate basic needs - Cash-for-utilities - PSS 	X	X (Only for PSS)	X	X	X	
		To what extent has the project's service delivery supported recovery, and protection of target beneficiaries?	X	X	X	X	X	
	Relevance of the intervention to beneficiaries	What changes have end-users observed in accessing their basic immediate needs through MPCA?	X		X	X		
		What changes have end-users observed in accessing their basic immediate needs through winterisation?	X		X	X		
		What changes have end-users observed in accessing their basic immediate needs through cash-for-utilities?	X		X	X		
		What changes have end-users observed in how they think and feel as a result of attending the PSS activities?	X	X (Only for PSS)	X	X		
		What changes have end-users observed in how they relate to and communicate with other people as a result of attending the project?	X	X	X	X		

		To what extent have wellbeing of PSS beneficiaries improved as a result of the PSS intervention?	X	X	X	X		
	Inclusion	Did all intended target groups benefit equally from programme as per their needs?	X	X	X	X		
Sustainability	Relevance of the intervention to beneficiaries	To what extent are end-users able to maintain and effectively apply newly acquired knowledge and skills through PSS activities?	X	X	X	X		
	Relevance of the intervention to the project context	How and to what extent are the achievements of the project sustainable beyond the period of the project?			X	X	X	
		Are there activities which are more likely sustain after funding than others?			X	X		
		To what extent advocacy efforts were in place to contribute to the sustainability of the project? Who were targeted with these advocacy efforts?			X	X	X	
		To what extent are the local communities and stakeholders e.g., targeted affected community members, local institutions and implementing partners are more resilient (in line with the project results) than before?			X	X	X	

NO.	NAME SURNAME	ORGANISATION	POSITION/TITLE
1	Tetiana Tkachenko	JERU - WHH	Cash distribution officer/MEAL Officer
2	Kamran Said	JERU - WHH	CVA Expert
3	Nolwenn Gautier	JERU - WHH	Head of Project
4	Anna Skowera	JERU - WHH	Former Head of Project
5	Dmytro Vilchynskyi	JERU - WHH	Partnership Officer for East
6	Helin Eren	JERU - WHH	Protection Advisor
7	Nataliia Sychova	JERU - WHH	Protection officer
8	Erica Niel	JERU - WHH	Head of Programs
9	Oleksandr Gryshyn	JERU - WHH	CRM Officer
10	Maksim Voyta	Poshmiskha	MPCA Focal Point
11	Anna Chernova	Poshmiskha	Project Manager
12	Svitlana Plevak	Poshmiskha	PSS or Protection Focal Point
13	Alyona Kolomiets	Sumy Public Circle (SPC)	MPCA Focal Point/Winterisation Focal Point
14	Nina Cherniavska	Sumy Public Circle (SPC)	Project Manager
15	Mariia Sheremet	Sumy Public Circle (SPC)	PSS or Protection Focal Point
16	Posokhova Kateryna	We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians	Project Manager
17	Khlebnikova Daria	We are Brothers, We are Ukrainians	MEAL Manager
18	Paul de Carvalho-Pointillart	Cash Working Group	Co-chair
19	John Wain	Shelter/NFI Cluster	Co-chair
20	Oleksandra Makovska	MHPSS Working Group	MHPSS Programme Manager
21	Milia Naissi	MHPSS Working Group	International Medical Corps (IMC)
22	Ruslana Mykolaivna - Posmishka EAST	Local Authority	Director of the Centre
23	Vlasov Oleh Mykolayovych - Posmishka EAST	Centre Side by Side	Head of the Centre
24	Pavlenko Oleksandr Petrovych	Narodna Dopomoga	Director of the volunteer centre "Narodna Dopomoga"
25	Margarita Bondarenko	Local Authority	Head of the Centre
26	Oleksiy Dyachenko	Khmelivka Village - MPCA local authority + PSS	Head of Settlement

27	Oksana Chernova	Cherneckhyna Village - MPCA local authority	Head of Settlement
28	Liudmyla Makaida	Ivanivka Village -	Head of the house of cultural
29	Kolebanov Denys Serhiyovych - Posmishka EAST	MPCA - local authority	Head of the Humanitarian Aid and IDPs Sector
30	Olena Vicrorivna	Centre for Out-of-School Education	Director of the Centre for Out-of-School Education

1.2. DATA PROCESSING AND ANALYSIS

The **qualitative** data analysis presented the key themes identified, trends and relationships with different variables. Qualitative data analysis incorporated transferring data into meaningful results, and it goes through different steps: (1) organising the data after transcribing interviews, (2) conducting a preliminary read-through of the database, (3) coding & organising themes, (4) representing the data, and (5) forming an interpretation of them. Dedoose and/or Nvivo used by Evaluation Team to analyses of collected qualitative data. In addition, inductive analysis for data was utilized. This process involved rereading the quotes several times to ensure that the quotes are suitable for the theme. Finally, after identifying the main themes, the meanings behind the quotes of each theme was interpreted and written in the form of conclusions of the main evaluation findings. To ensure the quality of analysis, the evaluation team used the member-checking method. This method depended on our evaluation team debriefing to double-check, clarify findings, and supplement the analysis.

All team members participated in data quality control as part of the data analysis phase. All raw data sets generated by this evaluation were provided to JERU team electronically in MS Excel and Word formats. We fully understand the importance of logging all changes and manipulations to the data in a transparent manner. Where relevant, we used password-protected data.

Triangulation of data was a key element of the data analysis process and was required to strengthen the rigor of the review. This evaluation used two types of triangulations to highlight any inconsistencies between different data sources. These are:

- **Data sources triangulation** was based on triangulation of secondary documents review with primary data collection. It involved examining the consistency of different data sources within the same methods. The credibility of this approach was improved through the consistent use of good semi-structured interview guides to reach a point where we minimize the impact of infrequent/outlier points of view.

1.3. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS LIST

1.4. GENDER-SENSITIVE EVALUATIONS

The evaluation team was aware that vulnerable populations require special sensitivity when it comes to managing data. For this reason, the evaluation team paid special consideration when designing methodologies, sampling, and tools for data collection with regards to women, men, girls and boys, persons with disabilities, LGBTQIA+, 65+ persons, refugees, host communities, and different ethnicities to ensure that data collection is appropriate and mitigates risks associated with vulnerable populations. This is of particular importance in certain thematic fields that address sensitive and stigmatised issues, such as protection. To ensure that the entire evaluation processes were inclusive of people with all genders, Scruples Research will be taking the following approaches:

- A gender perspective was integrated in the study to ensure each stage of evaluation is viewed through a gender lens and analysis was informed by the awareness on how gender shapes and was shaped by this project as well as final evaluation. The findings reflected on gender and gender roles, responsibilities, dynamics, and opportunities within the cultural context.
- Evaluation collected sex-disaggregated data and analysis will factor in an intersectional approach. However, as this was a qualitative evaluation, lack of surveys limited the representation of project participants, limiting the evaluation team's sex-disaggregated data and analysis ability.
- The evaluation team aimed creating participatory processes by including diverse stakeholders in various stages of the evaluation and selecting data collection tools and protocols appropriate to gender norms and cultural values of the evaluation participants.
- The evaluation team assessed whether project activities address key gender issues, whether they were designed based on an analysis of local needs, and whether they reflect any gender-equality objectives.
- The evaluation also assessed whether project design is gender-sensitive and if the activities have been long or frequent enough to achieve the desired change.
- The team focused on if certain segments of the population such as women, girls, individuals with disabilities, and so on and so forth were able to participate in the project or not.
- The evaluation considered if gender was reflected in outputs, outcomes, and impacts. There was a special attention to assess unintended negative outcomes which negatively impact gender equality.

1.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Scruples Research took rigorous steps to ensure ethical standards and safety in the evaluation conducted in Ukraine. The evaluation was underpinned by a commitment to ethical research, keeping child safeguarding and ethical integrity at the centre of its approach. "Do No Harm" approach was the key guiding principle, asking full accountability for the repercussions of the research activities. The evaluation

upheld the CHS on Quality and Accountability, along with its nine central commitments. All involvement in the evaluation process was entirely voluntary and participants were fully briefed on the usage, processing, sharing, and disposal of any data collected before their consent was obtained. Assuring confidentiality and privacy was central in the evaluation. Access to field data was restricted to the evaluation team and was solely used for study purposes. Protocols were in place to ensure confidentiality, which included securing consent through both verbal and written means, providing clear information on the study's main goals, and selecting suitable locations and modalities of data collection for FGDs, KIIs and MSCS'. KIIs, FGDs and MSCS were conducted in privacy, whether online or in-person, so that participants could talk freely. There was a strong emphasis on using female field researchers to conduct women's FGDs, MSCS and KIIs to provide a sense of empathy and understanding. The field researchers were attentive to issues that may trigger distress or discomfort, and the tools were designed to avoid asking sensitive questions. Prior to starting data collection all data collectors were trained on informed consent/assent training (how to capture written and/or verbal consent, when to get assent, etc.) and confidentiality (including data protection and security), interview techniques, practicing the tools and best practices, research ethics, humanitarian principles (do not harm, psychological first aid, basic protection principles and key child protection concepts etc.), accountability to affected populations, PSHEA and CSG (child safeguarding), survivor-centred approaches and safe referrals/incident reporting in case of protection disclosures.