Assessment of the state of public services in de-occupied communities

Kherson Oblast

Contents

List of abbreviations

MA — military administration

IDP — internally displaced person

VRU — the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

Law — Law of Ukraine

MI — municipal institution

OMA — oblast military administration

RMA — raion military administration

DLC — difficult life circumstances

CEA — central executive authority

ASC — Administrative Service Centre

Executive summary

According to the research, **administrative services** are resumed the most quickly of all services since restoring housing and recovering documents is the most urgent need. Issues of **digitalisation of administrative services** and access to **state registrar services** due to the lack of testing of registrars in de-occupied communities at the national level remain unresolved. The process of **land plot registration** is complicated by the insufficient capacity of territorial bodies of the State GeoCadastre to process applications. As for **educational services,** immediately after de-occupation, the educational process was resumed online. International partners are engaged in providing **medical services**, delivering material and technical facilities and performing training for community medical professionals. The social sphere is the most problematic **because of legislative gaps and the lack of financial and human resources.** Currently, the legislation defines 18 basic social services, but not all are provided at the community level. Therefore, it is necessary to optimise state standards of social services and support at the regional level by providing these services to several communities simultaneously. Provision of **housing and utility** services has become very difficult due to the destruction of infrastructure facilities, which, even after partial recovery, are damaged again due to shelling. Here, it is necessary to resolve the issue of recovering real estate documents and to grant communities the right to respond promptly to problems when residents don't have the required documents, or the documents are not updated. A **state policy on the protection of children** living in conditions of temporary occupation and needing special support must be developed. A uniform database of IDPs accessible to all communities is necessary to better coordinate **migration processes** between communities and oblasts. To ensure effective **humanitarian aid**, it is necessary to clearly outline the algorithm and principles for providing it. **Assessing the need for social services** at the community level is necessary. However, it is difficult to assess the needs due to personnel shortages and the lack of an effective financial mechanism for the social sphere's functioning. Therefore, it is necessary to differentiate the procedures for assessing the needs for social services for communities on the front line and at the rear. **Personnel shortages** have been recorded in all spheres of public services, with highly specialised experts especially needed and administrators being overloaded. In settlements of de-occupied communities, social employees fulfil their duties at a high risk to their lives and work with difficult cases and vulnerable social categories. Therefore, the regulation of the possibility of their **insurance** at the legislative level is needed. Reporting for various OMA and RMA entities is very time-consuming in conditions of limited human resources. Therefore, it is necessary to optimise **digital tools** for reporting **on the number of services provided and simultaneously** grant access to the community, raion, and oblast. If de-occupied communities cannot provide residents with certain types of services on their own, they use **the collaboration tool**. In addition, exchanging experience with other regions is useful. Therefore, it is necessary to optimise collaboration possibilities between regions in reconstructing infrastructure facilities, provision of materials, etc.

Introduction

Ukrainian communities are vested with one of the main roles in the system of state functioning. Territorial communities plan, arrange, and provide various types of services to people in need. In the first days of the full-scale war, they resisted the aggressor and continue to do this today. Despite current challenges, some territorial communities, in addition to providing services to residents, help the Armed Forces of Ukraine, undertake active international activity, as well as restore the damaged infrastructure in their territories.

In November 2022, the Ukrainian army liberated the right-bank part of Kherson Oblast, which had been under occupation for almost nine months. In the territory of Kherson Oblast, controlled by Ukraine, there are currently 17 de-occupied communities with a total area of 6,830 sq. km. During their occupation, the infrastructure was damaged, particularly schools, hospitals, social centres, and administrative institutions, making it difficult or impossible for residents to access basic public services. In addition, the explosion at Kakhovka HPP in June 2023 caused at least USD 2 billion of direct losses, mostly within Kherson and Mykolaiv Oblasts. The explosion at Kakhovka HPP exposed almost 37,000 residential buildings, most of them in Kherson Oblast, to the risk of flooding. The explosion at Kakhovka HPP also damaged port terminals on both banks of the Dnieper and flooded roads in Kherson Oblast.[1] Another challenge is the loss of human resources that left affected territories. In some communities, more than 60% of residents left their homes during the occupation. The hostilities also led to the ruining of business property, which caused enterprises to either relocate or wind up their activities in Kherson Oblast.

Up to the present moment, constant shelling of the right-bank part of Kherson Oblast continues, which makes the provision of services in the communities difficult. Considering these problems and limited financial and human resources, there is a need to **evaluate the availability and optimise public services for residents of the de-occupied territories of Kherson Oblast.**

A study of the state of public services testified to the unique experience of de-occupied territorial communities of Kherson Oblast, which, despite the lack of financial and human resources, continue to provide residents with public services, engaging the support of various entities. By all means, the provision of services in each community varies depending on the security situation and available resources. Analysing and studying this experience is extremely important, as it will help aggregate it and prepare for possible challenges after the de-occupation of other regions of the country. In addition, the study findings made it possible to develop recommendations for optimising public services in de-occupied communities in the current situation. In the future, they will help model the ability of territorial communities to function in full scope, taking into account a set of various indicators (in addition to public services, availability of infrastructure, financial resources, etc. shall be taken into account).

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[1] The total amount of direct damage caused to the infrastructure of Ukraine due to the war exceeded USD 150 billion as of June 2023.

Study methodology

The state assessment study and the subsequent modelling of public services in de-occupied communities are pilot projects; the method of state assessment and modelling of public services can be scaled to other de-occupied communities of Ukraine (now and in the future). The study's geography is 17 communities of Kherson Oblast, i.e., the de-occupied part of the Oblast. The study spanned from September to December 2023.

The study was carried out in two stages:

1. **Collecting statistical data on the provision of public services in the main areas:** administrative, social, medical, educational, security, housing and utility services in each de-occupied community based on three indicators: 0 — the service is not being provided, 1 — the service is being provided partially (not in all settlements), 2 — the service is being provided in full (in all settlements). The collected data revealed the service's availability or absence in a certain territorial community and the provision of a specific service by the neighbouring community or Oblast. Over 800 data sets were collected from each de-occupied community of Kherson Oblast during October — November 2023.

2. **In-depth semi-structured interviews with heads of military administrations of settlements** were conducted to determine key problems in providing public services in de-occupied communities and possible solutions. At this stage, the reasons for the lack of certain community services were also detected. A total of nine interviews were conducted in December 2023.

This way, the study findings contain data obtained while collecting information from communities and assessment by the main stakeholders of processes and the state of services. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods made it possible to obtain a multifaceted and comprehensive assessment of the situation concerning public services in de-occupied communities and, accordingly, outline recommendations for their optimisation.

Main categories of the study

The territorial community's capacity is measured by the available financial and human resources and the appropriate infrastructure. In particular, the Resolution of the CMU "On Approving the Methodology for Establishing Capable Territorial Communities"[2] states that *"a capable territorial community* is a territorial community of villages, towns, cities, which can, as a result of voluntary amalgamation (voluntary accession to the consolidated territorial community), independently or through relevant local governments*, ensure the due level of public service provision, in particular in the field of education, culture, healthcare, social protection, housing and utility services, taking into account human resources, financial support and infrastructure development of the respective administrative-territorial unit"*. The same document states that the establishment of capable territorial communities shall be performed taking into account:

❭ the ability of local governments to address public issues that belong to their competence to meet the needs of the population;

❭ historical, geographical, social and economic, natural and other features of community development;

❭ infrastructure development;

❭ financial procurement;

❭ labour migration of the population;

❭ results of preliminary assessment of the level of territorial communities' capacities;

❭ optimal chains of social infrastructure and accessibility of public services in the relevant areas.

Accessibility of public services is one of the indicators of the territorial community's capacity. The category "public services" is interpreted quite broadly in the expert and scientific communities. For the complete analysis and interpretation of study results, we use the legally established definition of this concept, namely: *"A public service* is a legally or socially significant action of the subject of public (electronic public) service, including an administrative service, upon an application (appeal, request) of the subject of the appeal or without such an appeal, as the result of which rights are acquired, transferred, terminated and/or obligations are fulfilled by the subject of the appeal, corresponding tangible and/or intangible benefits are provided to the subject of the appeal". The subject of a public service provision shall be a state authority, local government, their officials, state, municipal enterprises, institutions, organisations and other authorised entities[3].

Besides, regulatory documents prescribe the powers of local governments to provide residents with services. In connection with the measures of martial law in Ukraine and under the Law "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law", MAs of settlements are temporary bodies. Their powers shall

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[2] Methodology for Establishing Capable Territorial Communities.

[3] Law of Ukraine "On the Peculiarities of Providing Public (Electronic Public) Services".

also include providing services (Article 15, par. 2) — from administration of housing and utility facilities, educational, healthcare, cultural, and social protection institutions, arrangement of service provision to supplying fuel, electricity, gas and other energy sources to the population, addressing water supply issues, creating municipal emergency and rescue services following the legislation, fire-rescue units to provide fire protection, etc. These categoric definitions formed the basis of the study of public services in de-occupied communities of Kherson Oblast.

State regulation
and legislative field

The system of administrative service

Immediately after the de-occupation, administrative services were among the most demanded by residents of communities. As a result of the full-scale invasion, some Administrative service centres (ASC) in Kherson Oblast, in particular in de-occupied communities, were damaged or destroyed. The system of administrative services has experienced significant overload due to an increase in the number of people who need to have new documents issued, restore housing, receive consultations, etc. That is why resuming the provision of administrative services and ASC operation were the priority tasks after the de-occupation. Overall, the recovery was prompt based on the needs of residents. For example, administrative services are most fully provided in the Stanislavska community: 207 administrative services are fully provided in all settlements of the community, of which 20 are provided in collaboration with the raion Department for Social Policy and the Main Department of the Pension Fund in Kherson Oblast. The contract had been signed with the Pension Fund even before the full-scale invasion. The Department for Social Policy of Kherson Oblast processes and assigns all types of social aid, and the community collects documents and forwards them to the department. The situation is the same in the Novovorontsovska community, where 190 administrative services are fully provided, i.e., in all settlements. For larger communities and those located closer to the hostilities area and under constant shelling, there are mobile ASCs, and administrators go to settlements according to schedule.

After the de-occupation of the Stanislavska community, administrators' work was based on reception days, i.e., on a certain reception day, an administrator would go to the settlement and provide services. The community made this decision to prevent people from gathering in one place, as it is dangerous now. During the first months after the community was de-occupied, administrators worked with people by appointment to analyse the number of people coming to one appointment. Afterwards, they chose the number of days the administrator needed to fulfil the residents' requests. **ASCs that are destroyed and don't operate increase the load on the system of administrative services. However, at the state level, there is no vision of restoring and developing ASCs in de-occupied communities, considering the security situation.** Currently, communities are acting at their own discretion regarding the issue of resuming ASC operation.

Proposals:

For CEA:

1. To determine state priorities for restoration/development of ASCs in de-occupied communities, considering the security situation in community settlements, the number of residents and transport accessibility between settlements. This is necessary to use resources reasonably and rebuild ASCs where the security situation permits.

2. An alternative solution is using mobile ASCs. For this purpose, it is necessary to model the community's needs in technical facilities that provide administrative services.

Digitisation of the administrative service sphere

Digital technologies are becoming more and more relevant. This also applies to the sphere of administrative services. Certainly, digital technologies allow ASCs to integrate more services, but the specific situation of a certain community must be considered. **This way, according to the results of interviews, even if communities have digital tools for providing services, residents need certain consultations on entering all necessary documents into the system. Besides, digital inequality should be considered because not all community settlements have Internet access.**

Therefore, at the community level, the strategic vision of digitalising the administrative service sphere is necessary, particularly considering the access of de-occupied communities to digital tools.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA:*

1. The digitalisation strategy of the sphere of administrative services shall take into account the peculiarities of de-occupied communities and the conditions in which they are. In the case of communities of Kherson Oblast, not all settlements have access to electricity, mobile and Internet communication. Accordingly, various approaches are needed.

2. The administrator's role as a digital agent or consultant must be optimised, and additional training must be conducted.

3. Improve both electronic accessibility of administrative services, minimising digital inequality, and physical accessibility. It shall be taken into account that certain categories of persons (for example, the elderly) cannot receive electronic services for various reasons.

Land plot registration

In the de-occupied communities of Kherson Oblast, single cases of applications for a land plot registration service were recorded. At the same time, the provision of this service is complicated, on the one hand, due to limited personnel resources and, on the other hand, due to the impossibility of access to registers. For example, before the full-scale invasion, the Stanislavska community collaborated with the Main Department of Land Resources of Kherson Oblast. The community at its level collected sets of documents, handed them over to the oblast, and received extracts from the Department of Land Resources. Therefore, persons who needed this service could receive these extracts in the community ASC. Currently difficulties have arisen in this field, as even land managers cannot access the public cadastral map because it does not function fully. The restriction of such access makes it difficult to perform work and generally does not allow the solution of any land issues. Other communities cannot provide this service either since all communities concluded contracts with the Main Department of Land Resources of Kherson Oblast.

Simultaneously, certain requirements established by the law and difficult to fulfil at the level of a de-occupied community require the introduction of the position of a state cadastral registrar in

the community. For this position, there shall be the relevant education and internship at the State Committee for Land Resources.

Proposals:

❱ *For the VRU:*

The chain of territorial bodies of the State GeoCadastre's insufficient capacity to process applications from ASCs leads to violation of the terms for providing relevant services or the impossibility of their provision. Therefore, it is necessary to develop and adopt a law that establishes the possibility of delegating the authority to register land plots to local governments. Due to delegation, accessibility of such services will improve. At the same time, during the transfer of powers, there are risks associated with the problem of personnel in de-occupied territories. Therefore, it is additionally needed to model personnel capacity in certain communities.

Restoration of damaged buildings

Hostilities and temporary occupation resulted in damage or destruction of residential buildings. Therefore, immediately after de-occupation, housing restoration services became the most urgent. However, according to respondents, this field has several legal inconsistencies. **The documents of community residents (especially village and town communities) indicate the ownership of apartments, not residential buildings, while there are no apartment buildings in the community.** Although these documents were issued in 1997–1998, i.e., after the declaration of independence, they currently make helping restore housing impossible. At the same time, going to court and considering the lawsuit takes a lot of time.

On the other hand, the legislation uses vague wording when referring to the "owner" category, stating that owners of damaged or destroyed property are recipients of compensation[4]. After 2014, in the course of restoring de-occupied territories in Donetsk Oblast, abuses were observed when **compensation for property could be received by persons who registered ownership rights to already destroyed housing in de-occupied communities, namely, after the fact of housing destruction**. A person could basically buy several destroyed buildings and receive compensation for them. This led to abuses.

"If I register ownership now, am I entitled to compensation? No, as far as we understand. The person must be the owner at the time of establishing the fact of destruction. The law on compensation, the current version, does not mention this; it does not say who the owner shall be. Well, we have had some discussions about this recently. Who is the owner? If there are, for example, exceptions like inheritance, a grandmother lived there, she died, and the children are entitled to compensation because they inherit this property. If, for example, I buy ten houses and

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[4] The Law "On Compensation for Damage and Destruction of Certain Categories of Real Estate Resulting from Hostilities, Terrorist Acts, Sabotage Caused by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, and the State Register of Property, Damaged and Destroyed as a Result of Hostilities, Terrorist Acts, Sabotage Caused by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine".

want to receive compensation for them, it will be unfair in relation to others, to the budget, and to the current legislation. It is unacceptable that a person with no rights to this could receive funds. We had litigations with those who wanted compensation by simply buying the houses. So, this is a real situation".[5]

Proposals:

❯ *For the VRU:*

1. To settle the matter of recovery of real estate documents and to grant communities the right to respond quickly and address the problem of residents' lack of documents or the need to update them.

2. To specify the "owner" category in the legislation of Ukraine, taking into account the current situation in de-occupied communities.

State support of children

Hostilities and temporary occupation led to the social crisis; in particular, the number of vulnerable categories of society increased. In the de-occupied communities of Kherson Oblast, the number of children with disabilities, children living in families in DLC, and children raised by a single parent increased. **Considering the risk of living in these communities, children need special protection. This applies, in particular, to providing both social and educational services.** Now, the service of **care and upbringing of children in conditions close to family conditions** is a basic one and shall be provided at the level of the territorial community. However, as stipulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the state must guarantee the provision of services to children. Art. 20 states: "A child temporarily or permanently deprived of his or her family environment, or in whose own best interests cannot be allowed to remain in that environment, shall be entitled to special protection and assistance provided by the State".[6]

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA:*

To develop the state policy on protecting children living in conditions of temporary occupation and needing support. It shall consider the state of children's education and social services for children of various groups (DLC, orphans, children raised in a single-parent family, etc.).

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[5] Quote from the interview.

[6] Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Legislative regulation of basic social services

As of today, the Law of Ukraine "On Social Services" [7]establishes 18 social services as basic: care at home, daycare; supported accommodation; social adaptation; social integration and reintegration; provision of a shelter; emergency (crisis) intervention; consultancy; social support; representation of interests; intermediary activities; social prevention; in-kind aid; physical support of persons with disabilities who have musculoskeletal disorders and move around in wheelchairs or have vision impairments; sign language translation; care and upbringing of children in the environment close to family conditions; support in the course of inclusive education; awareness-raising; mediation.

> Currently, analysis of the situation in communities demonstrates that not all basic social services are being provided. Communities argue this with the fact that residents do not apply for certain services, respectively — there is no need for such services.

However, the real reason is either the lack of assessment of residents' social service needs or the community's inability to provide these services due to limited financial and human resources. Moreover, the problem of the lack and/or obsolescence of the state standards for some types of social services makes their provision and budget planning impossible.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA and VRU:*

1. To develop state standards of basic social services to be provided in communities and harmonise them with the norms of the Law of Ukraine "On Social Services". For example, supported accommodation requires, according to standards, a space for living, which is unlikely in the communities that suffered from the aggression of the Russian Federation.

2. Certain types of basic services should be supported at the regional level. These are services that can be provided for several communities together and are in less demand while also being expensive, namely:

   ❯ supported accommodation;

   ❯ provision of shelter;

   ❯ in-kind aid (if mobile social centres are available);

   ❯ care and upbringing of children in an environment close to family conditions.

3. A universal approach to "social support" service should be avoided. Therefore, it is ecessary to divide the content of the "social support" service and the standard of its provision into categories, i.e., separate work with veterans and their families, work with IDPs, elderly people, etc.

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[7] Law "On Social Services".

Social service delivery

Migration processes

The load on the social service system increased after the beginning of the full-scale invasion. In some communities, this is related to a large number of IDPs; in others — elderly people, people with disabilities, and people in difficult life circumstances. Social problems that existed even before the beginning of the full-scale invasion did not disappear.

At present, the number of internally displaced persons has increased. **Residents move both within the community and the entire region, increasing disproportions between the communities.** There is an inflow of internally displaced persons in communities located at a distance of more than 30 km from the area where hostilities take place. People go to live with relatives and acquaintances; some have lost their homes in their settlements and are looking for shelter.

One of the reasons for rapid migration is the lack of coordination and control of humanitarian aid. For example, persons registered as IDPs in Kryvyi Rih receive payments there, but to receive humanitarian aid, they must return to the community where they used to live permanently.

> Rapid migration negatively affects the planning and organisation of public services due to difficulties in establishing the needs and calculating the required resources to provide services to residents at the community level.

There is also a problem of the **lack of housing for internally displaced persons.** This is especially observed in small communities with mostly no temporary accommodations for IDPs. Therefore, people are temporarily accommodated in abandoned buildings that are not destroyed and their owners permit others to live there. Respondents noted that accommodation for IDPs is a critical problem, particularly in the Kalynivska, Stanislavska, and Borozenska communities. A large share of local residents has already returned to the communities, and there is a shortage of unoccupied housing.

Proposals:

❭ *For oblast departments of social protection:*

1. A single database of IDPs living in territorial communities must be created at the oblast level. This database should be publicly accessible to all communities, as communities are often unaware of their residents' whereabouts and only know about their departure from the community.

❭ *For CEA:*

2. To arrange a systematic collection of data about the movement of persons in order to establish trends in population migration. For this purpose, the registration tool can be used to provide humanitarian aid and track changes in residents' movement across communities and regions. **This will help communities to plan the organisation and provision of services.** The methodology for determining migration trends shall include distribution by socio-demographic characteristics.

Humanitarian aid

Since the number of vulnerable population groups has increased and the resources of de-occupied communities are limited, one way to support community residents is to provide them with humanitarian aid. Certainly, humanitarian aid is a necessary component in conditions of war, but it is worth considering that it also affects community development, human potential, and the systemic nature of service delivery in general. **Community representatives correlate the categories of "social service" and "humanitarian aid".** However, these categories are different in the context and meaning. Most legislation does not stipulate a humanitarian aid service, only the "in-kind aid"[8] or "care at home" service[9]. Social services are a complex of various measures and not just humanitarian aid.

It is worth mentioning another problem. International partners send humanitarian aid and implement projects in communities where the safety situation is better. For example, in the Muzykivska community, which is located in an area of possible hostilities but where the safety situation is currently more or less stable, international organisations are conducting their activities more actively. **This leads to uneven distribution of humanitarian aid.**

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA:*

1. To establish the algorithm and principles for providing humanitarian aid. Humanitarian aid is **temporary support for people in difficult life circumstances. It is evenly distributed depending on the person's needs.** However, a person should also find ways to solve their problems and, if necessary, contact the Centres for social services or social public organisations. **The provision of humanitarian aid shall not spread the so-called "social passivity" phenomenon.**

❯ *For oblast departments of social protection:*

2. To ensure even distribution between communities and clear coordination of humanitarian aid provision depending on the needs of community residents.

> Since residents migrate within the oblast to receive humanitarian aid, for an even distribution of humanitarian aid among all 17 de-occupied communities, a uniform accounting of humanitarian aid should be created with access for all communities of Kherson Oblast. This accounting needs systematic updates.

❯ *For social protection departments of city, village, and town councils:*

3. To assess the needs of residents who stayed in de-occupied communities and, based on the needs assessment analysis, to provide the community with humanitarian aid. Since the capacity of de-occupied communities to perform needs assessment and generally provide social services is rather low, it is important to promote the involvement of social organisations in providing social services and/or performing alternative needs assessment.

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[8] On Approving the State Standard of Social Services in the Form of In-Kind Aid.

[9] On Approving the State Standard of Care at Home.

Performing needs assessment

To provide social services, it is necessary to arrange and assess the territorial community's needs for social services. Needs assessment is also necessary to:

❱ establish the expediency of maintaining the Social Services Centre, geriatric care homes and other institutions that provide residents with services;

❱ establish the probability and possibility of using other tools to provide residents with services, for example, establishing collaboration between communities to provide certain types of services, involving non-state providers (NGOs, businesses);

❱ determine social services that residents need and ensure preventive response in the event of difficult life circumstances;

❱ identify new services that may be demanded in wartime conditions.

> However, at the level of territorial communities, no assessment of needs for social services is performed. Moreover, some de-occupied communities do not provide some services, or their provision is not comprehensive; only one-time services (consulting, information) are offered.

The reasons are both a lack of personnel and a lack of an effective financial mechanism in the social sphere. On the other hand, there are no clear norms in the legal field regarding the assessment of needs in the conditions of martial law. The current Procedure for establishing the needs of the population of the administrative-territorial unit/territorial community for social services[10] states that "no needs of the population for social services shall be determined under Sections II–IV of this Procedure during the state of emergency or martial law in the territory of Ukraine or a separate area of the state". Only quantitative data shall be collected regarding various categories of the community's population, which is not a full assessment of needs. According to the Procedure, a coordination group should operate which considers the results of determining the needs of the population for social services during the state of emergency or martial law; identifies measures for arranging the provision of necessary social services; coordinates the activities of social service providers of the municipal and non-government sectors, volunteers who are engaged in the provision of social services; responds in a timely and efficient manner to changes in population migration trends, the capacity of social service providers to deliver social services.

Proposals:

❱ *For CEA:*

1. To introduce supervision over the assessment of needs for social services, which should be performed under the Law of Ukraine "On Social Services" and several subordinate regulatory acts. To stipulate the possibility of public organisations to perform an alternative

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[10] The procedure for establishing the needs of the administrative-territorial unit/territorial community's population for social services.

assessment of needs in the conditions of martial law and limited resources of territorial communities.

2. As the result of assessing the needs for social services, establish and prioritise social services for de-occupied communities. This will also allow for determining the capacity of local authorities to provide services or the need to engage non-government providers (public organisations, businesses).

❯ *For CEA and VRU:*

3. To establish procedures for assessing the needs for social services by adapting them to conditions of martial law for those communities that are territorially close to the front line and those that are located in the rear.

4. To conduct training for communities on the procedure and stages of the assessment of needs for social services and the importance of such assessment for understanding community problems and needs.

5. To clearly identify the role and tasks of the coordination group, which should also include monitoring of social service delivery.

Municipal institutions providing social services

Such institutions are mostly created as needed and depending on the number of requests for social services. That is, certain services are provided depending on the number of residents, the size of the community and the scope of social needs. If the community is small, a separate social work department, with social employees and social work specialists, should be created. Representatives of the Muzykivska community noted that creating separate legal units (for example, Social Service Centres) was not always necessary to provide services. It is impractical for a small community with a population of 3,500 people because such institutions require maintenance. Therefore, community collaboration can be the most effective tool for providing some services. For example, if a person needs housing (e.g., an elderly person needs to live in a geriatric care home), the community applies either to an oblast department or to other communities where such facilities are available. For example, in the Kochubeiivska community, the Kakhovka geriatric care home or the territorial centre in Vysokopillia (the former district centre of the Kochubeiivska community) were contacted to provide housing for the elderly. Similarly, the number of people needing daycare is insufficient to establish a separate institution according to the standards.

In the Stanislavska community, a "Centre for Social Services" operates, providing services to various social groups. All categories of the population in need are registered and provided with humanitarian aid.

> In Kherson Oblast, de-occupied communities lack premises and resources to maintain Social Service Centres as municipal institutions.

In addition, it is impossible to ensure that such premises meet all requirements since the RF's aggression and the temporary occupation destroyed and damaged several institutions. However, at the governmental level, as of today, there is no prioritisation of creating Social Service Centres to provide residents with services.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA:*

1. To determine state priorities for restoring and developing the network of Social Service Centres. At the same time, limited resources must be considered in martial law conditions. Therefore, state support and the involvement of international partners must be used as effectively as possible. If the restoration of such Centres is planned, focus should be placed on the infrastructure already available in the communities. There is also no need to spend resources if Centres are not needed.

2. Mobile centres for social services can be a temporary alternative solution for rapidly resuming access to social services in de-occupied territories. It is also worth optimising the provision of social services through community collaboration. In addition, mobile tools can be used in various areas, from delivering humanitarian aid to arranging on-site counselling, signing declarations with a family doctor, etc.

Human and material resources

Security problems

In some communities of Kherson Oblast, services are provided partially, that is, not in all settlements. The main reasons for the impossibility of providing certain types of services are constant shelling, lack of necessary technical and material facilities, lack of infrastructure, geographical proximity to the territory of active hostilities, and lack of human resources.

Proposals

❱ *For CEA and VRU*:

1. **The administrative-territorial system** must be reviewed, and relevant changes must be made to the legislation to optimise community capacity and stability. However, for this purpose, only modelling of public services is not enough. The following indicators should also be considered:

    ❱ availability of financial and human resources;

    ❱ quantity of the population;

    ❱ existing infrastructure;

    ❱ proximity of the settlement to the community centre;

    ❱ institutional capacity for international collaboration;

    ❱ opportunities for inter-municipal cooperation;

    ❱ migration process trends, etc.

2. To develop the Procedure for evacuating community residents, since active hostilities lead to even greater ruining of logistics routes, making the evacuation of residents even more difficult.

Lack of resources

The findings of the pilot study of de-occupied communities in Kherson Oblast indicate the problem of the lack of personnel in the field of public services. In the social services field, communities face the problem of a lack of highly specialised experts. For example, in the Tiahynska community, there is a problem with providing services to people with disabilities and people who need daycare. The problem can be partially resolved by involving volunteer and public organisations that help evacuate people to other regions. Also, Kherson Oblast communities engage persons registered with the Employment Centre in the provision of social services. For example, the "Restoration Army" initiative helped attract more than 30 people from the Employment Centre to the Novooleksandrivska community. However, these persons do not always have relevant experience and education. Highly specialised experts are needed to perform such tasks, especially when it comes to case management services and the provision of complex services.

> In the field of administrative services, there is an overload of ASCs, as ASC admini-
> strators receive especially many requests after the start of the full-scale war:
> eVidnovlennia, shelter, and subsidies (there can be up to 40 subsidies per week).
> Problems with service delivery are exacerbated due to the lack of technical equipment.

In the de-occupied communities of Kherson Oblast, some equipment was destroyed or stolen during the occupation, so administrators cannot perform their work effectively. In the Kochubeiivska community, before the full-scale invasion, residents could get ID passports, but during the occupation, all equipment was destroyed by the Russians.

Mayors are also involved in service delivery. People with disabilities and elderly people who have issues regarding document execution apply to the Mayor, who forwards the requests to the ASC. **However, a lack of human resources forces communities to "provide services where possible".**

Kalynivska community engages an architect from Kryvyi Rih. Notary services are not provided in the Beryslavska community due to the lack of a specialist, but the need for such services is covered by the Novooleksandrivska community. The appropriate service is not provided in the Kochubeiivska community due to a lack of specialists in out-of-school education.

The management system in the service sector underwent certain changes as a result of occupation and a lack of human resources. **In some communities, one employee performs the functions of the manager and an executor.** For example, in the Tiahynska community, there is no head of the social sphere department, so a social employee performs the work of both the manager and an executor. **Another problem arises here since the needs assessment certificate must be approved by the head of the relevant department.** In such a situation, the certificate is now approved formally by the head of the settlement military administration; however, according to the procedure, this shall be done by the head of the social sphere department. A similar situation is observed in the field of administrative services when an employee has to perform more tasks than stipulated by the official job description and the contract.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA:*

1. To arrange training for social employees on the specifics of providing highly specialised services, for example, day care services. Specialists cannot provide social support to families or persons in difficult life circumstances without appropriate training.

2. It is necessary to engage representatives of public organisations in providing social services as an alternative to state providers. For example, in Ukraine, there is a charity organisation called "Vplyv", which finances public organisations that provide social services to persons with disabilities and can act as a mediator between local authorities and non-governmental social service providers.

3. To conduct training for persons who are recruited from the Employment Centres to work in the social sphere.

4. Technical equipment and technical facilities for providing administrative services must be provided for ASC administrators' workplaces and technical facilities, as well as a system of motivation and psychological support for employees.

Employee insurance

In settlements of de-occupied communities, social employees, social work specialists, and social workers perform their duties with high risk to their lives; they work with difficult cases and vulnerable categories of society (the number of which has increased significantly since the beginning of the full-scale invasion). In addition, employees are often engaged in organising the evacuation of their service recipients since they have established contact and trust with them. Difficult working conditions, exacerbated by low salaries,[11] reduce the motivation to work in the social sphere. Also, these extremely difficult working conditions lead to emotional burnout, and employees quit their jobs.

The employees of housing, municipal, medical, and administrative sectors also work in conditions that are highly dangerous. Administrators leave to provide administrative services to settlements that are systematically under shelling. Medical employees are engaged in evacuation and saving people's lives in extremely difficult conditions. In the housing and municipal sector, employees also carry out repair works on damaged infrastructure. This is followed by risks to life in conditions of constant shelling, so there are situations when they refuse to go for missions due to high risks to life.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA and VRU:*

1. To regulate the possibility of insuring social work specialists, social employees, and social workers operating in de-occupied communities at the legislative level. For this purpose, the following indicators should be considered:

    ❯ the number of recipients of social services for each employee;

    ❯ category of recipients;

    ❯ average indicator of social services provided;

2. To prevent social employees from burnout, they shall be provided with psychological assistance and supervision. For this, international partners providing psychological assistance to community residents could be involved.

3. To provide the possibility of insuring workers of housing and municipal, healthcare, and administrative spheres.

State Registrar's services

Almost every de-occupied community of Kherson Oblast had problems with access to the services of the state registrar. According to the interview results, the need for this service is urgent, as

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[11] At present, the average salary of a social employee is approximately UAH 9,000. However, its amount varies depending on the community and can be less than UAH 6,000.

people residing mostly in their own houses in villages do not have legal documents certifying their right of ownership. A person needs documents for the house in order to apply via Diia to receive payment for destroyed or damaged property.

Communities solve the problem of a lack of a state registrar by collaborating with other communities or engaging a registrar remotely. The administrator accepts documents in the community and sends them to another region by Nova Post service; the registrar registers them and returns documents to the community. Then, administrators help residents register payments to receive funds to restore destroyed houses.

For example, in the Stanislavska community, the registrar, who worked once a week to process all the documents, could accept 30–50 people during the reception that day. This was the situation during the first months after de-occupation. At the same time, the state registrar of the Stanislavska community provided services to the Chornobaiivska community, where the registrar did not have the right to work due to the conflict of interests. Bilozerska community also requested services since there was only one registrar left (before the full-scale invasion, there were two), and the workload increased.

Kochubeiivska community signed an agreed decision with the Petrykivska community of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. At the same time, ASC administrators undergo training to accept documents, process and send them to the registrar for registration. It is worth noting that this service is not free, and all earnings are received at the place of service provision. This way, the communities that create conditions for their residents to receive services without leaving the community's boundaries do not have earnings to the local budget.

> As respondents note, it is necessary to set a certain percentage of funds that the community processing the documents and sending them to the registrar could receive to the local budget.

In addition, the respective requirements must be met to create a position of registrar in the community. This must be a person with a law degree who passed a special test. However, all interviewed respondents noted that these procedures became even more complicated during martial law. Testing was not conducted for a long time, so potential registrars could not pass the test and, accordingly, start their work.

Proposals:

❱ *For CEA:*

It is necessary to introduce regular testing of persons who intend to perform functions of the state registrar of real estate and business (at least once every two to three months). It is also necessary to inform in advance about the questions asked during tests so potential candidates can prepare well. If necessary, they should be given appropriate training (for example, online courses).

Horizontal and vertical interaction

Reporting on services provided

Territorial communities report on the number of services provided, changes in social and demographic characteristics, financial situation, etc., at the raion and oblast levels. Often, the same forms for reporting come from both the RMA and the OMA. Respondents noted that the OMA often does not receive information from the RMA, which is forwarded to it by the MAs of settlements. Communities must respond to the requests of both RMA and OMA.

> Parallel reporting for different entities takes time and resources from the communities in conditions of limited human resources.

Community representatives also emphasised the lack of quality feedback after providing information on public services to higher government levels.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA:*

1. To arrange/optimise digital tools for reporting on the number of services provided with access for communities and raions, the oblast.

❯ *For oblast departments and divisions responsible for such services:*

2. At the oblast level, a unified reporting form must be developed and access provided to communities and the region. The most effective way is to transfer the necessary information from the basic to the oblast level.

Collaboration between communities

De-occupied communities use collaboration if they cannot provide residents with certain services independently. In the Kalynivska community such types of services as "Issuing an Extract from the State Register of Civil Status of Citizens", "Repeated Issue of a Certificate on State Registration of the Civil Status Act", "Entering Data on a Newborn Child to the Certificate of Parents of a Large Family" and "Making a Decision on Birth Registration of an Abandoned, Found Child", are provided by the Velykooleksandrivska community. Collaboration also takes place regarding property registration services; in particular, a state registrar from another region or community is involved. For example, the Tiahynska community has agreed with a neighbouring community that its registrar will enter 30 objects of the Tiahynska community per week. The Novooleksandrivska community has established collaboration with the Novovorontsovska community. Novovorontsovka is a former raion centre with a Pension Fund branch, a hospital, laboratories, a paramedic and midwifery point, an ambulance, and a police station. In fact, the community provides ASC services, and residents often go to other communities to receive other services. In the Chornobaiivska community, a part of administrative services (23) is provided by the Muzykivska and Bilozerska communities.

Respondents noted the effectiveness of the "Side by Side" programme. In particular, with the help of Vinnytsia Oblast, it was possible to restore a significant part of residential buildings in the Kalynivska community and, thus, return the residents. Such programs are effective because, first, the affected communities lack financial resources; second, they are mostly inhabited by elderly people, and qualified workers are needed to carry out repair work. This programme is qualitatively implemented in three settlements of the Kalynivska community (Kalynivske, Bobrovyi Kut, Blahodativka). Cooperation also contributes to the study and dissemination of other communities' and regions' experiences and the introduction of useful practices.

The tool for concluding contracts between communities is also used in providing medical services. This way, Novooleksandrivska and Novovorontsovska communities jointly finance the maintenance of primary medical care units. Doctors from one community go to the starosta districts of another community and provide their residents with services.

Proposals:

❯ *For CEA and VRU:*

1. To optimise collaboration between regions in the context of restoration of infrastructure facilities, provision of materials, etc.;

2. To improve the procedure of collaboration between communities where hostilities are taking place and those that are temporarily occupied.