



Evaluation Report

Ukraine Response
2022-2023

To: Stichting Vluchteling

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1.1. Acronyms

AAP	Accountability to Affected Populations
AoR	Area of Responsibility
CM	Case management
CARM	Complaint (Feedback) and Response Mechanism (aka FCRM or CFRM)
FSL	Food Security and Livelihoods
HH	Household
HK	Hygiene Kits
HNOs	Humanitarian Needs Overview
HoH	Head of Household
HR	Human resources
IDP	Internally displaced person
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organisation
HQ	Headquarters
IP	Implementing Partner
ITT	Indicator Tracking Table
KII	Key Informant Interview
LF	Logical Framework (log frame)
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
MoV	Means of verification
MPCA	Multipurpose Cash Assistance
NFI	Non-Food Items
(L)(I)NGOs	(Local)(International) Non-Governmental Organisations
ODU	Open Doors Ukraine
PAH	Polish Humanitarian Action
PSS	Psychosocial Support
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SDR	Secondary Data Review
SH	Stakeholder
SOPs	Standard operating procedures
SV	Stichting Vluchteling
TWG	Technical Working Group

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In December 2023, MECS was contracted by Stichting Vluchteling (SV) to undertake the final evaluation of their humanitarian response in Ukraine. The response included a portfolio of seven projects delivered over the course of 2022 and 2023 and tackling different sectors, i.e.: Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM), Shelter ad NFI, WASH, Health, Protection, and others. The portfolio included three projects delivered by INTERSOS, two by PAH, one by PIN, and one by Open Doors Ukraine (ODU).

The evaluation intended to gather learning evidence from the first 1,5 years of implementation of SV Ukraine response, assessing the effectiveness and relevance of the diverse assistance approaches and organisational set-ups of the implementing partners, and evaluating SV's role in enhancing their effectiveness for the benefit of the affected population. The evaluation aggregated information from different sources, i.e.:

- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with staff at SV (4 KIIs); with project staff from INTERSOS, PAH, PIN, and ODU (10 KIIs); with project staff and local/field implementing partner level (4 KIIs); with local stakeholders having directly participated in the project (7 KIIs).
- Quantitative surveys with beneficiaries of the projects recently concluded or about to conclude, i.e., of INTERSOS UKR-22.09, PAH UKR-22.10. Target: 170 surveys (phone-based).
- Secondary data evidence from project reports (all projects) and MEAL datasets/reports (PAH only)

The analysis of the data followed the analytical framework agreed upon between SV and MECS during the inception phase. The analytical framework, and its definition of themes and indicators, informed the design of the data collection tools as well as the patterns of triangulation of results which help validate findings and strengthen the robustness of the analysis.

Key findings

Effectiveness, relevance to the local needs, and impact

Achievement of objectives and short-term effects on the most urgent needs

- The evaluation could not determine whether the different projects formally achieved their intended targets, as figures concerning the achievements of intended targets were either not available or not properly phrased by the implementing partners. Yet, most LINGO and INGO staff did not report any specific underachievement performed during the projects.
- Overall, beneficiaries did not frequently report a tangible improvement of their most pressing needs upon receiving the assistance. Such finding does not come unexpectedly, as the type of assistance received by the sample did not directly address priority needs as cash, electricity, or heating – reported by the participants as their most urgent needs. Moreover, some of the participants found that the assistance was not sufficient to cover the wide spectrum of their needs (pointing to the need for a more diversified assistance).
- The overall livelihoods and financial resilience, the sense of comfort provided by their shelter, and the nutrition and health care of the participants did improve compared to the time before they received the assistance, based on their own opinion. Yet, such improvements cannot be exclusively correlated with the assistance provided by INTERSOS and PAH.

- The overall levels of beneficiary trust in the assistance provider were high, and INTERSOS beneficiaries shared particularly high levels of trustworthiness, which might possibly correlate with the fact that the communities were directly assisted by local partners/authorities, and not by INTERSOS.

Operational challenges and successes

- The response did not experience delays that substantially affected the projects performance, based on the personal opinion shared by INGOs, LNGOs and local actors. However, INGO staff often reported having struggled in managing the response due to matters related to procurement and logistics.
- In general, the evaluation observed that the projects did experience a few deviations – or rather 'adaptations' - from the plans (as in the original proposal), because of their intention to adapt to the changing needs and to the volatile context.

Consistency with local needs and context

- The response was found relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries of all the sampled projects (even if not sufficient to generate an improvement in the most pressing priorities), while also taking into consideration the needs of vulnerable groups. Similarly, beneficiaries were largely satisfied with the size/amount of the assistance, with its quality, and with the quality of its delivery. LNGOs stated that the interventions primarily considered the requests of IDPs and local people who suffered and lost their assets.
- The response respected the local culture and the social customs of the beneficiaries, as confirmed by all LNGOs and local actors. LNGOs noted that the assistance was provided in a dignified manner, and the sampled beneficiaries credited the project teams for the way they behaved towards them.

Quality standards

Protection and safeguarding

- The response adhered to relevant safety and security protocols while delivering aid or restoring buildings for the project's beneficiaries, as confirmed by LNGOs, local actors, and by INGOs. Not all INGOs, however, were directly involved in working with the final beneficiaries (i.e., INTERSOS and ODU did not directly deliver the assistance to the final beneficiaries), and some of the INTERSOS beneficiaries felt exposed to safety risks.
- The response deployed a range of policies to ensure the promotion of beneficiary safeguarding, accountability, and to regulate the Code of Conduct of the staff and contractors – based on the information disclosed by LNGOs and INGOs staff and confirmed by the beneficiary population.
- A supervisory/advisory role to monitor the application of accountability, safety, and safeguarding principles was regularly available at the LNGO level, while INGOs did not always included such a position. SV included an advisory role on the application of quality standards by INGOs, albeit the role was not systematically and regularly involved.

Participation and accountability

- The existence of CARM during the projects was confirmed by both LNGO and INGO staff (except for ODU). Despite the information shared by the staff, the evaluation observed that beneficiaries did not regularly report knowing about such mechanism – especially INTERSOS recipients. Worth recalling that a significant minority of INTERSOS sample affirmed that they would have liked to share a feedback/complaint, but they did not know how to do that.
- All INGOs and LNGOs staff confirmed they have been regularly consulting with local authorities during the initial assessments, project design, and assistance delivery phase.

- With reference to the direct consultations with the beneficiaries, INGOs were not aware of similar mechanisms enacted during the project – apart from PIN. Moreover, sampled beneficiaries occasionally reported not being consulted by the response (nearly 50% of INTERSOS beneficiaries).
- The response adequately communicated with the beneficiaries the information about the assistance, as well as about the time and venue of the delivery. Besides, the response adequately communicated with the beneficiaries the information about the assistance, as well as about the time and venue of the delivery.
- Beneficiaries shared a large sense of trust in the organisations treating their information confidentially. Both INGOs and LNGOs mentioned using various consent forms and data protection techniques in their work, except for ODU which affirmed not directly handling any beneficiary data.

Partnership quality

Decision making and management structure

- At the LNGO level, roles were found as clearly assigned, facilitating a quick decision making –featuring a proper communication between managers, on-site teams, and various stakeholders. On the other hand, the understanding and effectiveness of the roles at the INGOs and – separately - at SV level, occasionally presented some issues.
- Concerning the INGOs level, the evaluation noted that some cases struggled with the upscaling of their Country mission (PIN), while others suffered from the lack of responsiveness and turnover in their HQs (INTEROS).
- Most INGOs and all LNGOs noted that the response did not suffer from any inefficiency related to remote-based management, and they never complained about the nature of the decision-making processes. The sole exception related to INTERSOS RRM field unit, as INTERSOS HQs were reportedly not sufficiently responsive at attentive to the needs of the field unit.
- None of the INGOs affirmed perceiving the centralised decision-making role of SV as binding on or limiting their performance and autonomy. Overall, no duplication or overlapping of tasks and mandates happened among the different organisations engaged in the response, i.e., SV, INGOs, and LNGOs.

Technical support and resource mobilisation

- The evaluation found extremely limited information about trainings provided by SV to INGOs, and by INGOs to their own staff and to partner LNGOs.
- The evaluation found that LNGOs could rely on their own, well-developed team structure and local cooperation networks, including warehouses, logistics system, distributors, and safety specialists. Some LNGOs even held an advisory role to INGOs on cooperation options and on the best practices to establish a humanitarian response team.
- Neither LNGOs nor local actors reported any difficulties in project implementation, noting a clear understanding of applied policies, procedures, and schedules.
- Except for INTERSOS, most INGOs and LNGOs considered having had enough experienced staff to implement the various projects activities in an efficient manner, and they could afford expanding their teams when needed. While some INGOs admitted struggling occasionally with their human resources due to the upscaling of their mission (PAH), other INGOs observed their staff capacity became stronger after 2022 (PIN).
- While INGOs reportedly established a functional MEAL system during the projects, the evaluation was not able to confirm such statement, as it could not access the MEAL datasets or reports produced by the other partners (except for PAH).

Coordination and information sharing

- The efficiency of the approval cycle between SV and the INGOs was optimal according to the INGO staff. On the other hand, INGOs performed different levels of responsiveness towards their field partners.
- Among the limited information about the coordination between INGOs and LNGOs, the evaluation observed that PIN credited the efficiency of their coordination with Pomishka and ODU with its local partners. In turn, LNGOs described the quality of the information flow with INGOs as sufficiently good and swift.
- The evaluation recorded that the staff from all INGOs expressed a general sense of satisfaction with SV flexibility.
- The communication between the local authorities and both LNGOs and INGOs was deemed effective by all the interviewed participants, confirming that the response benefitted from a comprehensive support from the local authorities.
- With reference to the quality of the coordination between the response and other humanitarian actors and clusters, only PIN staff shared their comment on the issue. Reportedly, they affirmed that at the time of the project humanitarian coordination was very poor to non-existent, as OCHA had just started to establish its clusters mechanism.

Top-line recommendations

- ✓ Consider upscaling the cash assistance if the aim is to improve the beneficiaries needs quickly and significantly.
- ✓ Support partners, especially in the sudden onset of a crisis, in handling procurement and logistics processes.
- ✓ Monitor the application of safety standards by field implementers and keep track of the beneficiary sense of safety.
- ✓ Promote SV role to develop partner capacities and closely support them as needed.
- ✓ Consider investing more in the partnership with local organisations in light of their expertise and capacity.
- ✓ Take stock from best practices and learning keys to deliver a flexible, humanitarian response

I. SCOPE OF WORK

I.A. Purpose

In December 2023, MECS was contracted by Stichting Vluchteling (hereinafter referred to as 'SV') to undertake the final evaluation of their humanitarian response in Ukraine, including a portfolio of seven projects delivered over the course of 2022 and 2023 and tackling different sectors (more information is disclosed in the upcoming sections of this report).

The evaluation intended to gather learning evidence from the first 1,5 years of implementation of SV Ukraine response, assessing the effectiveness and relevance of the diverse assistance approaches and organisational set-ups of the implementing partners, and evaluating SV's role in enhancing their effectiveness for the benefit of the affected population. The evaluation combined project-based learning with more strategic level learning, encompassing the review of governance, processes, decision-making, and strategic approaches enacted during the response period.

MECS evaluation mandate included a desk review of key project documents; development of inception report, analysis framework, and the data collection tools; fieldwork coordination and training of enumerators; primary data collection inside target regions as well as remotely; and analysis and reporting.

I.B. About the response

During the first 1,5 years of Ukraine response (2022-2023), SV initially supported INGOs, either establishing new partnership with actors with a consolidated presence in the Country (e.g., with PIN and PAH) or through already experienced partnerships from other areas (e.g., with INTERSOS). Since early 2023, SV has shifted its focus, establishing a support office in the Country, and supporting a series of Ukrainian NGOs and other Dutch volunteer networks.

Drawing on the project documents collected during the inception phase, the evaluation team outlined a factsheet for each of the seven projects falling in the scope of work of the evaluation, identifying the core structure and information describing their performance. The factsheets (Annex III) helped the evaluation team understanding the nature and type of the delivered response and supported in the elaboration of a consistent analytical framework and data collection tools.

The seven projects include the following:

1. INTERSOS RRM, Shelter, Health project – March 2022 to November 2022. Code: UKR-22.5
2. INTERSOS Shelter/Health, partnership project – March 2022 to October 2022. Code: UKR-22.6
3. INTERSOS Shelter, RRM project – November 2022 to November 2023. Code: UKR-22.09
4. PIN Shelter project - March 2022 to August 2022. Code UKR-22.2
5. Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH) Shelter, FSL project - March 2022 to November 2022. Code: UKR-22.3
6. PAH Shelter/NFI, MPCA, WASH, Protection project. December 2022 to December 2023. Code: UKR-22.10
7. Open Doors Ukraine (ODU) Shelter project. January 2023 to September 2023. Code: UKR-23-0018

I.C. Questions and criteria

The following overarching questions governed the approach of this evaluation, providing guidance about the nature of the information needs required by SV.

1. How well did the response **address the needs** identified by of the affected population? To what extent did the programme activities effectively respond to immediate humanitarian needs in a timely manner? To what extent did the RRM contribute to a more agile, flexible, relevant, and local response? What lessons can we gather from both internal and partner perspectives regarding its innovative nature?
2. What positive/negative **changes were observed in the lives** of the affected population as a result of the response?
3. Did the programme contribute to the overall **well-being and protection** of the affected population? And how did the different approaches between our partners have an impact on the affected population (e.g. in terms of appropriateness to the needs, adaptation to the context, cost-efficiency, etc.)?
4. What were the **key factors that contributed to the success or challenges** of the response in delivering assistance? And what role did the affected population have in shaping or commenting on the successes and challenges of the response? What lessons can be learned from Shelter project experiences, and how can improvements be identified for future programming?
5. What effects did **procurement challenges** have to the RRM agenda?
6. How has SV's **expertise/mandate and partnerships** (including SV's presence) affected the quality of the partners projects?
7. What has been the **impact of the partner's presence** and response on local stakeholders? (e.g. on local partners, other local organisations, authorities, relationship between communities and authorities, etc.)
8. How did SV's approach impact **the decision-making power of its partners** concerning the design, implementation and modality of delivery? How did (local) partnerships promote the inclusion and meaningful participation in the decision-making of local actors and marginalised groups within the affected population?
9. How did the partners consider the local embeddedness/representativeness of local partners, and impact **power dynamics and relationships** between different local stakeholders? And how has this affected the response?

Based on MECS understanding of the thematic scope of the evaluation and the general questions above, the evaluation structured its approach around the following criteria, associated to the performance of the response:

1. **Effectiveness, relevance to the local needs, and impact** generated by the sectoral assistance on the lives of the beneficiaries and on their communities. The criterion broadly investigated the extent to which the response achieved its intended objectives, what outcomes and effects it contributed to generate on the community, the relevance of the response to the local needs, culture, and preferences. Key gap, red flags, and challenges causing underachievement on the project plans or inconsistencies with the beneficiaries' needs and expectations were also analysed.

The criteria primarily relied on the information shared by the beneficiaries and by the local stakeholders engaged in the different projects, in addition to the projects' documentation (secondary data) conveying evidence about the parameters just outlines in the previous lines.

Evaluation questions of reference: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

2. **Application of quality standards** by local partners in the delivery of assistance, most notably parameters related to accountability (AAP), community participation, as well as promotion beneficiaries' dignity and safety. Under this

criterion, the evaluation reviewed the application of quality standards by the implementing partners, focusing on the experience reported by the participants and beneficiaries, and less on the formal compliance with eventual policies and procedures.

The information shared by the implementing partner staff at field level was crucial to determine the performance of this criterion, as well as the perspectives of the local authorities, actors, and beneficiaries. Secondary data complemented any gap in the availability of primary data information.

Evaluation questions of reference: 1, 4, 6, 8.

3. **Quality of the partnership** between SV, the international and the local implementing partners, with a focus on the advantages of decentralised vs. localised decision-making processes, sense of ownership about decision-making by local teams, efficiencies in information flows, monitoring and reporting processes, as well as adequate and timely provision of technical backstopping and follow-up to local field units.

The criterion relied on the perspectives shared by the different units and organisations engaged in the delivery of the response, including SV, international, and local partner staff.

Evaluation questions of reference: 6, 7, 8, 9.

The evaluation further attempted capturing any potential **unintended effects** that may have occurred because of the project, identifying strengths and areas for improvement, and providing **actionable recommendations** for improving or strengthening the three above-mentioned dimensions qualifying the project performance.

Given that the evaluation covered the response in its entirety, MECS followed an analytical approach responding to the evaluation criteria [section I.C. Questions and criteria], and not analysing each project performance individually (which would otherwise generate several project evaluations). MECS addressed the evaluation questions in a comprehensive manner, triangulating findings from the different project activities and from the different sources of information consulted.

II. METHODOLOGY

II.A. Data collection concept

To satisfy the spectrum of information required within the scope of the evaluation, MECS aimed to collect and analyse relevant evidence from both secondary and primary data sources. The evaluation aggregated information from different sources, depending on the availability at each project level [see section III.D. Limitations and field-based observations for more details), i.e.:

- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with staff at SV, directly engaged in the response management, oversight, and coordination.
Target: 4 KIIs
- KIIs with project staff at international/regional implementing partner, including INTERSOS, PAH, PIN, and ODU.
Target: 10 KIIs
- KIIs with project staff and local/field implementing partner level, including with the different local organisation partnering with the projects.

Target: 4 KIIs

- KIIs with local stakeholders having directly participated in the project and received assistance through it, such as supported facility staff, beneficiary community representatives, distribution team, facilitators, etc.)

Target: 7 KIIs

- Quantitative surveys with beneficiaries of the projects recently concluded or about to conclude, i.e., of INTERSOS UKR-22.09, PAH UKR-22.10.

Target: 170 surveys

- Secondary data evidence from project reports (all projects) and MEAL datasets/reports (PAH only).

The data collection in the field spanned approximately 17 working days between 11 March and 02 April during which 1 male and 5 female MECS staff/enumerators collected the relevant information in selected project areas of intervention where sampled beneficiaries were located using phone assisted surveys with length of average 15 minutes, as well as remotely online/via phone with other relevant actors.

The table below summarises the participants consulted for each project, by modality of data collection. Please refer to the sections below for the detail of the individual data collection modalities, and for an outline of the communities covered by the evaluation.

Project ref.	End date	KIIs Int. NGOs	KIIs Local NGOs	KIIs SV	KIIs Local actors	Beneficiary Surveys
INTERSOS UKR-22.5	Oct.22	N/A	N/A	4	N/A	N/A
INTERSOS UKR-22.6	Oct.22	1 (INTERSOS)	1 (Light of Hope)		1 (local authority)	N/A
INTERSOS UKR-22.09	Nov.23	2 (INTERSOS)	1 (RCC & Angels)		1 (local authority)	40 (Winterisation for IDPs) 41 (SNFI kits /RRM)
PIN UKR-22.2	Aug.22	2 (PIN)	N/A		1 (local authority)	N/A
PAH UKR-22.3	Nov.22	1 (PAH)	1 (Tovarystvo Leva) 1 (Posmishka)		1 (centre coordinator)	N/A
PAH UKR-22.10	Dec.23	2 (PAH)	N/A		1 (local authority)	89 (assistive devices)
ODU UKR-23	Sep.23	2 (ODU)	N/A		1 (infrastructure rehab. teams) 1 (local authority)	N/A
TOTAL		10	4	4	7	170

Secondary data review

During the inception phase, MECS has reviewed available documents about the projects part of the SV response, to gather a solid grounding of information which could feed in the development of the evaluation methodology and analysis framework. For each project, SV shared with MECS the most updated proposal, log frame/ITT, and narrative activity report.

In addition, the evaluation required the partners to share additional secondary data to help analysing the project performance, the main effects, and the levels of satisfaction and quality reported by beneficiaries at the project time

(MEAL data including eventual post-distribution monitoring and other field-based evidence). The availability of this information at the partners was overall quite limited (except for PAH), due to their diversified internal protocols and operational capacity (for a full list, please see Annex V).

Key Informant Interviews

This qualitative source of information collected the feedback of those stakeholders at international and field level who were a) directly engaged in the delivery of the evaluated response activities, including management and coordination staff at SV, international partner NGOs, and local partner levels; and b) local actors having directly experienced or contributed to the delivery of the assistance to the community, such as representatives of local authorities, infrastructure rehabilitation teams, collective centres Focal Points (FP), etc. For a full of the interviewed profiles, please refer to the list in Annex IV.

The interviews were designed to collect information from the point of view of key informants in their own words about the quality of assistance delivery, performance of field coordination, about direct and indirect impacts they could observe at a local level, about the quality and the reputation of the project (if applicable), and the ongoing needs they observe among the local communities as well as on their own role.

Interviews were structured or semi-structured according to the evaluated activity and to the interviewee profile. Interviews with project staff and with field-based actors were conducted online.

The proposed sample of qualitative interviews did not follow a specific mathematical or statistical logic. The selection of these qualitative interviews was purposive, where relevant profiles are selected to reach solid qualitative understanding of the projects performance, implementation and obstacles faced, and quality of partnership. Higher samples of qualitative interviews would not have had a noticeable added value, as the primary focus of KIs is to cover relevant and various technical thematic areas using their unique knowledge, rather than generating a large volume of data.

Beneficiary surveys

Beneficiary surveys aimed to capture changes in the situation of the response participants compared to their situation prior to and during the intervention, in addition to complementing evidence already available across the projects' documents concerning the achievements of the expected outcomes. Beneficiaries were asked to share their perspective concerning the adequacy of the received assistance, their satisfaction with the delivery, with the way they were treated by the response, and with the overall quality and professionalism of the intervention.

Overall, these tools enabled collecting adequate information to verify beneficiaries from selected geographical locations, including a comparison of details (names, age, sex, status etc.). MECS ensured that both the tool design and the survey implementation accommodated the characteristics of participants (see quality measures detailed below), with questions suitable to their profiles and field researchers equipped with the adequate skills with vulnerable groups. Surveys were implemented using phone-based data collection techniques, due to the lack of details concerning their location.

Sampling - Inside Ukraine, a random cohort of direct beneficiaries was selected according to the following sampling plan, including beneficiary HHs receiving winterisation assistance, SNFI kits/RRM assistance, and assistive devices.

The random sample was selected by MECS using a coded list provided by SV and partners in order to maintain the confidentiality of the participants. Specifically, a random sample of beneficiaries was selected from each beneficiary's list shared by the partners, prioritising raions hosting the larger share of project beneficiaries.

INGO	Assistance	Tot. beneficiaries in the list	Original sample	Response rate (%)	Final sample
INTERSOS	Winterisation assistance	53	53	75%	40
INTERSOS	SNFI Kits	60	60	68%	41
PAH	Assistive devices	183	168	63%	89

Contact details of beneficiaries of recently concluded activities were accessible only in case of INTERSOS UKR-22.09, and PAH UKR-22.10. For the other projects, having concluded before Sep. 2023, or not having the contact details of the participants [see also section III.D. Limitations and field-based observations], the evaluation was not able to investigate the researched parameters.

Overall, the sampling plan aimed at reflecting the demographics of the targeted population groups during the intervention period, focusing on the key sectors of implementation among the interventions which recently ended (after September 2023). Although higher samples are generally desired, the proposed sample size expected to generate largely accurate results that helped in drawing a clear picture of project effectiveness, relevance, and impact from the point of view of direct beneficiaries.

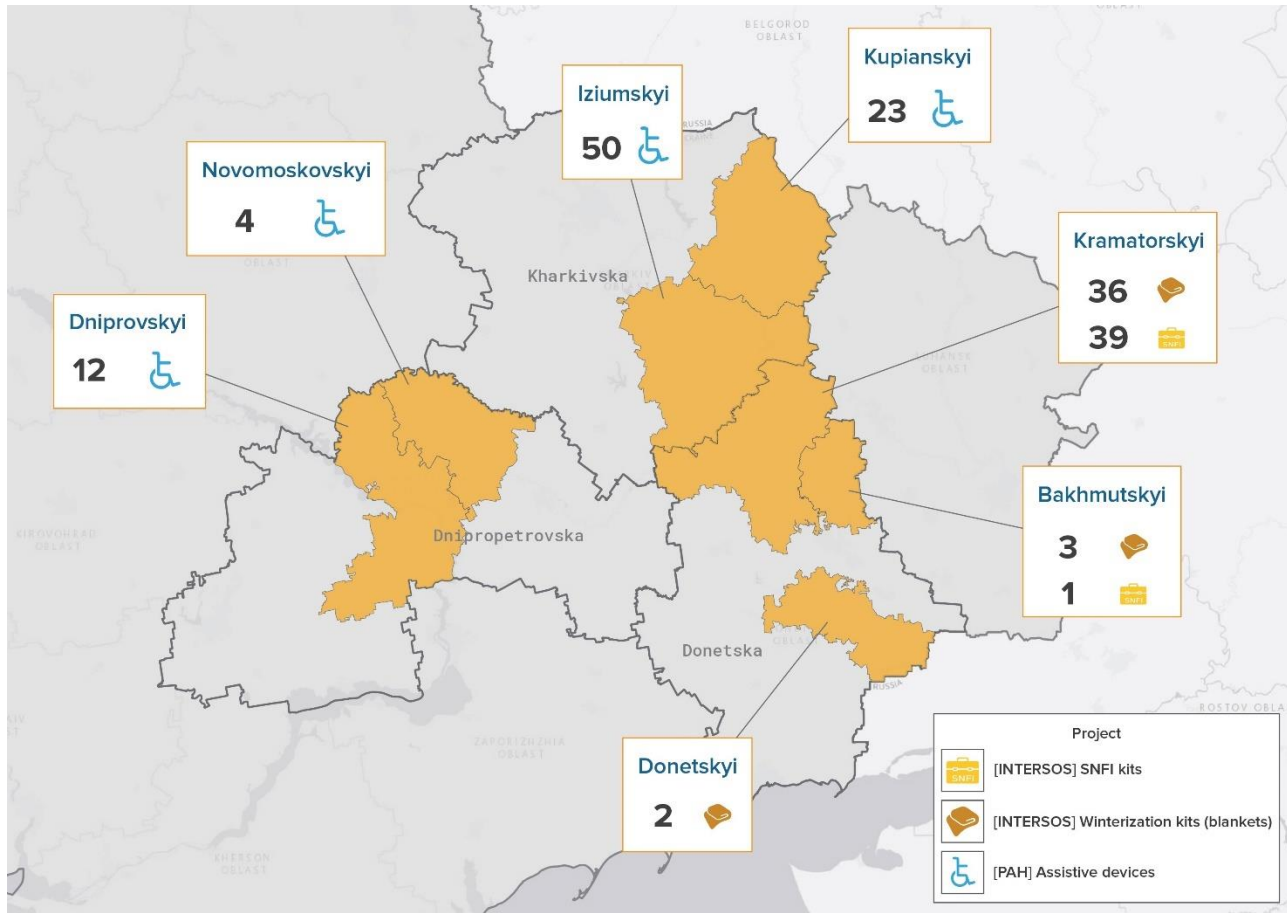
III.B. Sampling map

The table and the map below summarise the data collection activities undertaken by the evaluation with beneficiaries and local actors based inside Ukraine, by geographic level and by implementing partner levels. The figures do not refer to other evaluation participants, i.e., project staff at SV, local, and international Implementing partners levels.

Oblast	Raion	Respondent cat.	Survey (F)	Survey (M)	% with disability/ill
Dnipropetrovska	Dniprovskiyi	PAH Assistive devices	11	1	100%
Dnipropetrovska	Novomoskovskiyi	PAH Assistive devices	4	0	100%
Donetska	Bakhmutskiyi	INTERSOS SNFI kits	0	1	0%
Donetska	Bakhmutskiyi	INTERSOS Winter kits	2	1	100%
Donetska	Donetskiyi	INTERSOS Winter kits	2	0	0%
Donetska	Kramatorskiyi	INTERSOS SNFI kits	29	10	25%
Donetska	Kramatorskiyi	INTERSOS Winter kits	28	8	29%
Kharkivska	Iziumskiyi	PAH Assistive devices	36	14	94%
Kharkivska	Kupianskiyi	PAH Assistive devices	17	6	96%
		TOTALS	129	41	

Overall, the sample of beneficiaries included a gender representation of approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of female respondents and $\frac{1}{4}$ of male respondents for each evaluated project modality. The displacement status of the respondents included a majority of host community members (54%-100%), a minority of IDPs (23%-34% only in INTERSOS project) and a small share of returnees (5%-12%).

The majority of respondents of PAH project (94%) were living with a disability, and were widowed (68%), while respondents of INTERSOS project rarely experienced a disability (8%-12%) or were widowed (9%-25%).

Figure 1 – Beneficiaries surveyed in each raion, by project type


III.C. Analysis

The analysis of the data collected through the above-mentioned methods was conducted according to the analytical framework agreed upon between SV and MECS during the inception phase (Annex II). The analytical framework, and its definition of themes and indicators, informed the design of the data collection tools as well as the patterns of triangulation of results which help validate findings and strengthen the robustness of the analysis.

Quantitative data generated through beneficiary surveys was exercised in Tableau and ARC GIS according to established indicators provided in the framework, without any tests against pre-established benchmarks, targets or baseline values. Quantitative results and their descriptive interpretation were triangulated - whenever possible - with qualitative sources of information, recalling that the quality of the findings was affected by: a) the limited sample size (i.e., the evaluation surveyed as many beneficiaries possible given the limited profiles available in the lists) and b) by the limited scope of the surveys (i.e., respondents were assisted by two partners only, and received only few types of assistance out of the total modalities delivered throughout the response) (see more in the upcoming limitation section III.D.). Qualitative datasets, in turn, underwent a deductive thematic analysis approach, where the evaluation processed the data with a set of expected themes, as listed in the analytical framework.

The analytical framework and the related approach ensured addressing SV information needs, processing the data against **the evaluation criteria** [see also section I.C. Questions and criteria] inspired by the evaluation questions formulated in the ToRs, and taking into consideration the variance of results between the different projects, sectors, implementing partners profile and experience, geographic areas and vulnerable categories targeted.

The thematic analysis approach addressed the broad evaluation criteria, ensuring that findings illustrative of specific partners (by country experience, history of partnership with SV, and modality of implementation), population groups (by area, age, vulnerability) or sectors of interventions are taken into consideration. The analysis aimed at representing - to the extent feasible - the perspectives of each category of respondents participating in the evaluation - stretching from international implementing partners staff, local implementing partner staff, SV staff, authorities, local actors and providers, and beneficiaries - without disclosing names and contact information as part of the analysis and report. The main findings were organised and reported into key topics best illustrating the evidence collected through primary and secondary data.

Overall, the following steps defined the analysis process in use for this evaluation:

1. **Inception phase and data collection:** the evaluation firstly outlined its questions, objectives, and tools, determining with SV what themes is worth exploring and understanding the scope of work. Accordingly, the evaluation developed data collection methods, including interviews, surveys, or focus groups. Upon the collection of the data, information was transcribed, cleaned and organised to ensure its clarity and accessibility.
2. **Data review.** The analysis team reviewed all qualitative transcripts, survey responses, secondary data, and other qualitative data to obtain an overall understanding of the gathered information. While doing so, the team got acquainted with recurring trends, patterns, any critical flag or illustrative findings.
3. **Coding and themes identification:** analysts clustered data under a set of labels ('coding'), which largely responded to the structure of themes proposed in the analytical framework (see 'suggested indicators'), while also including potential new themes observed across the results. Analysts ensured to categorise the data reflecting the perspective shared by respondents/informants and to avoid imposing their own bias (i.e., coding should be grounded in the primary data evidence and not in the analysts' preconceived ideas). Analysts further looked at eventual patterns or sub-themes arising from the categorised data, searching for correlations and relationships

between different sources of information and themes (triangulation of results), in case these helped determining the achievement of the related evaluation criteria.

4. **Verify consistency and coherence with evaluation objectives:** upon having finalised the list of themes, including their connections and correlations, analysts verified whether these logically responded to the evaluation criteria. Based on the quality of the information available, analysts eventually merged, split, trimmed, or further expanded the analysis and the list of themes.
5. **Write-up of key findings:** the evaluation organised the write-up of themes in a sequence to help understanding the analysis flow and the correlations and connections between results. Each theme included reference to the data evidence utilised, and -whether available – quotes from individuals and illustrative examples to support the findings. To facilitate the reader understanding correlations between results, in case these were outlined in different sections of the report, the evaluation included cross-reference [hyperlinks] between different paragraphs, pages, figures, and recommendations. Analysts organised themes under headers and sub-headers, whose phrasing was meant to help the reader anticipating the contents therein presented.

Throughout the assignment, MECS committed to regularly communicate with SV to share progress updates. At the end of the analysis process, MECS provided SV with a draft final report and a presentation of key findings. Once SV reviewed the evaluation report, MECS was responsible for delivering a satisfactory final report within the agreed timeframe.

III.D. Limitations and field-based observations

- a. In most cases, PAH, PIN, and INTERSOS did not inform LNGOs and partners/local actors that their contacts would have been shared with MECS, as originally agreed with the evaluation team. As a consequence, MECS field researchers had to allocate additional time and efforts to schedule meetings, making multiple calls, sending introductory messages over SMS/WhatsApp/email.
- b. The vast majority of LNGOs and local actors – among the lists shared with MECS - finally couldn't participate in the interview as they had a very limited knowledge and/or memory of the assistance and collaboration happened in 2022-2023. Even those informants which finally agreed to participate, reiterated to MECS that in those years 'the assistance was coming in bulks (governmental or separate NGOs, volunteers, etc), and therefore, they lacked specific records about the performance of a specific organisation'. MECS field researchers received information from LNGOs and local actors by type of assistance and years, however, they could not probe whether the informants referred to SV response or another funding line. Hypothetically, informants in clinics, shelters, local administration should have provided a range of information which they could not realistically hold, e.g., the exact dates of assistance, amount of delivered assistance in each centre/community, and the list/act of acceptance of service – for MECS to triangulate with eventual project documentation.
- c. Out of the list of key informants to interview received by MECS from the partners, some individuals affirmed not having worked on the required project back in 2022/2023.
- d. Due to high levels of turnover experienced by INGOs, several of the international staff members which managed the SV funded projects in 2022/2023 were not available anymore. MECS adapted its data collection plan, interviewing local staff at INGOs, even if their profile did not have a full knowledge of the SV response. The beneficiaries' list shared by INTERSOS, because of the limited number of available contacts and the lack of information included. Therefore, MECS selected all the participants in the list without doing any sampling. Most notably, INTERSOS lists included limited information – only the name and phone number of the BNF, while they lacked additional details such as household size, location, disability, displacement status, dates of assistance, etc.

The original evaluation plan was to interview 40 beneficiary of winterisation kits and 130 of RRM. However, since INTERSOS lists finally included only 53 recipients of winterisation kits (blankets) and 60 recipients of NFI kits, MECS decided to include all the recipients in the list to its data collection plan. Of the 113 contacts provided, however, MECS was able to interview only 81 respondents, with non-response due to the following reasons:

- 29 respondents had phone numbers out of mobile coverage or not working.
- 3 respondents denied having received any assistance, possibly to avoid participating to the interview.

The evaluation recalls that INTERSOS obtained the beneficiary information from the local partners/authority, receiving them via paper-based form, while it had no direct interaction and did not firsthand verify the beneficiaries it assisted [see section 2.2.2.4 Data protection and confidential treatment of information]. Such a dynamic might have contributed to generate poor quality beneficiary records.

Moreover, the evaluation notes that the location of INTERSOS beneficiaries was close to the front line, hence mobile coverage was quite poor, and the survey phone calls were often interrupted. MECS enumerators had to interrupt and reschedule calling multiple times to finalise surveys. In addition, the targeted settlements have limited access to electricity, and beneficiaries did not always have their phones charged.

Taking all the inefficiencies above into account, the number of allocated days to survey INTERSOS beneficiaries spanned from 5 to 9.

- PAH has shared with MECS a complete list for beneficiary sampling. While the original plan was to survey 50 MPCA recipients and 30 repaired shelter dwellers, the evaluation had to adjust its plans because such forms of assistance concluded before September 2023. The evaluation finally sampled beneficiaries of 'assistive devices', being this modality delivered during the last months of 2023. The number of beneficiaries in the list allowed sampling 139 beneficiaries in two oblasts (Dnipropetrovska and Kharkivska), and to finally conduct 89 surveys (64% response rate). The non-response rate (36% - 50 beneficiaries) included cases of no mobile coverage or line out-of-service (26 beneficiaries out of 50), or respondents not holding any memory of receiving the assistance or not having replied to the call (24 beneficiaries out of 50).
- ODU has been providing reconstruction works through partners (like OSBB, ZHEK or local authorities). MECS was not able to obtain a list of beneficiaries from ODU as the latest project was implemented by ZHEK in Kharkivska Oblast. ODU local representative attempted to obtain the contact details from partners – as per MECS requests. However, the Head of ZHEK received instructions by the hromada's lawyer not to share any personal details of the beneficiaries, but instead sharing only addresses of the repaired houses and apartment numbers. MECS refused approaching the beneficiary HHs on-site, without having previously obtained their consent, due to potential safety and reputational risks in the Country, currently ruled by martial law.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1. Effectiveness, relevance to the local needs, and impact

This chapter attempted to investigate the extent to which the response achieved its intended objectives, looking at what outcomes and effects it contributed to generate on the community. The relevance of the response to the local needs, culture, and preferences also represented a parameter of research. The evaluation identified, wherever possible, gaps, red flags, and challenges which likely contributed to eventual underachievement on the project plans, or inconsistencies with the beneficiary's needs and expectations.

The analysis primarily relied on the information shared by the direct beneficiaries and by the local stakeholders engaged in the different projects, in addition to limited projects' documentation (secondary data) conveying evidence about the parameters just outlines in the previous lines.

2.1.1. Achievement of objectives and short-term effects

2.1.1.1. *Formal achievement of outputs and outcomes*

The evaluation could not determine whether the different projects part of the response formally achieved their intended targets. Apart from INTERSOS, **project figures concerning the achievements of intended targets were either not available or not properly phrased by the implementing partners.** In some cases, such as for ODU, the projects did not follow the standard management cycle required by humanitarian donors and the related reporting requirements. **Yet, most LNGO and INGO staff did not report any specific underachievement performed during the projects.**

Overall, all the informants having an opinion about the projects' performance shared positive feedback concerning the effectiveness of the interventions to reach its intended goals, concluding that the response overly managed to deliver its intended activities.

While such evidence might suggest that the response overly managed to deliver its intended activities and objectives, the evaluation cannot draw any conclusion on the effective achievement of projects' results, because of the general nature of the information provided by the informants, the limited number of informants involved, and the lack of secondary data (i.e., with the exception of INTERSOS UKR 22.05 and 22.06, and with PAH UKR 22.10, documents from all the other projects documents, such as narrative reports and indicator trackers, lacked a clear indication of the results achieved by the interventions against eventual targets, and/or provided figures were not consistent with the plans set in the proposal).

INTEROS - The projects finally achieved most of their planned targets, according to the figures disclosed in the documentation (i.e., numerical achievements against target figures were disclosed within INTERSOS UKR 22.05 and 22.06 documents) and based on the observations by INTERSOS staff.

By interviewing the INGO and LNGO staff, however, the evaluation noted that one project (UKR 22.09) would have failed to deliver all the medical supplies from the warehouse to the Primary Health Centres (PHC) by November 2023 (tentative end of grant). INTERSOS reportedly dispatched such supplies in the form of donations only in early 2024 (the evaluation was not informed whether the grant was extended to 2024) [see more about delays caused by procurement mechanism in section 2.1.3.1 Deviations from plans and efficiency considerations].

PIN - The evaluation could not determine whether PIN project finally achieved its intended targets, as nor the staff nor the available documents included such reference.

PAH - The documentation about the projects implemented by PAH (22.2, 22.3, 22.10) provided only partial information about the target achievement. Yet, the limited figures available in the documents indicated that the projects managed to achieve or overachieve their targets.

PAH staff shared positive indications of the projects effectiveness in delivering their expected outputs and outcomes. Moreover, they stressed that the projects managed to overachieve part of their targets.

ODU - The project documentation did not provide any illustration concerning the achievements of a set of target indicators. Based on the information disclosed by ODU staff, the evaluation noted that the project did not follow a log-frame structure, governed by baseline, endline, and target figures to measure the success of its outputs and outcomes. The evaluation therefore lacks evidence to determine if and how the project delivered what it planned to achieve.

The rationale for ODU interventions, supported by SV funding, was reportedly 'to deliver support to the affected communities as soon as possible, responding to the pressing needs of the population but also to the spending pressure required by the funding line.'

By doing so, ODU did not fully respond to an already established project logic elaborated in the concept note phase, while it maintained a high degree of flexibility – e.g., it started by repairing roofs in the Kyiv region, to then expand to rehabilitate shelters in the areas close to the Russian border, to assist the needs of the elderly, and activating a mitigation scheme to contrast the corruption in the Country. ODU's modus operandi reportedly aimed to reduce bureaucracy and maximise the use of its resources to benefit the target communities.

“THE (UKR 22.10) PROJECT WAS ABOUT ADAPTABILITY AND CONSIDERATION OF NEEDS DURING IMPLEMENTATION.”

PAH STAFF

“WE CANNOT YET TALK ABOUT OUTCOMES, AS WE CAN'T MEASURE THE EFFECTS OF OUR ACTIVITIES IN THE SHORT TERM. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT, AT SOME POINT, PEOPLE WOULD COME BACK TO THEIR VILLAGES, AND RESUME GOING TO SCHOOL.”

ODU STAFF

2.1.1.2. Observed improvements in the beneficiary needs

The contribution of SV response to improve the beneficiary needs was moderate, based on the opinion of its beneficiaries, at least with reference to the surveyed projects modalities (SNFI, Winterisation kits, and assistive devices), and recalling all the limitations about the sampling approach pursued by the evaluation [see also section III.D. Limitations and field-based observations].

The main needs experienced by the beneficiaries right before receiving the assistance pertained cash, electricity, heating, water, healthcare, and hygiene items [see Figure 2], with little variations by project type. Overall, the evaluation observed that **beneficiaries did not frequently report a tangible improvement ('to a great extent' or 'fully') of such needs upon receiving the assistance. Such finding does not come unexpectedly, as the type of assistance did not directly address priority needs as cash, electricity, or heating** – according to the evaluation. On the same line, the evaluation also recorded

that about 23% of the total sample declared being still in need of assistance, referencing to their urgent needs for cash (i.e., they needed either MPCA, or cash to access medical treatments or shelter repairs) [see Rec. 1].

Even though the assistance might have not generated a tangible improvement, the evaluation flags that it still proved relevant to the broad spectrum of beneficiaries needs [as observed in section 2.1.2.1 Adaptation to the needs of the beneficiaries and vulnerable groups].

While a large half of PAH beneficiaries found that the assistive devices generated a significant improvement to their needs (56% of PAH sample), INTERSOS beneficiaries mentioned that less frequently (36% of SNFI kits and 15% of winterisation kits sample). Those who did not report a positive improvement, however, affirmed that the assistance contributed to improve their needs just 'moderately', whereas negative statements were extremely limited, and just among INTERSOS beneficiaries (8% of SNFI kits sample, and 15% of winterisation kits sample) [see also Figure 3].

Following up on the reasons why some of the recipients did not report any improvement after receiving the assistance, the evaluation recorded that SNFIs and blankets were not sufficient to the needs of these individuals, which reportedly required other forms of assistance as well.

In terms of lasting, positive effects generated by the assistance (i.e., 3 months after receiving the assistance), most of the recipients of PAH assistive devices (96%) confirmed that 3 months after the receipt the assistance was still supporting their needs (including 'somehow', 'to a great extent' and 'fully' answers). INTERSOS recipients also reported that the positive effects of the received assistance were still tangible after 3 months (68% of winterisation kits sample and 74% of SNFI kits sample) [Figure 4].

Figure 2 - Top needs experienced by the beneficiaries before the assistance

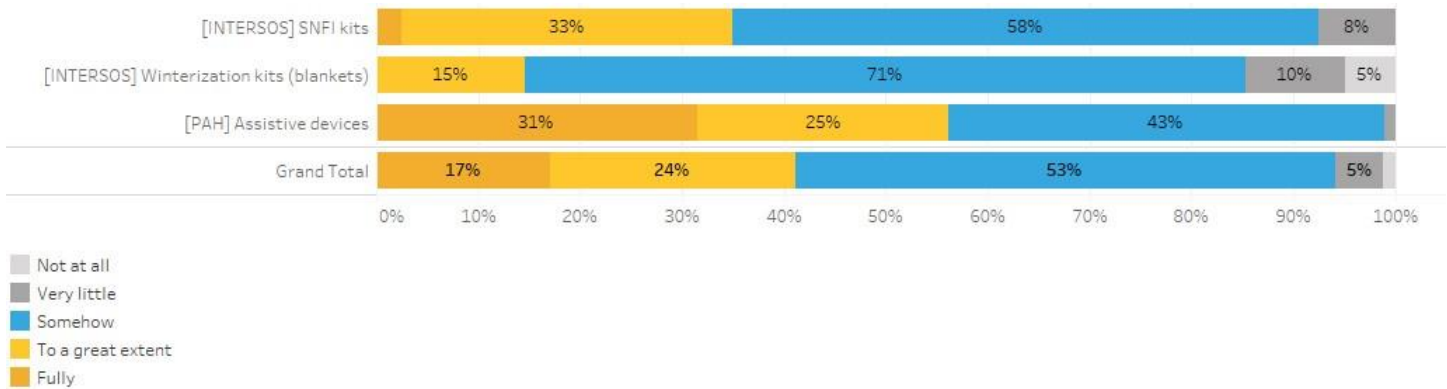
	[INTEROS] SNFI kits	[INTEROS] Winterization kits (blankets)	[PAH] Assistive devices	Grand Total
Cash	22%	18%	21%	20%
Electricity	8%	10%	21%	15%
Heating system/fuel/gas	17%	19%	10%	14%
Water (to drink and for domestic use)	9%	19%	8%	11%
Health care and pharmaceuticals	4%	5%	17%	11%
Hygiene items	17%	12%	6%	10%
Livelihoods and income-generation	11%	3%	9%	8%
Safety/security (outdoor)	7%	4%	1%	3%
Food	0%	4%	3%	2%
WASH facilities	1%	0%	2%	1%
Safety/security (inside your shelter)	1%	3%	1%	1%
Shelter and housing	0%	1%	1%	1%
Family reunification support	2%	1%	0%	1%
Psycho-social support	1%	0%	0%	0%
Other	1%	1%	0%	0%
Legal counselling	0%	0%	0%	0%

% of Total Pivot Field V..



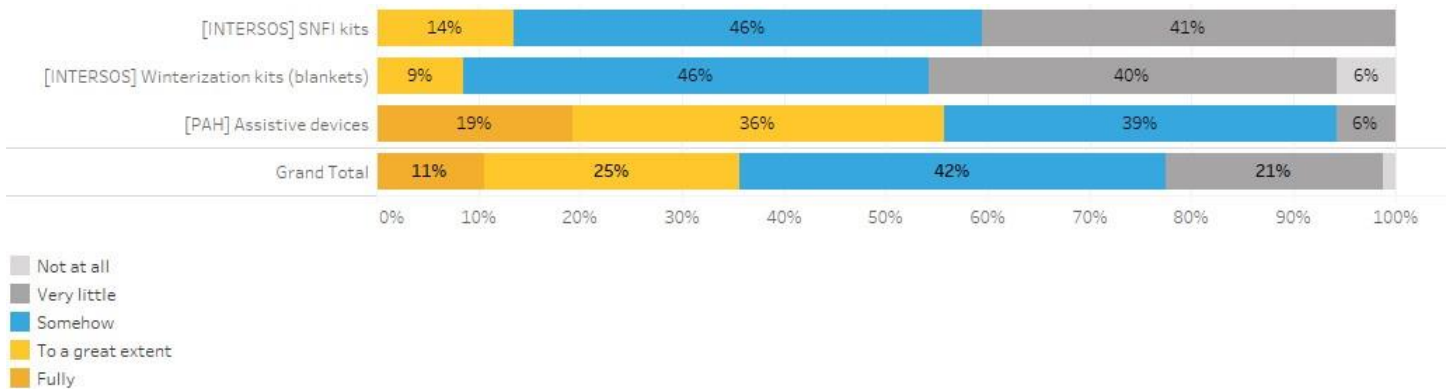
Source Q: What were the main needs of your household, right before receiving the project assistance/support?

Figure 3 – Improvements in the beneficiary needs improve upon assistance delivery



Source Q: From your direct experience, how much did your needs improve after the assistance was completed/distributed?

Figure 4 – Moderate or positive improvements still tangible three months after the receiving the assistance



Source Q: If the answer was ‘somehow’ ‘to a great extent’ or ‘fully’, could you still observe such positive improvement in your needs three months after the receiving the assistance?

2.1.1.3. Beneficiary's livelihoods, shelter comfort, and health and nutrition

According to the statements shared by the beneficiaries, their overall livelihoods and financial resilience, the sense of comfort provided by their shelter, and their nutrition and health care did improve compared to the time before they received the assistance.

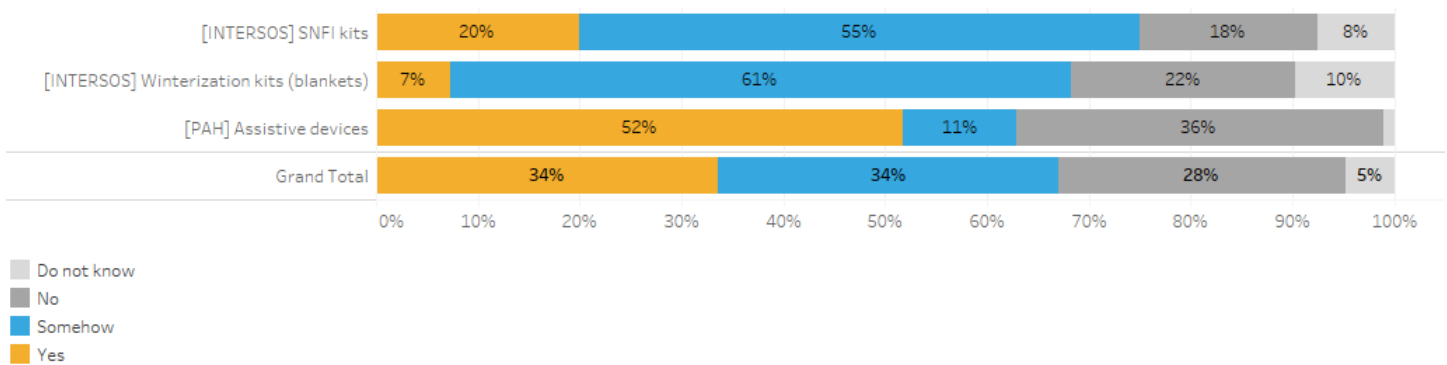
The evaluation notes that such improvements cannot be exclusively correlated with the assistance provided by INTEROS and PAH, as the beneficiary context could have been possibly affected by several other contextual factors, and by other types of assistance.

Beneficiaries of INTEROS and PAH (63%-75%) confirmed having noticed a moderate to full improvement in their overall livelihoods and financial resilience compared to before receiving the assistance. PAH recipients disclosed particularly high levels of improvements, with 52% of the sample fully endorsing such improvement, and 11% finding it just ‘moderate’ [Figure 5].

Concerning the effects of the sense of comfort provided by the shelter, most beneficiaries reported moderate to full improvement (62%-80% of the total sample). The evaluation observed that INTERSOS beneficiaries, namely recipients of household commodities as SNFI and blankets, disclosed higher levels of improvement (80%-85%), compared to PAH recipients of assistive devices (62%) Figure 6]. The finding could be possibly justified with the fact that SNFI and winterisation kits reached families whose shelters conditions were more disadvantaged compared to the shelters of beneficiaries of PAH.

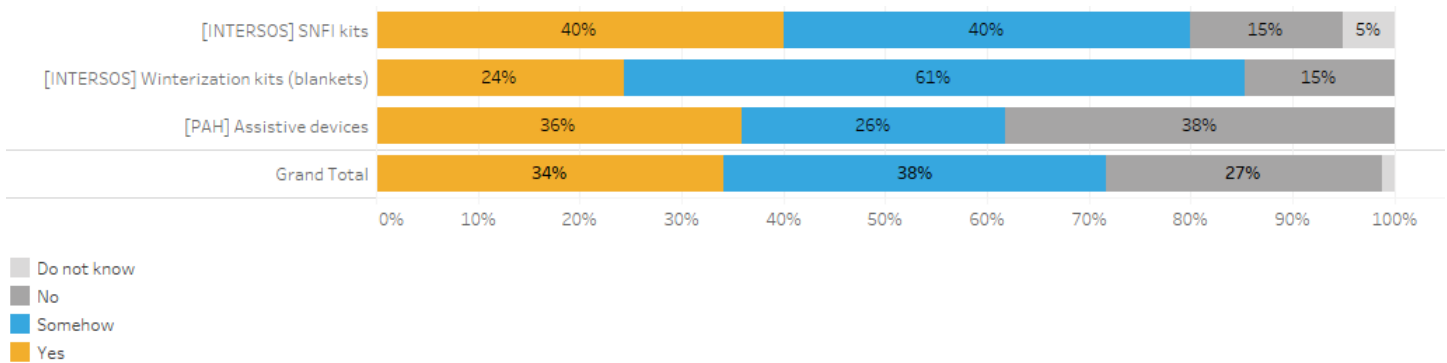
Finally, beneficiaries of PAH and INTERSOS assistance reported similar levels of moderate to full improvements in their nutritional habits and access to health care, as indicated by nearly 55% of the sample, with little variation by project type [Figure 7].

Figure 5 - Reported improvement in overall livelihoods and financial resilience



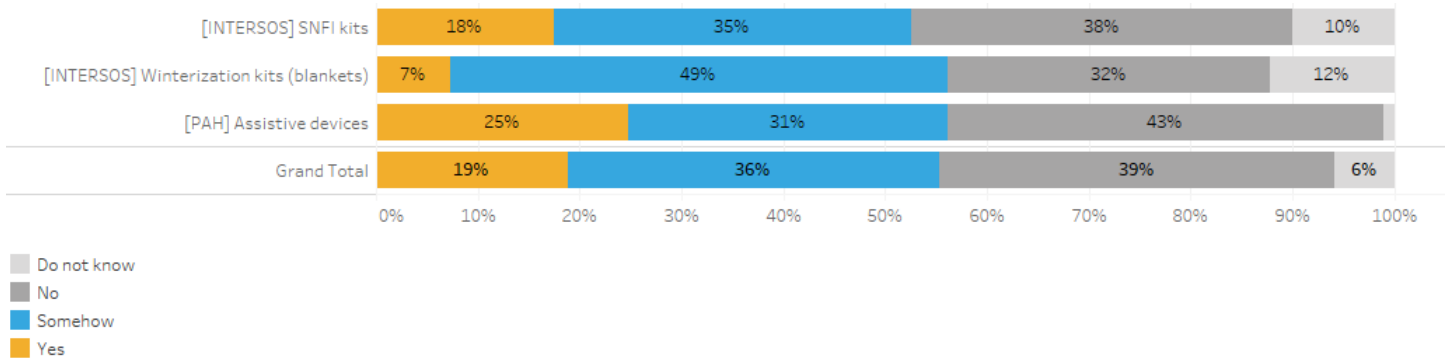
Source Q: We would like to know whether you agree with the following statements: I noticed an improvement in my overall livelihoods and financial resilience, while describing your ongoing situation, compared to before receiving the assistance.

Figure 6 - Beneficiary feels safer and more comfortable in their own shelter or accommodation



Source Q: We would like to know whether you agree with the following statements: I feel safer and more comfortable in my shelter or accommodation, describing your ongoing situation, compared to before receiving the assistance.

Figure 7 – Beneficiary could afford better nutritional habits and health care measures



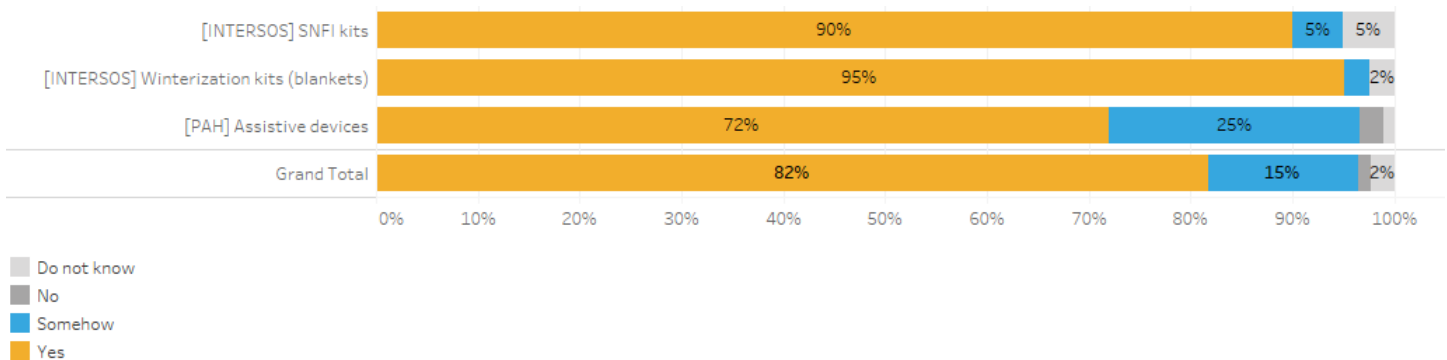
Source Q: We would like to know whether you agree with the following statements: I can afford better nutritional habits and health care measures, describing your ongoing situation, compared to before receiving the assistance.

2.1.1.4. Reputation of assistance providers in the eyes of the community

The majority of the sample of beneficiaries considered the assistance provider as acting in a professional manner and operating for the sake of the beneficiary's benefit, pointing to a general sense of trust in the assistance provider. While the overall levels of trust in the assistance provider remained high, the evaluation noted that INTERSOS beneficiaries shared particularly high levels of trustworthiness (90%-95% of the sample in full agreement, 3%-5% in moderate agreement), as compared PAH beneficiaries (72% in full agreement, and 25% in moderate agreement).

Such finding should be correlated with the fact that INTERSOS beneficiaries were directly assisted by local partners/authorities, and not directly by INTERSOS. The INGO Staff also observed that during distributions, beneficiaries could have likely considered that the assistance was provided by the local authorities, and not by INTERSOS. Therefore, the positive levels of trust shared by its recipients might possibly refer to local actors rather than INTERSOS.

Figure 8 – Trustworthy reputation of the NGO delivering the assistance



Source Q: Do you feel that the organisation (NGO) which provided you with the assistance is trustworthy?

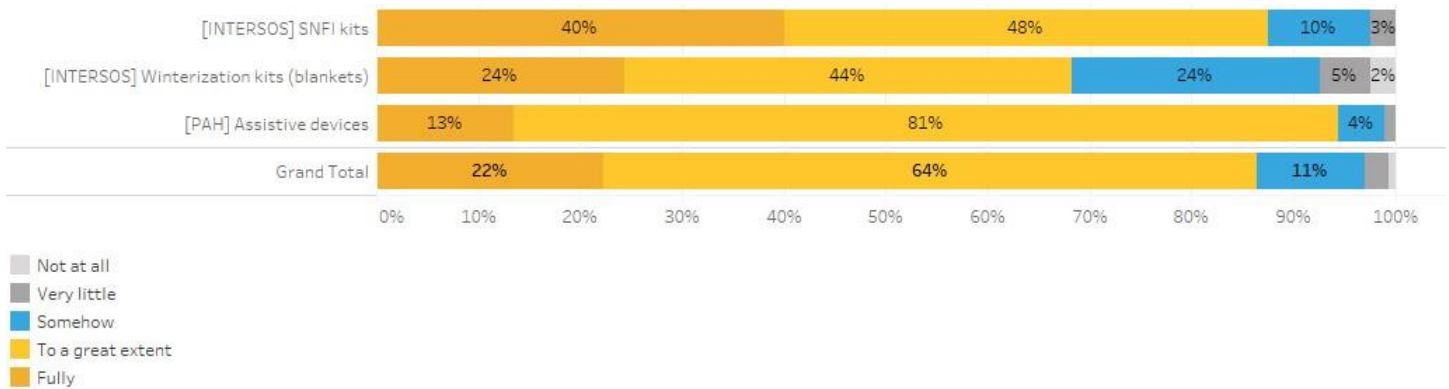
2.1.2. Consistency with local needs and preferences

2.1.2.1. Adaptation to the needs of the beneficiaries and vulnerable groups

The response aligned with the needs of the beneficiaries of all the sampled projects. Survey findings showed that the striking majority of the beneficiaries (86% of the total sample) found that the assistance met their needs 'to a great extent' or 'fully', while 11% of cases reported a moderate alignment [Figure 9]. Beneficiaries (98%) also perceived that the response took into consideration the needs of vulnerable groups [Figure 10].

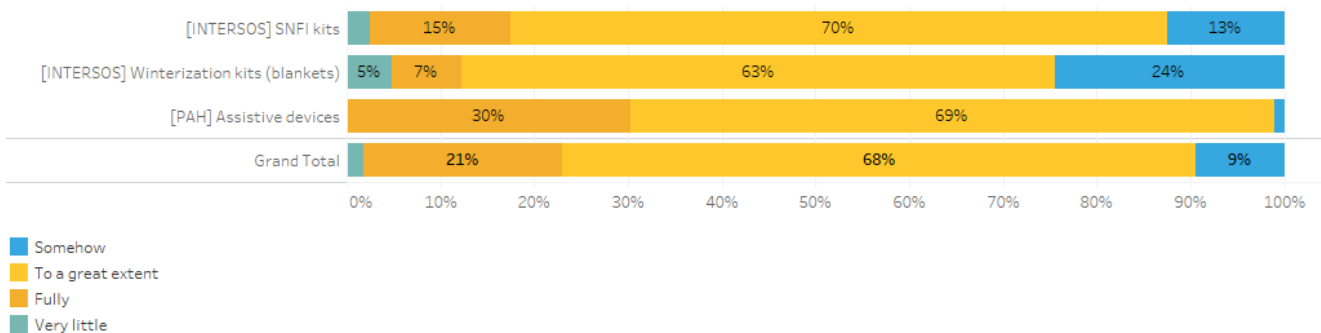
While still on the positive spectrum, the evaluation identified that the beneficiaries of INTERSOS winterisation kits perceived relatively lower levels of relevance compared to other project types, i.e. 24% of the sample indicated that the assistance met their needs just 'somehow', and another 7% 'very little' or 'not at all' (the same 7% also mentioned their dissatisfaction with the amount of the assistance – see section 2.1.2.2 Beneficiary satisfaction with assistance).

Figure 9 - Assistance aligned with the beneficiary needs



Source Q: How well did the assistance align with your needs?

Figure 10 – Assistance considered the specific needs of women, IDPs, PWDs, and children



Source Q: In your opinion, how well did the assistance take into consideration the specific needs of women, IDPs, people with disabilities, and children part of the beneficiary families?

Matching with the positive levels of relevance observed by the beneficiaries, LNGOs and local actors found that the response addressed the needs of all the vulnerable segments of the society. Notably, both LNGOs and local actors

affirmed that the response did not exclude any vulnerable groups. Some of the informants claimed the target groups of the projects considered the needs of all segments of the communities, while other informants unaware of target criteria mentioned that the assistance followed a blanket targeting approach, supporting to all those having applied for it (e.g., at the start of the programme, humanitarian aid was distributed to all registered IDPs and all people in need of it and was finetuned to sectoral needs at later stages. Similarly, rehabilitation projects in schools and buildings covered all individuals served by the facilities).

LNGOs staff stated that all vulnerable beneficiaries were considered in the project implementation, further elaborating that the interventions primarily considered the requests of IDPs and local people who suffered and lost their assets.

Examples of consideration of the special needs of the most vulnerable included:

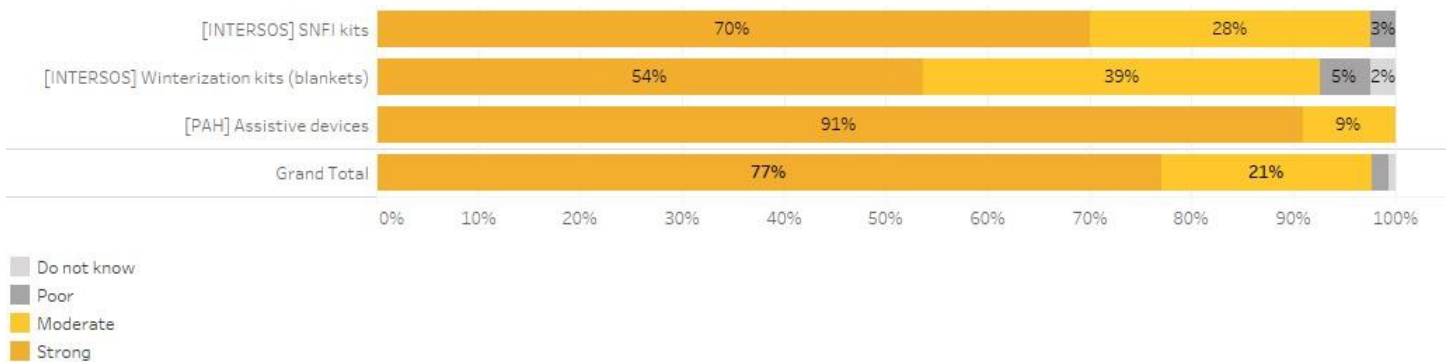
- Deployment of a mobile teams of psychologists theoretically supporting all vulnerable groups.
- When there was a need reach out to people with disabilities in certain locations, the work was done online to overcome mobility constraints due to the lacking infrastructure.
- Collective centres were equipped with inclusive means (ramps, call buttons for staff), while also noting people with disability not necessarily could reach to those due to the inappropriate and non-inclusive local transport and infrastructure.

2.1.2.2. Beneficiary satisfaction with assistance

The evaluation observed that the beneficiaries were largely satisfied with the size/amount of the assistance, with its quality, and with the quality of its delivery.

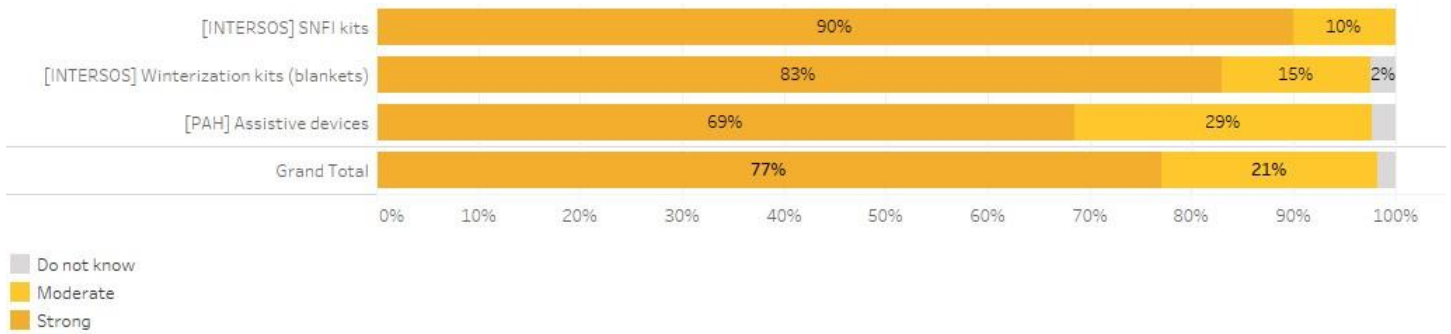
As already outlined in the previous section, few beneficiaries complained about the insufficient number of items in the INTERSOS SNFI kits (3%) and winterisation kits (5%) [Figure 11]. The quality of the aid distribution was satisfactory according to nearly all the sample, with limited exceptions which were not satisfied among INTERSOS SNFI recipients (3%) and winterisation kits recipients (3%) [Figure 13]. The beneficiaries did not report any issues around the quality of the assistance [Figure 12].

Figure 11 – Beneficiary satisfaction with size/amount of assistance



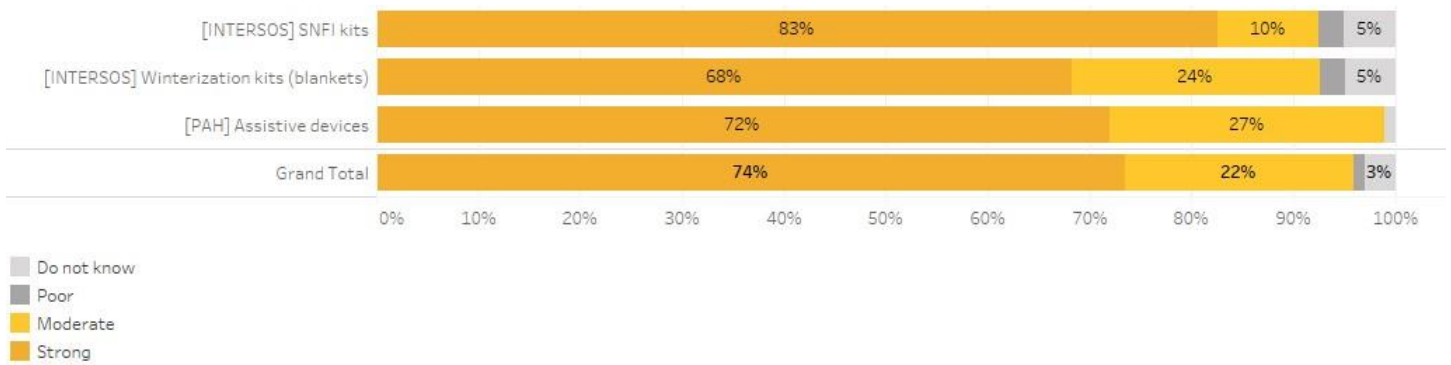
Source Q: Can you please rate your satisfaction with the (Size/amount of assistance) you received

Figure 12 – Beneficiary satisfaction with the quality of the delivered items/services



Source Q: Can you please rate your satisfaction with the quality of the delivered items/services you received.

Figure 13 - Beneficiary satisfaction with the delivery/distribution of assistance



Source Q: Can you please rate your satisfaction with the modality of delivery/distribution of assistance you received

2.1.2.3. Respectfulness towards the local culture, authority, and social customs

The response respected the local culture and the social customs of the beneficiaries, as confirmed by all LNGOs and local actors consulted by the evaluation. Even if beneficiaries were not always consulted by the projects [see section 2.2.2.2 Consultations with community members and authorities], the assistance was provided in a dignified manner according to LNGOs, and beneficiaries credited the project teams for the way they behaved towards them [see Figure 15].

Similarly, the response acted in respect of the local authorities and relevant regulatory acts, promoting the involvement and participation of the local community members. Local actors and LNGOs interviewed by the evaluation described that the projects teams **cooperated with local governing bodies at various stages of the programme, including planning and coordination**, consulting them on a regular basis and providing them with progress reports. In some communities, local authorities helped with distribution of items notifying beneficiaries via relevant channels or facilitating the signing of appropriate memorandums with receiving entities. Moreover, the response involved local contractors in the project implementation, which facilitated the **direct participation of local residents in the (re)construction process**. Such positive degree of cooperation with the local authorities was corroborated by the statements of INGO staff [see section 2.2.2.2 Consultations with community members and authorities and 2.3.3.2 Coordination with the local authorities and humanitarian actors].

Local actors and LNGOs did not report any social, economic, and political effects produced by the response on the local community, business, or governance structure. Besides, they specified that none of them was directly engaged in projects delivering cash assistance, hence they could not mention of any economic impact.

2.1.3. Operational challenges and successes

2.1.3.1. *Deviations from plans and efficiency considerations*

The response did not experience delays that would have substantially affected the projects performance, based on the personal opinion shared by INGOs, LNGOs and local actors.

However, INGO staff often reported having struggled in managing the response due to matters related to procurement and logistics (i.e., inflation rates and increasing costs of commodities in the local market, complex shipping process to and within Ukraine, establishing an international procurement process and managing the related contracts) [Rec. 2].

Other difficulties related to the deployment of paper-based forms to collect beneficiary information – which should then be digitalised, and to register beneficiaries which were in transit on their way back home.

In general, the evaluation observed that the projects did experience a few deviations – or rather 'adaptations' – from the plans (as in the original proposal), because of their intention to adapt to the changing needs and to the volatile context, particularly ODU, PIN, and PAH. The latter INGOs reported adjusting their modalities due to the needs arising from the field, including upscaling some forms of assistance, growing their outreach, or adding new modalities. Security developments also influenced the approach of these INGOs.

INTERSOS - Even though the projects finally managed to deliver their intended targets, the performance was affected by some delays and inefficiencies, mostly related to difficulties in procurement and logistics for the supply of relief items, to the high turnover of the management staff, and to the enforcement of paper-based forms to register and collect beneficiary information (to comply with the local authority's requests).

Specifically, as mentioned by INTERSOS staff:

- The procurement of relief items was negatively affected by the inflation rates, by the difficulties in obtaining quotations from other countries, and by the logistics barrier to ship commodities to and within Ukraine.
- Local authorities required working with paper-based forms which affected the speed of registration and information processing. INTERSOS MEAL team had to digitalise manually the information collected, and this also generated a delay in the provision of the assistance.
- INTERSOS performance suffered from the frequent turnover of its international, management staff.

Additionally, INTERSOS project report (UKR 22.09) described difficulties in finding appropriate locations to donate the prepositioned medical kits: '*The items included in the kits do not sufficiently match the needs of frontline medical facilities, and interest in the kits is lower than expected*'. Moreover, the project (UKR 22.09) reportedly experienced delays in the final procurement of medical supplies and other relief items,¹ following the same issues nominated above by the staff: staffing shortages and procurement inefficiencies.

Other than the delayed dispatchment of medical supplies, the evaluation did not find any evidence about the INTERSOS projects deviating from their original plans, based on the information disclosed by the staff.

¹ INTERSOS UKR-22.09 project underwent 3 months of No-Cost-Extension.

PIN – According to PIN staff, the project performed smoothly with little inefficiencies affecting its performance. They noted that the action occurred in the sudden onset of the Russian aggression, when very few agencies were active in the area to respond to the humanitarian needs and virtually no humanitarian coordination was active.

At the beginning, the project took advantage of solid SoPs and of the support of PIN headquarters which reportedly facilitated the delivery of a quick response – as disclosed by PIN staff. PIN initially sourced its relief items in the Czech Republic, shipping them via trucks and trains to Ukraine. Reportedly, PIN negotiated with UKRZALIZNITSA [government-run railroad company] to send about 17 trains to Ukraine, and over 50 trucks. Most of the NFIs initially distributed through the SV grant reached Ukraine via train.

PIN switched to local procurement mechanism as soon as the local private sector in Ukraine demonstrated sufficient capacity to deliver the commodities. For the first few months, PIN team operated based on 'exceptional cases' and encountered no issues. However, the lack of a proper procurement system established locally in Ukraine started generating inefficiencies and issues after the first six months of project, for PIN had to start structuring such system.

Project reports described that the intervention experienced challenges mainly related to the context, such as those related to fluidity of IDPs' movement, availability of items in the market, and prices of basic commodities. The reports did not correlate such challenges to the performance of the project. The project underwent only one major strategic shift, according to its staff, which was motivated by donor requirements and not by field dynamics. During its early stages, the project reportedly narrowed its focus on Shelter assistance and not anymore on cash assistance. PIN reportedly kept delivering cash assistance, but through another grant from another donor.²

PAH – The evaluation noted that a few challenges affected the MEAL and the logistics performance of PAH projects.

Namely:

- The registration of MPCA beneficiaries in Kyivska and Kharkivska oblasts was compounded by the continuous movement of people returning to their homes. In addition, PAH struggled collecting the beneficiary information as they hesitated to disclose their details out of fear of fraud and scam.
- The procurement of goods in Ukraine was reported more expensive in comparison to Poland.

“OUR PROCUREMENT TEAM GOT USED TO THE EXCEPTIONAL NATURE OF THE EMERGENCY ONGOING IN 2022 AND LACKED THE PREPAREDNESS FOR THE SHORT TO MEDIUM TERM. ONCE THE SUDDEN ONSET OF THE EMERGENCY WAS OVER, THE OPERATIONS REQUIRED TO HAVE BIG FRAMEWORK CONTRACTS TO AVOID REPEATING EACH PROCUREMENT PROCESS SEVERAL TIMES, AND WE WERE NOT IMMEDIATELY READY TO HANDLE SUCH A REQUIREMENT. “

-PIN STAFF

² PIN staff mentioned that during the early months of the project (originally supposed to deliver a combination of shelter and cash activities), SV ultimately required PIN to spend an amount of money which exceeded PIN's expectations, and that such amount of money was also to be reported to SHO. For such reason, PIN reported having spent the money on cash-based activities in Ukraine which were originally supposed to be funded by other donors, in addition to PIN. Afterwards, PIN kept using SV funding to support shelter initiatives, whereas they continued their cash response with the support of another donor.

The evaluation did not find any evidence about the PAH projects deviating from their original plans, based on the information disclosed by the staff. PAH staff described having added additional modalities to meet the local needs (i.e., UKR 22.10 project managed to add more WASH assistance and included the provision of assistive devices).

ODU - ODU staff affirmed experiencing challenges related to the procurement (of generators), which became too expensive during winter 2023, and forced the team to procure them from abroad where prices were more competitive. The international procurement, however, caused delays in the delivery of the generators. Apart from the supply of generators, it shall be noted that ODU was handling the procurement process via its partners (OSBB - home association, ZHEK - housing maintenance office or local administration/authorities), and not directly.

Other challenges reportedly experienced by ODU concerned the application of high exchange rates and fees by the bank: ODU initially operated without a registration and a bank account in Ukraine, which helped them reducing the time spent to register locally. However, it negatively affected on the financial efficiency of each international transaction.

According to ODU staff, the only deviation affecting the project was the suspension of the planned shelter repairs in one of the villages in Kharkivska, due to the security situation.

2.1.3.2. Responsiveness and approval request cycle

The efficiency of the approval cycle between SV and the INGOs was optimal according to the INGO staff, which never complained about the process. While INGOs did not report such an issue, SV observed that – while they did their utmost to facilitate a quick and direct response to the partner requests – sometimes SV reply was not immediate. This followed some coordination mechanism internal at SV, where the Program Officer (acting as Focal Point with the INGOs) necessitated the final approval of SV Country Director before approving a partner request.

On the other hand, INGOs performed different levels of responsiveness towards their field partners, based on the feedback shared by the LNGO staff. By and large, LNGOs reported a quick and immediate reaction by INGOs to most of their aid delivery and information requests.

INTEROSOS – The INGO staff confirmed that the grant was managed smoothly, and they credited SV for its quick responsiveness. The informants mentioned of a case when their field partners required a change in the NFIs included in the kits, to better meet the needs of the recipients. In such a case, they affirmed that the approval mechanism from SV was rapid and efficient.

Concerning the responsiveness of INTEROSOS towards partner LNGOs, Angels of Salvation (INTEROSOS partner in UKR-22.09 in Donetsk region) shared an observation about frequent delays in response to various requests (e.g., agreements, budget reallocations, supply of items) submitted to INTEROSOS due to frequent changes of Focal Points in the INGO. These delays have impacted planned timeline of project implementation, according to LNGO staff [see more on INTEROSOS staff turnover in section 2.3.2.2 Adequateness of human resources]. SV also observed a similar issue when dealing with INTEROSOS.

PIN - PIN reportedly established its own internal system for informal reporting to SV, including monthly goals and situational updates which could potentially result in some changes of the project design. PIN staff considered such process fast and effective to manage the grant collaboratively with SV.

PAH - PAH staff interviewed by the evaluation did not have any comment about the effectiveness of the grant management between SV, PAH, and local partners, nor they described any modality to seek approval for eventual project amendment with SV.

ODU - ODU staff was satisfied with the responsiveness and proximity performed by SV to address their requests. The staff emphasised on the small-scale nature of ODU, where there was a full degree of transparency, where every partner could question and monitor the procurement, timeline of works, and check on the quality of works that have been implemented at any stage of the project.

2.2. Application of quality standards

The section reviews the levels and modality of application of quality standards by local partners in the delivery of assistance. Most notably, it analysed parameters related to accountability (AAP), community participation, as well as promotion beneficiaries' dignity and safety. Under this criterion, the evaluation focused on the experience as reported by the implementers, local actors, and beneficiaries, and less on the formal compliance with eventual policies and procedures.

The analysis was primarily informed by the evidence shared by implementing partner staff at field level, as well as by the perspectives of the local authorities, actors, and beneficiaries.

2.2.1. Protection and safeguarding

2.2.1.1. Safety and security measures

The response adhered to relevant safety and security protocols while delivering aid or restoring buildings for the project's beneficiaries, as confirmed by LNGOs, local actors, and by INGOs. Not all INGOs, however, were directly involved in working with the final beneficiaries (i.e., INTERSOS and ODU did not directly deliver the assistance to the final beneficiaries), and some of the INTERSOS beneficiaries felt exposed to safety risks.

The security measures adopted by the response reportedly included assessment of potential risks and measures for their mitigation done at the start of a project, compliance with regulations for safe working environment and site assessment, due diligence while choosing contractors, involving independent experts for technical supervision. Aid distributions and schedules were meticulously planned so as to avoid crowding (especially in settlements close to the frontline), sometimes with targeted individual deliveries where needed. Field teams were equipped with personal protective equipment on their trips to high-risk areas and activities were done in premises providing access to bomb shelters.

Moreover, INGOs and LNGOs regularly monitored that security situation in relevant communities, with LNGOs Focal Points (security staff or logisticians in absence thereof) maintaining a liaison with the local authorities and other NGOs. Any movement inside the Country could be changed if the situation deteriorated, and any work had to be stopped and staff evacuated to shelters during air raid alerts. Some LNGOs interviewed by the evaluation mentioned receiving appropriate safety and security trainings from the partner INGO.

“WE ARE UNDER CONSTANT SHELLING, AND THERE WAS NOTHING THAT THE DISTRIBUTION TEAM COULD DO TO PROTECT US. DURING THE SECOND ROUND OF DISTRIBUTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID, THE CROWD OF PEOPLE WAS HIT”.

WINTERISATION KIT BENEFICIARY, FROM KATERYNIVKA VILLAGE, KRAMATORSKIY RAION

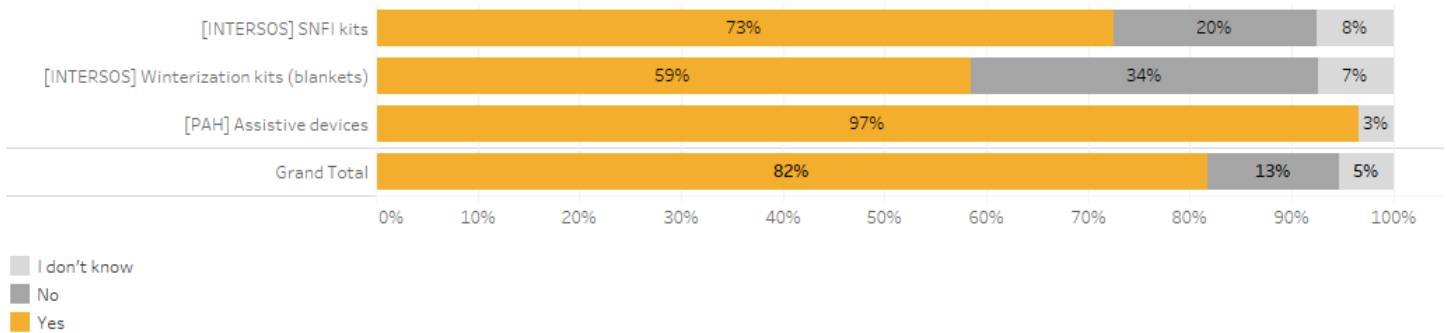
While the majority of beneficiaries (82% of the total sample) reported always feeling safe during the assistance distribution (or when with the project team), the evaluation flags that a minority of INTERSOS projects recipients felt exposed to risks [Figure 14], in spite of the security standards reported above by the staff [Rec. 3].

Most notably, 20% of INTERSOS SNFI kits beneficiaries (all located in Kramatorskij raion), reported feeling unsafe due to the constant shelling affecting either the area nearby the distribution site, or the road they had to take to reach the distribution site.

For example, a beneficiary resident in Lyman village – where NGOs had to access - had to rent a bus to Yampil to reach the distribution site, and the road was under shelling.

Another 34% of INTERSOS winterisation kits beneficiaries felt unsafe during the assistance distribution (in Kramatorskij raion). They reported not feeling safe for the constant risk of shelling, noting that the risk amplified in cases of crowds – which happened at the distribution site.

Figure 14 – Beneficiary always feeling safe and not at risk during the project



Source Q: Did you always feel safe and not exposed to any risk while receiving the assistance or while dealing with the project team?

2.2.1.2. Enforced policies: accountability, safeguarding, and conduct

The response deployed a range of policies to ensure the promotion of beneficiary safeguarding, accountability, and to regulate the Code of Conduct of the staff and contractors – based on the information disclosed by LNGOs and INGOs staff and confirmed by the beneficiary population.

The staff broadly mentioned adhering to all or some of the following policies: Code of Conduct, Humanitarian Standards, Policy for Prevention of Gender-Based Violence at work, PSEAH Policy, Safety Policy, Staff Evaluation Policy, Conflict of Interest Policy, Child Protection Policy, Accountability to Affected Populations Policy, Anti-Fraud, Bribery, and Corruption Policy, Non-Discrimination and Gender Equality Policy, Confidentiality and Personal Data Protection, Non-Disclosure Policy (the evaluation did not access nor review any policy document mentioned by the INGO or LNGO).

All INGOs (except for ODU) as well as LNGOs confirmed that each staff members were expected to sign some form of Code of Conduct. Moreover, they confirmed receiving a training on the Code of Conduct, accountability and PSEAH principles.

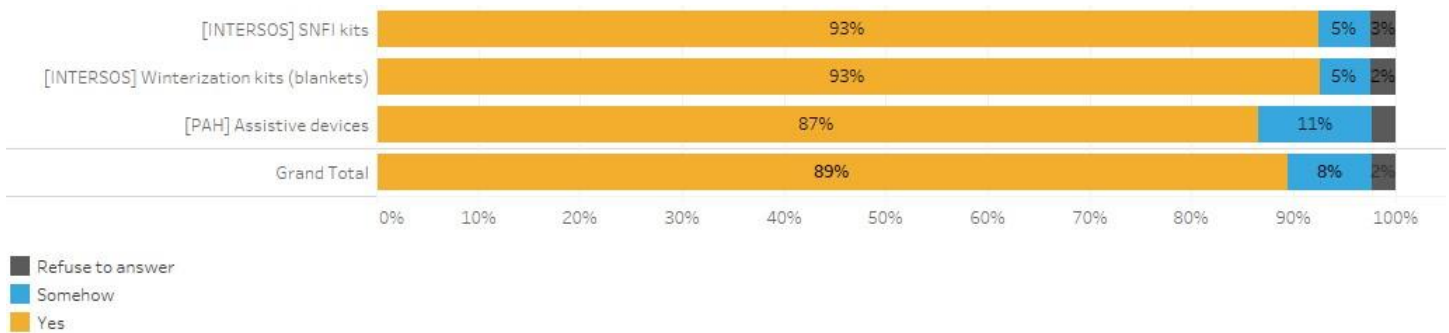
The evaluation observed that INGOs often adopted a standard/global version of the policy, especially those related to safety, complemented by another version which could be:

- simplified to be shared with local partners (PIN).
- fine-tuned to the Ukraine context (INTEROSOS) or to specific Ukraine regions (PAH).

SV did not require the partners to follow specific policies, as affirmed by SV staff. However, as part of the contract, it required its grantees to abide by a list of standard principles concerning PSEAH, Fraud and Corruption, and Code of Conduct (annexed to the contract). On the other hand, as part of an initial organisation capacity assessment, SV required the INGOs to share their own policies about topics as PSEAH, MEAL, and Security – for SV to review. The aim of SV review was not to score or qualify the INGOs eligibility to the grant based on the number of policies they had, but rather to suggest recommendations for their improvement.

The observation shared by the beneficiaries confirmed that the behavioural standards and safeguarding principles promoted by the organisations were turned into practice. The majority of the sample (98%) reported that the project was behaving professionally and was attentive to the situation of the beneficiary [Figure 15], whereas a minor 2% refused to answer. The minority of respondents (2% - 4 cases in total) reportedly trusted the service provider and did not mention additional explanations. However, the evaluation noted that 3 cases out of 4 mentioned in their last comments that they wished the assistance could support more of their needs, suggesting that they did not observe any issue with the conduct of the staff, but rather considered the project could have been caring more of their own situation.

Figure 15 – Project team behaved professionally and caring of the beneficiary situation



Source Q: Was the project team behaving in a professional manner, and always being attentive to your situation?

2.2.1.3. Monitoring and advisory roles for the application of quality standards

The availability of a supervisory/advisory role to monitor the application of accountability, safety, and safeguarding principles was regularly available at the LNGO level, while INGOs did not always included such a position. SV included an advisory role on the application of quality standards by INGOs, albeit the role was not systematically and regularly involved in the monitoring and verification of the INGOs quality compliance – according to SV staff.

Specifically, LNGO staff mentioned deploying a dedicated specialist (Coordinator, Protection Manager, Case Manager) for such a supervisory role. Additionally, psychologists and managers further advised on the resolution of psychologically complex issues. INGO staff, on the other hand, reported variable evidence concerning the availability of such a role.

INTEROSOS - Reportedly, INTEROSOS HQs includes an Accountability Officer to support the missions dealing with CARM. However, INTEROSOS staff did not mention of other profiles with the mandate of monitoring the application of beneficiary

safeguarding principles, nor they specified if and how they measured the application of beneficiary safeguarding and safety policies with their partners.

PIN - During 2022, PIN head of MEAL in Lviv was responsible to monitor the application of beneficiary safeguarding and accountability principles. Most recently, in 2023, PIN reportedly assigned a staff dedicated only accountability and safeguarding.

PAH - PAH staff described that the MEAL team was responsible to monitor the safeguarding of beneficiaries and also to verify the application of vulnerability criteria.

2.2.2. Participation and accountability

2.2.2.1. *CARM Management and users' awareness*

The existence of CARM during the projects was confirmed by both LNGO and INGO staff (except for ODU), which described the nature of the process and its functioning. Despite the information shared by the staff, the evaluation observed that beneficiaries did not regularly report knowing about such mechanism – especially INTERSOS recipients [see Figure 16 below].

As described by INGOs, in terms of standard process, the mechanism derived from the global CARM in place at each INGO, while the local implementing partners contributed to customise it by selecting the most adequate channels to collect the community feedback.

While none of the LNGO staff was directly involved in handling the users' feedback, INGOs described of different mechanisms in place at their organisation to handle, track, and follow-up with the feedback they received. The most commonly received feedback related to requests for assistance (INTEROS, PIN), to the insufficient amount of cash assistance during winter 2023 (due to the increasing price of local commodities) (PAH), and to the lack of quality performed by technical service providers like construction workers (PIN). Consequently, the organisation reportedly re-discussed the amount of assistance with the Cash Working Group.

Information about the use of feedback mechanism was reportedly distributed differently among beneficiaries, as affirmed by LNGO staff. It included information posters and handout leaflets. Feedback would be collected through a dedicated hotline in some projects or by installing suggestion boxes. Some LNGOs informed they hardly received any complaints, while during PDM exercises the feedback was mostly positive and showed the distributed aid was timely and appropriate.

INTEROS – Depending on the nature of each complaint, INTEROS followed specific SOPs regulating how to process and follow-up with the issue, noting that no complaints were left without a response – according to INTEROS staff. Through PDM activities, INTEROS also tracked the beneficiary's knowledge of CARM, levels of utilisation.

The evaluation further noted that INTEROS staff occasionally struggled to keep track of all complaints from multiple projects in different oblasts, noting that most of them included requests for assistance by the local community. INTEROS Ukraine mission reportedly enforced its CARM under the responsibility of an Accountability Officer, who was also instructing the project partners about CARM. On HQ level, INTEROS allocated an 'auditor' responsible for dealing/reviewing the most sensitive complaints (e.g., sexual rights violations and misconduct), and the evaluation does not

have information about their occurrence during the SV response. The evaluation recalls that INTERSOS sample of beneficiaries unexpectedly recorded low levels of awareness of CARM [Figure 16].

PIN - According to the figures shared by PIN staff based on their CARM annual report for Ukraine, in 2023 PIN received 72,000 different queries via their CARM: the majority included requests for information from non-beneficiaries aiming to receive assistance, from beneficiaries enquiring about distribution time, or even simple appreciations by the participants. Most recently, PIN staff reported receiving complaints by beneficiaries concerning deficiencies about the performance of PIN's suppliers. PIN could follow-up on such cases when they referred to service providers such as construction companies - through direct monitoring and verification of their modus operandi (as part of their Shelter response). On the other hand, they could not verify the modus operandi of providers of commodities and materials, as they could not verify how they manufactured the items in their own factories.

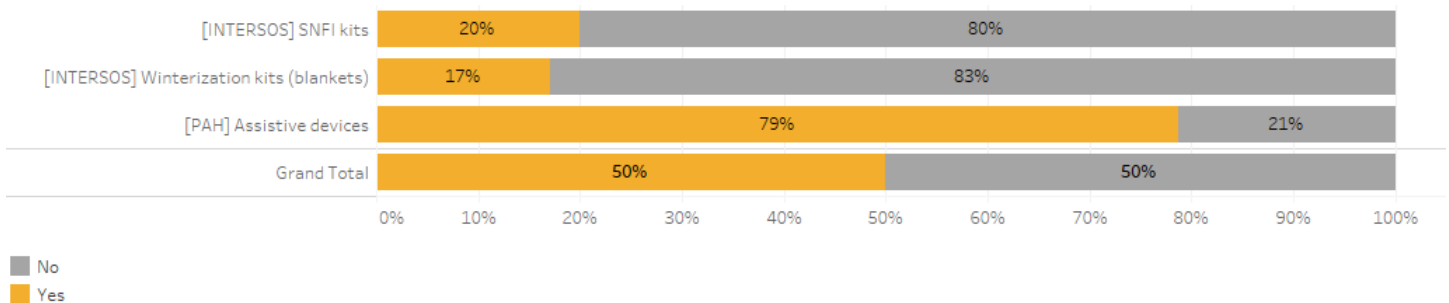
PAH - Reportedly, PAH CARM followed a three-layered structure: 1. The adoption of diversified feedback channels for the community, distributed across community centres and mobile teams during distributions and field visits. Information was usually disseminated on how to use these communication channels; 2. A centralised database storing all the received complaints - where they are labelled and correlated to each specific project. Information from such database normally fed in the projects reports; 3. Another database recording all follow-ups on complaints, following the division into sensitive and non-sensitive (PAH affirmed receiving no sensitive complaints related to the SV projects).

ODU - ODU did not run a formal CARM, according to the evidence shared by its staff. However, ODU staff affirmed the organisation encouraged all partners to have a direct, open communication with ODU, noting that all partners had the contact details and phone number of ODU responsible management staff.

Looking at the figures shared by the beneficiaries surveyed by the evaluation, the recipients of INTERSOS projects surprisingly reported critically low levels of awareness of modalities to contact the assistance provider (17%-20%). The negative does not pertain to PAH beneficiaries, which reported knowing of a CARM in 79% of cases [Figure 16].

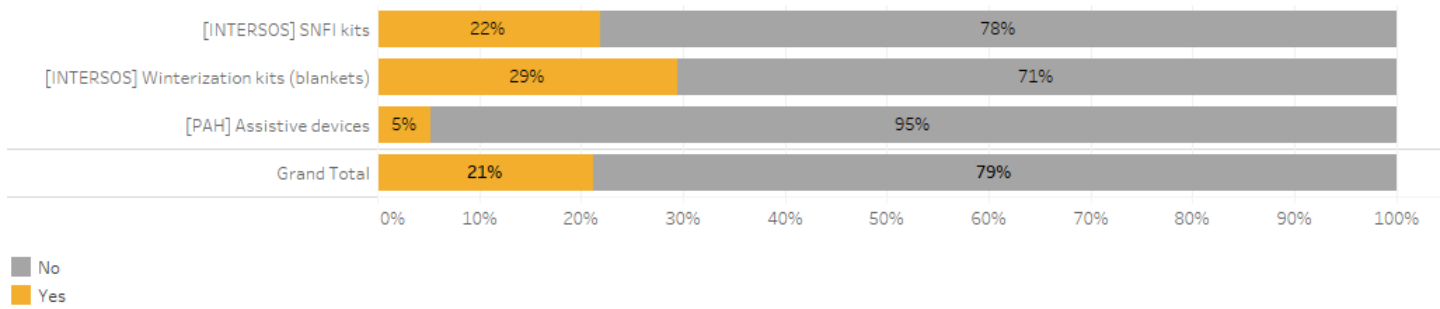
The issue related to INTERSOS beneficiaries is worth considering as a significant minority of the sample affirmed that they would have liked to share a feedback/complaint with INTERSOS, but they did not know how to do that (22%-29%) [Figure 17]. Such finding potentially indicates that INTERSOS did not regularly provide space to the beneficiaries to express their opinion on the assistance - in spite of all the standards procedures described above by its staff.

Figure 16 – Beneficiary aware of modalities to contact the assistance provider (CARM)



Source Q: Do you know how to contact the organisation which delivered the assistance?

Figure 17 - Beneficiary unaware of CARM, and willing to share their feedback



Source Q: *If no, would you have liked to reach out to the organisation to share feedback/complaint during the project?*

2.2.2.2. Consultations with community members and authorities

All INGOs and LNGOs staff confirmed they have been regularly consulting with local authorities during the initial assessments, project design, and assistance delivery phase. ODU emphasised on their close and direct relationship with the local mayors, which they trusted for being responsible to identify the main needs and the most suitable modality of assistance. Corroborating the above, most local actors reported they were consulted for their expertise and insights on community needs prior to the implementation of project activities.

With reference to the direct consultations with the beneficiaries, the evaluation observed that INGOs were not aware of any similar mechanism enacted during the project (possibly due to their role, or their memory of the process) – apart from PIN. Moreover, beneficiaries occasionally reported not being consulted by the response (nearly 50% of INTERSOS beneficiaries, see Figure 18).

“ODU INVOLVED ALL PARTNERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECTS BEING THEM THE CITY MAYORS, SHELTER REPRESENTATIVES, ETC. EVERYONE HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO INFLUENCE THE PROPOSAL AND THE IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES IN THE AREA”.

ODU STAFF

PIN – PIN reportedly consulted with the local community, specifically with community representatives, as part of their approach to ensure meeting the beneficiaries needs and deliver a relevant response to the context. As described by PIN staff, during the early stages of their shelter response, the field teams visited the collective centres, talked to the people that oversaw the collective centres, organised some key informal interviews, and focus group discussions with the displaced people.

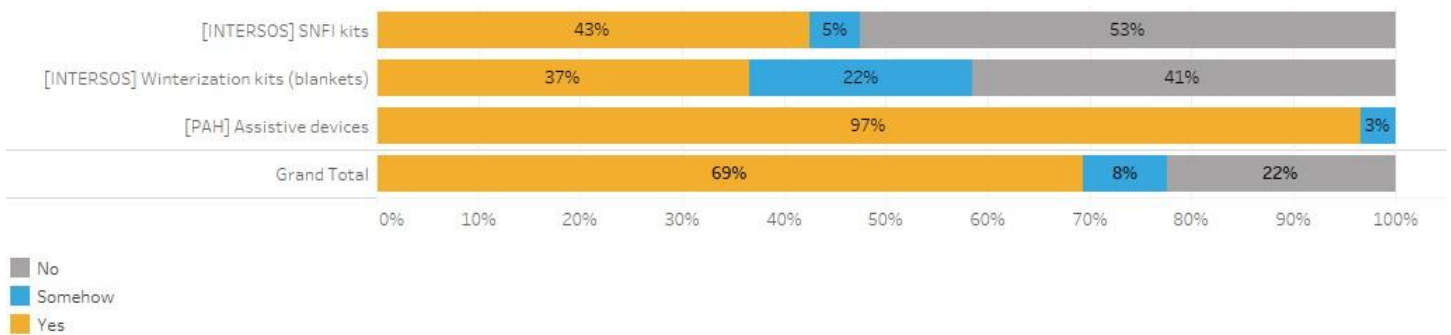
The evaluation gathered only instance where PIN approach was not previously endorsed by the local authorities. One local actor disclosed that at the start of the Russian aggression in 2022, PIN dispatched trucks with humanitarian aid (i.e., as part of urgent emergency response – see also section 2.1.3.1 Deviations from plans and efficiency considerations) to a community in western Ukraine without prior consultation.

ODU – ODU localisation approach pivoted on the close collaboration with hromada/city mayors, as reported by the staff. Namely, ODU staff explained that each hromada/village could decide by themselves about whether to apply for a grant

and which type of intervention they required in their neighbourhood. ODU did not undertake structured, direct consultations with the final beneficiaries, based on the information reviewed by the evaluation.

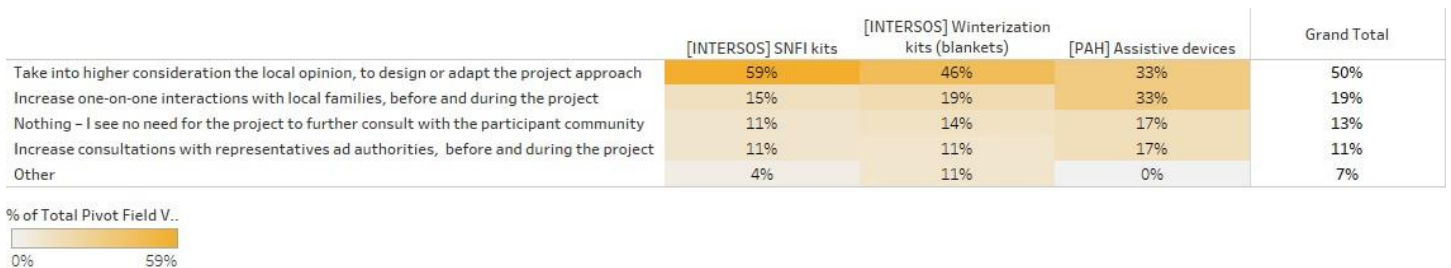
Surveyed beneficiaries did not regularly feel that the response consulted with them and valued their opinion, especially INTERSOS recipients. While all PAH beneficiaries of assistive devices perceived that the project values their opinion, INTERSOS beneficiaries shared such positive evidence only in 48%-59% of cases [Figure 18]. Among INTERSOS beneficiaries considering that the project did not consult with them nor value their opinion, the majority recommended the project to better design its approach based on the preferences expressed by the local community [Figure 19] [Rec. 4].

Figure 18 – Beneficiaries felt the project valued his/her opinion about modality/type of assistance



Source Q: Do you feel the project consulted with you concerning the type and modality of assistance, and valued your opinion?

Figure 19 – Recommendations for the project in consulting with communities



Source Q: If 'no' or 'somehow', how could the project better consult with communities in the future? (Tick all that applies)

2.2.2.3. Beneficiary communication

The response adequately communicated with the beneficiaries the information about the assistance, as well as about the time and venue of the delivery.

Namely, almost all the beneficiaries (96% of the total sample) mentioned that the projects provided them with accurate and timely information about the type of assistance, the time, date, and venue of its delivery. Moreover, all the beneficiaries (100% of the sample) reported that the assistance was delivered in due time, as previously announced to them.

Similarly, both LNGOs and local actors confirmed the communication within the response was clear and timely. Reportedly, LNGO or INGO would normally reach out to the local administration to disseminate information about a visit to community through local chats in various social media or through word-of-mouth and posting printed announcements in case of a poor connection. Sometimes, announcements were made on websites of local council and on NGOs websites.

2.2.2.4. Data protection and confidential treatment of information

The response collected beneficiary data in compliance with the legislation on the collection and processing of personal data, and with the internal organisational policies on data processing and do no harm principles both at INGO and LNGO levels. On the same line, beneficiaries shared a large sense of trust in the organisations treating their information confidentially.

Both INGOs and LNGOs mentioned using various consent forms and data protection techniques in their work, except for ODU which affirmed not directly handling any beneficiary data. Overall, data protection measures mentioned by the organisations included the storage of information about beneficiaries after obtaining their consent; the collection of consent forms from beneficiaries whenever information, pictures, and videos of beneficiaries were collected; encoding of project-related beneficiary data, and archiving and storage in the MEAL database of each organisation with restricted access.

INTERSOS - INTERSOS collected the beneficiary information through paper-based forms, not directly but through their implementing partners. After the partners collected the information, local authorities were responsible to send the papers to INTERSOS logistics department, which in turn handed them to the MEAL team. INTERSOS MEAL team digitalised the paper-based forms and stored them at the office cabinet, noting that only very limited staff members had access to it. The interviewed staff added that partners were supposed to inform the beneficiaries that their data would be handled confidentially by the authorities and by INTERSOS, but no formal consent form was signed by the beneficiaries.

PIN - PIN staff reported having their consent forms which were distributed among the beneficiaries, seeking their authorisation to collect their information, and to take photos or pictures during the event or delivery of assistance where they were attending. PIN marked that even in their contracts with service providers they specified the supplier to abide by confidential data treatment and not to personal information of the beneficiaries to third parties.

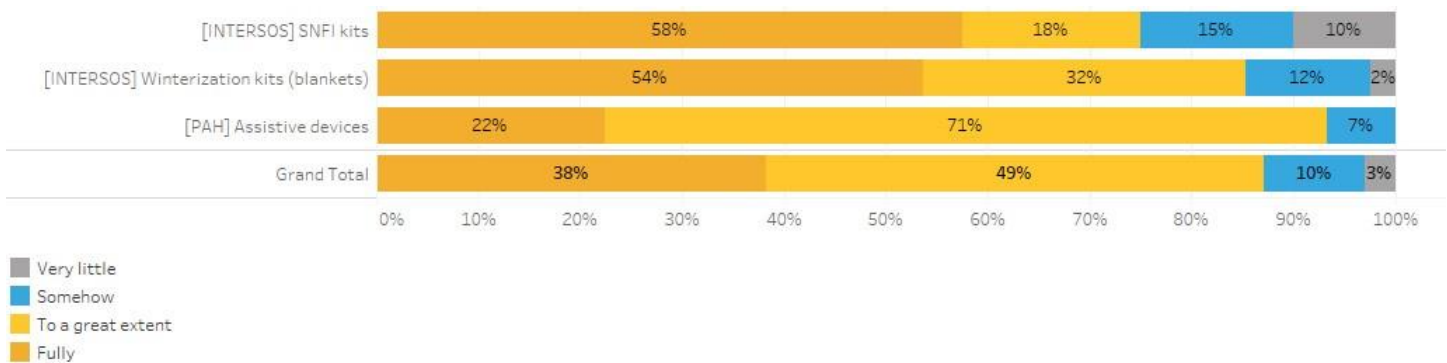
It shall be noted that PIN did not reportedly collect the information on the individual beneficiaries during the NFI distribution to collective centres, as the dwellers of these centres were transiting in the collective centre for a few days only.

PAH- PAH approached beneficiaries' information through several steps. During the initial registration phase, via phone, the applicants provided only their general information to the organisation. Upon having selected the applicants, PAH field staff visited the households, explaining the project rationale, and asking them to fill in the application form and a consent form regarding their personal data treatment. While the originals consent and application forms stayed with each household, PAH stored such information in its database, password protected. PAH staff also mentioned of data protection policies in place, relying on the use of coded data base, password protections, GDPR, limitations in file sharing even within the team, anonymising data.

ODU - ODU did not hold any information related to beneficiaries nor to contractors, as this was handled by the local authorities or by OSBB. ODU staff noted that the organisation aimed at keeping the city administration/OSBB accountable and responsible for their suppliers.

Overall, the evaluation observed a high sense of trust among the sampled beneficiaries towards the treatment of their personal information. In fact, the majority (97% of the total sample) was confident that the projects treated their information and contact details confidentially – with almost no variations between project types [see Figure 20]. The evaluation notes that INTERSOS beneficiaries trusted their information to be treated confidentially, even though they did not formally sign any consent form [see section above].

Figure 20 – Beneficiary trusted the projects treating their information and contacts confidentially



Source Q: How much do you trust the project team treating your information and contacts confidentially?

2.3. Partnership quality

In this section, the evaluation looked at the quality of the partnership between SV, the international and the local implementing partners, with a focus on the advantages of decentralised vs. localised decision-making processes, sense of ownership about decision-making by local teams, efficiencies in information flows, monitoring, and reporting processes, as well as adequate and timely provision of technical backstopping and follow-up to local field units. The analysis relied on the perspectives shared by the different units and organisations engaged in the delivery of the response, including SV, international, and local partner staff.

2.3.1. Decision making and management structure

2.3.1.1. Understanding of organisational roles and efficiency implications

At the LNGO level, roles were found as clearly assigned, facilitating a quick decision making – according to the LNGO staff. The organisations featured a proper communication between managers, on-site teams, and various stakeholders. On the other hand, the understanding and effectiveness of the roles at the INGOs and – separately - at SV level, occasionally presented some issues.

The evaluation observed that SV structure and roles were not clear to all the SV staff involved in the response, particularly concerning the responsibilities of the field-based staff and the HQ-based staff. Moreover, SV coordination and management roles were not crystalised, and they adapted to the requirements of each partner/project (e.g. in some cases being more closely involved in the management and day-to-day communication), as well as to operational needs of setting up a new mission in Ukraine (SV established its field unit after the Russian aggression in 2022). Such dynamics – according to SV – possibly contributed to generate a level of confusion in the roles assigned across its staff [Rec. 5]. That

said, none of the INGOs reported misunderstanding the roles of SV staff – and overall, they just showed appreciation towards the flexibility and responsiveness of SV.

Concerning the INGOs level, the evaluation noted that some cases struggled with the upscaling of their Country mission (PIN), while others suffered from the lack of responsiveness and turnover in their HQs (INTERSOS).

INTERSOS - The evaluation received contrasting information from INTERSOS staff concerning their opinion of the organisational structure, and of the definition of the roles of the different staff involved. While one representative reported that INTERSOS organisational chart followed a clear definition of roles and decision-making and management lines were clear on the different levels, the other informant found that while roles were clear in the field unit (RRM), the relationship between the field and the organisation HQs was flawed. Specifically, the HQs would have reportedly taken strategic decision without considering or 'listening' to the needs of the mission which were raised by the local unit.

PIN - Overall, PIN staff considered that the organisation was governed by a clear definition of roles and a functional organisational chart, even though they marked that PIN experienced a transitional phase due to the upscaling of the Ukraine mission. Such a transition originally generated some misunderstanding and adaptation on the overall structure. Namely, PIN staff described that the organisation switched from a project-based and/or a programme-based management to an area management approach, where project coordinators have shifted to the positions of Area Managers, managing their own teams of Officers, Assistants, and Administrators. Reportedly, such a change would have finally simplified the decision-making at the local level, regardless of the projects. Moreover, its staff mentioned that the large scale of PIN's response allowed to move and reallocate funds among different projects and modalities and saving on operational costs.

The evaluation also noted that PIN run several projects with Pomishka LGO, maintaining strong communication and coordination on a frequent basis. Such aspect further contributed to the efficiency of PIN response, according to its staff.

PAH - PAH staff considered the organisational structure and the decision-making lines as clear and did not share much information about such process.

PAH did not comment on the quality of the decision-making between SV and their organisation, nor about the cost-efficiency of the entire structure including SV and PAH levels. However, the evaluation noted that PAH experienced a challenge possibly related to the coordination with SV. Most notably, one PAH representative mentioned having discovered, while the project had started already, that the MPCA modality required to spend at least 50% of the budget in a limited amount of time, and not knowing the origin and the reason behind such a regulation. The staff was not sure whether the decision came from SV but recommended that similar communications to be announced to the field management in due time, for the project to adjust its planning to strict deadlines.

ODU - ODU staff noted that the organisation was small and its roles quite clear, noting that ODU had built a very strong, close relationship with SV. ODU staff considered their collaboration with SV as optimal and supportive (i.e., in dealing with project design, relocation of funds, or reporting). According to ODU, their organisation had the adequate size to remotely manage the different intervention they were leading.

2.3.1.2. Values brought by decentralised management processes

Most INGOs and all LINGOs noted that the response did not suffer from any inefficiency related to remote-based management, and they never complained about the nature of the decision-making processes. The sole exception related

to INTERSOS RRM field unit which complained about the decentralised decision-making by INTERSOS HQs, reportedly not sufficiently responsive or attentive to the needs of the field unit [the evaluation also noted that INTERSOS reportedly struggled from staff layoff and turnover, as in section 2.1.3.2 Responsiveness and approval request cycle and 2.3.2.2 Adequateness of human resources].

None of the INGOs affirmed perceiving the centralised decision-making role of SV as binding on or limiting their performance and autonomy.

SV staff highlighted that all project related approaches and propositions originated from the partners, while SV role was to approve or rarely discuss them with the INGOs. Echoing the same dynamic, ODU staff referred to the fact that the strategic decisions about its project were regularly discussed with SV.

Overall, no duplication or overlapping of tasks and mandates happened among the different organisations engaged in the response, i.e., SV, INGOs, and LNGOs. While discussing about the quality of decision-making systems, all INGOs commented on their own internal mechanism, but not on SV.

INTERSOS - INTERSOS staff shared little information about the effectiveness of the decision-making authority leading on their projects' strategies, and about the remote-based management. Only one informant commented on the issue, mentioning that all the decisions (with reference to the RRM component of UKR-22.09) were taken by INTERSOS Coordinator in the HQs. Such a decision-making system was not fully effective according to the informant, as information about the project end came abruptly and not leaving the field team the time to hand over the contents of the warehouse, which were instead donated to the local authorities later in 2024 [see also section 2.1.1.1 Formal achievement of outputs and outcomes].

PIN - Overall, PIN staff noted that in 2022 the procedural aspects of the decisions were extremely fast, and decision-making related to SV project was very effective in addressing urgent needs. While currently PIN projects and decision-making fully abide by the procedures enforced by Ukraine and Czech Republic, the staff mentioned that the structure in 2022 was faster and more efficient, which helped PIN to respond quickly.

PAH - PAH staff described that the projects did not experience any challenge related to the remote-based management. More on that, one informant mentioned that at the beginning of the project (UKR 22.3) their field staff had fled Ukraine and relocated in Poland: according to the informant this dynamic turned in PAH favour as this staff could ensure continuity while the field staff was affected by unexpected events (such as air raid, blackouts, etc.).

ODU - ODU staff described that any decision concerning the project amendments or deviation from the original were discussed directly in person with SV HQs. The organisation reportedly did not experience any challenge related to remote-based management, as it could reportedly rely on Ukraine based staff, while its representative travelled from the HQ to the field every three months.

2.3.2. Technical support and resource mobilisation

2.3.2.1. Training and capacity building opportunities

The evaluation found extremely limited information about trainings provided by SV to INGOs, and by INGOs to their own staff and to partner LNGOs.

Nearly none of the LNGOs and INGOs affirmed having received any training or capacity building besides the initial briefing about the organisational policies when they started the job. The main exception to this trend was ODU, which reported being frequently coached by SV on matters related to reporting, project management, and budgeting.

In fact, SV staff explained holding a specific medical expertise, and not being in the position to provide the INGOs with technical backstopping about other sectors. In addition, SV noted that – besides ODU – the other partners included structured INGOs active globally and already having experience in managing humanitarian grants, hence not requiring further core training on project management related matters. While the INGO staff did not express the need for receiving capacity building on specific topics, one PAH representative recommended SV to step in advising newly arrived managers at the INGO, most notably on the requirements, recent updates, tracking systems, and briefing them about SV requirements [Rec. 5].

Interestingly, the evaluation observed that while SV enabled the INGOs to allocate part of the project budget to the capacity development opportunities for their own staff (i.e., about 5% of the total budget), none of the INGOs consulted by the evaluation referred to having participated to any similar opportunity through SV funding.

The evaluation found that LNGOs, in turn, could also rely on their own, well-developed team structure and local cooperation networks, including warehouses, logistics system, distributors, and safety specialists – as affirmed by LNGO staff. Some LNGOs even held an advisory role to INGOs on cooperation options and on the best practices to establish a humanitarian response team [Rec. 6].

Neither LNGOs nor local actors reported any difficulties in project implementation, noting a clear understanding of applied policies, procedures, and schedules – possibly suggesting that they did not require to receive any core capacity building on the topics. In some cases, local actors reportedly set the aid distribution schedules themselves. In one instance, Light of Hope LNGO (INTEROS partners) handled by itself the procurement of relief commodities – just by following INTEROS procurement guidelines, without any issues of quality or timeliness – according to the LNGO staff.

2.3.2.2. Adequateness of human resources

Except for INTEROS, most INGOs and LNGOs considered having had enough experienced staff to implement the various projects activities in an efficient manner, and they could afford expanding their teams when needed. While some INGOs admitted struggling occasionally with their human resources due to the upscaling of their mission (PAH), other INGOs observed their staff capacity became stronger after 2022 (PIN).

INTEROS – The evaluation collected a few complaints from both INTEROS, LNGO, and SV staff concerning the availability and adequateness of human resources at INTEROS.

One INTEROS representative reported that, during the project UKR-22.09, the RRM unit would have suffered from an ineffective management: the project did have a manager whose role was reportedly not very supportive to the field teams, and after a few months the role underwent several changes (turnover). On the same wavelength, the LNGO staff in the Donetsk region – also part of the RRM response – mentioned of key vacant positions at INTEROS staff towards the end of 2023. According to SV, INTEROS lacked a medical coordinator for a while, and their staff turnover often compounded the quality of the response and of the coordination. The evaluation links such statements with the complaints from INTEROS RRM staff concerning the lack of responsiveness by INTEROS HQs [see section 2.1.3.2 Responsiveness and approval request cycle].

On the other hand, INTERSOS staff also shared positive statement concerning the adequateness of the RRM team. Notably, one INTERSOS representative credited the functionality of the RRM team, as this was not hired and trained a project-basis. Instead, the RRM team was permanent at the organisation and supported by several funding sources to ensure continuity. The informant highlighted that the RRM team would not function if hired and supported only by one grant with a short timeframe, as the organisation would not have the time to hire and adequately prepare the resources involved.

The evaluation further noted, based on SV feedback, that INTERSOS normally allocated a larger share of their project budget for human resources (particularly for international positions) – if compared to other INGOs part of the response.

PIN - PIN could reportedly rely on an already established and numerous teams, as confirmed by its staff. PIN staff described that their team was already active before the Russian aggression, and even after February 2022 the majority of its staff members continued working for PIN, even if displaced in other areas of the Country. Moreover, PIN staff reported that while other INGOs already active in the Country temporarily froze their operations upon the Russian aggression, PIN continued its activities. Such a position attracted several staff members previously working for other INGOs in Ukraine, which moved working with PIN.

PAH - According to PAH, the projects effectiveness was not affected by any gap in the human resources deployed by the organisation. One representative mentioned that the team suffered from transition and turnover (during December 2022-January 2023), but such a shift did not affect the quality of the project performance (UKR-22.10).

ODU - ODU did not experience any issue concerning the availability and quality of its personnel, according to its staff.

2.3.2.3. Quality of MEAL and reporting

INGOs established a functional MEAL system during the projects, according to their own staff, which did not present specific issues and included site monitoring and/or PDM as minimum and enabled the delivery of quality reports. The evaluation, however, was not able to confirm such positive, flawless statements.

In fact, LINGO staff did not disclose any information concerning the MEAL systems in place during the projects, suggesting that they might have had no direct or indirect knowledge about them. Moreover, except for PAH, which finally shared several PDM reports with MECS Team, the evaluation could not access the MEAL datasets or reports produced by the other partners. While the evaluation anticipated the lack of formal reports from ODU, due to the nature of their approach which visited the project sites without a formal MEAL system in place, it was more surprised by the lack of materials received by PIN and INTERSOS.

Linked to the lack of information described above, SV staff confirmed to the evaluation having not set any strict requirement to the partners concerning the type of MEAL activities, log frame, projects reports and other project-related evidence (expenditures, beneficiaries lists, etc.) to share with SV.

SV reportedly suggested the partners to share quarterly IATI reports, but not often receiving them. Instead, SV staff affirmed largely relying on verbal evidence shared by partner INGOs during project meetings, and on the final report of each project. Concerning the quality of the final reports received by the partners, these did not always include the figures and information needed by SV to report back to the Donor (SHO). However, based on SV suggestions, such a gap could be rooted in several reasons, stretching from the inadequate capacity of some INGOs to build a structured report (especially ODU), to the lack of clarity in the reporting requirements and template provided to the INGOs.

SV allowed flexible reporting formats to the INGOs, which were reportedly invited to use the templates of other Donors with whom they were already experienced – as affirmed by SV staff. When elaborating the first report to SHO (9 months after the start of the mission), SV reported having struggled to reconcile project figures and identifying the required information across the various reports received by the partners, noting that perhaps 'SV should have been clearer in its requests since the beginning'. On one occasion, the evaluation observed that PIN did not immediately understand the financial reporting requirements by SV [see also 'section 2.3.3.1 Internal and external information flow'] [Rec. 5].

Finally, during the inception phase, the evaluation rated the quality of the received project reports, log frames, and narrative proposals – and the overall quality was not considered high. The evaluation team rated the quality of the documentation available, in terms of completeness and accuracy, on a scale from 1 (very low) to 5 (very high), as follows:

- INTERSOS UKR-22.5: 5 out of 5
- INTERSOS UKR-22.6: 4 out of 5
- INTERSOS UKR-22.09: 3 out of 4
- ODU UKR-23: 1 out of 5 (missing information and unclear structure)
- PAH UKR-22.3: 3 out of 5 (achievements were not clear, otherwise it's 4 for overall documents)
- PAH UKR-22.10: 3 out of 5
- PIN UKR-22.2: 3 out of 5

2.3.3. Coordination and information sharing

2.3.3.1. Internal and external information flow

Most of the INGO staff did not comment on the quality of the information flow between their organisation and SV and with the LNGOs.

Among the limited information about the coordination between INGOs and LNGOs, the evaluation observed that PIN credited the efficiency of their coordination with Pomishka [see section 2.3.1.1 Understanding of organisational roles and efficiency implications] and ODU with its local partners. In turn, LNGOs described the quality of the information flow with INGOs as sufficiently good and swift.

The evaluation recorded that the staff from all INGOs expressed a general sense of satisfaction with SV flexibility. PIN and PAH staff also complained about limited inefficiencies in the communication between their organisations and SV: PAH referred to the late notification by SV concerning the spending pressure for MPCA [see also section 2.3.1.1 Understanding of organisational roles and efficiency implications], while PIN reported misunderstanding the donor reporting requirements set by SV, forcing the team to internally adjust its financial reporting to meet the deadline set by SV in the last minute [see also section 2.3.2.3 Quality of MEAL and reporting]. Interestingly, one INTERSOS staff – while not directly engaged in the communication with SV – mentioned he missed the 'vertical of communication between the donor and the implementing partner'.

When describing the quality of the exchanges within their own units, all the INGO and LNGOs staff shared positive feedback describing their approach as 'well-coordinated'. Overall, the INGOs and LNGOs teams reportedly performed effectively to adapt and respond to shocks, which were happening on a daily basis.

LNGOs mentioned having taken all the necessary steps to ensure a smooth risk management process – from a fast communication with beneficiaries to an increase in the project staff numbers, and there was probably nothing they would have advised to improve the capacity of the projects to mitigate risks any further [rec. 6].

The evaluation collected the following examples of best practices illustrating the organisational capacity to flexibly respond to unexpected circumstances [Rec. 7]:

- INTERSOS Collective centres activated special protocols to assist especially vulnerable individuals, such as people with disabilities. During the first days upon their arrivals, the project staff ensured continuous support to the newcomer, who was never left alone.
- PIN team performed high flexibility, noting that the organisation had a hotline for emergency, and teams of psychologists and mobile teams ready to support affected people at any time.
- PIN could rely on its core funds, which the organisation could flexibly allocate based on the emerging needs in the field without the time and compliance limitations set by the usual donor systems.
- Some LNGOS had a pool of volunteers on standby who would respond quickly and help with distributions or unloading shipments.
- LNGOs and local actors' capacity to draw solid project plans and priorities, and to promote a clear definition of roles and responsibilities of each team member.
- Effective communication within the LNGO and local authorities' team and coordination with various stakeholders.
- Service providers would bring in additional people from other sites to catch up on the deadlines whenever work schedules were disrupted due to weather conditions.

In terms of lessons learnt from the projects, the evaluation collected the following observations [Rec. 7]:

- INTERSOS RRM budget should consider including a contingency line dedicated to un-foreseen events, to be able to react timely without developing budgets and do budget reallocations.
- ODU recalled their need to improve their organisational capacity to compare field needs and necessities. Due to their small scale, ODU staff noted relying on the information provided by some of the local mayors about the rehabilitation needs in their area. However, they did not have an overview of the needs in the region, hence they could not determine whether another village had higher needs than the one under the responsibility of the mayor they consulted. ODU staff expressed the need to access a mechanism allowing them to compare the needs among the villages within a same area [Rec. 5].

2.3.3.2. Coordination with the local authorities and humanitarian actors

The communication between the local authorities and both LNGOs and INGOs was deemed effective by all the interviewed participants, confirming that the response benefitted from a comprehensive support from the local authorities. For further information about the levels of consultation held with the local authorities and community representatives, please see section 2.2.2.2 Consultations with community members and authorities.

The evaluation collected only one evidence about 'weak' coordination between the response and the authorities. Reportedly, in 2022 PIN team would have not adequately informed the local authority about the plans, priorities, reporting and procedural requirements of their humanitarian project in Western Ukraine. Therefore, the local authorities would have had to do everything at their own discretion.

Despite the positive feedback on the coordination between the authorities and the project implementers, INTERSOS staff recommended the establishment of an additional layer between the INGO and the local authorities, such as local CSO,

local NGOs, or local actors, which would support building the capacities of the local authorities in dealing with humanitarian assistance [Rec. 6].

With reference to the quality of the coordination between the response and other humanitarian actors and clusters, only PIN staff shared their comment on the issue. Reportedly, they affirmed that at the time of the project humanitarian coordination was very poor to non-existent, as OCHA had just started to establish its clusters mechanism.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Rec. 1 Consider upscaling the cash assistance if the aim is to improve the beneficiaries needs quickly and significantly

The main need of the sampled beneficiary population – as of mid-2023, right before receiving the assistance – was cash/MPCA. The type of assistance received by the beneficiaries, i.e., winterization kits, SNFI, and assistive devices, while relevant to their situation, generally produced only a moderate improvement on their needs – possibly because other most pressing needs still remained unaddressed.

Based on the assumption above, the evaluation suggests that – in case the response aimed to quickly assist the target community's needs and generate the most significant impact in the short term – SV should have focused its support on projects delivering cash-based modalities.

The evaluation further highlights the importance for SV to access solid, comparative evidence (if available) concerning the ongoing priority needs of a region, for example those included multisectoral needs assessment and humanitarian needs overviews. Such information could be found either among the resources publicly shared among the international community, or separately commissioned by SV to local research firms. Such a secondary data review, combined with the review of the context analysis and needs analysis elaborated by potential project partners, might help SV determine the relevance of one intervention against another, while not exclusively relying on the information disclosed by the applicant NGOs.

Rec. 2 Support partners, especially in the sudden onset of a crisis, in handling procurement and logistics processes

The evaluation could observe that even the most experienced INGOs – among those participating in the study – struggled at handling the procurement process, either at the very beginning of the crisis or after a few months. Such difficulties most likely unfolded because of a variety of factors, from the uncertainty of the events happening in Ukraine, the very tight timeline to deliver the assistance, and the recruitment of new personnel managing the response.

The evaluation recommends SV to anticipate such risks by allocating a specific support line to help the grantee organisations planning and implementing their procurement processes since the early stages of the projects. Specifically, SV might consider:

- Hiring a procurement/supply chain consultant, not necessarily based in the field but holding the required Country experience, in addition to the technical expertise related to the management of local and international procurement matters. The consultant could support partners – upon their requests - in defining the best

procurement protocols to activate in a given context, and in managing and adapting their logistics and supply chain mechanisms based on the ongoing context instability and market fluctuations.

- Alternatively, SV might require the grantee organisations to allocate a budget line to hire procurement and logistics advisors/consultancy fees, highlighting the reasons for such a need and the overall goal of such support to their project performance.

In both cases, the support should address the organisation responsible to directly handle the procurement mechanisms, e.g., in case an INGO delegates such tasks to a local organisation, both entities shall directly benefit from the support.

Based on the issues observed by the evaluation while interviewing the staff, key areas to advise include:

- Monitoring of inflation rates and commodities prices in the local markets and surrounding countries' markets
- Best practices to cope with volatility of local currency and anticipate risks of financial loss for the procurement of relief items
- Availability of local and international shipping mechanisms and comparative analysis of associated costs, including strengths and weaknesses of each option
- Custom regulation, banking barriers, and time efficiency considerations related to international procurement
- Standard operating procedures of international procurement mechanisms and management of related contract, including for framework agreements.
- Standard operating procedures of local procurement mechanisms, including insights on the Ukrainian law and regulatory framework

Rec. 3 Monitor the application of safety standards by field implementers, and keep track of the beneficiary sense of safety

Delivering assistance in a volatile context systematically exposed to security risks is always challenging, even to the most experienced service providers with a sound knowledge of the context. While SV should rely on and trust the knowledge of its partner NGOs in ensuring a safe delivery of the support, the evaluation recommends to regularly monitor:

- Which practical safety protocols and risk mitigation measures are in place when the field implementers deliver the assistance in the field. Monitoring the availability of safety policies in the HQ of an NGO, which eventually does not even directly work with partners, does provide little evidence to the scope.
- Whether the final beneficiaries feel safe while receiving the assistance, and if any measure can be improved to avoid exposing them to additional risks for the sake of receiving the assistance (e.g., reducing crowds in the distribution sites, select underground distribution sites, etc.)

The suggestion above was driven by the feedback collected by the evaluation among INTERSOS beneficiaries, where nearly 1/3 of the cases reported feeling unsafe during distributions, and even experienced a security incident at the distribution site. While incidents and low sense of safety can be common in areas close to the frontline, the evaluation recommends the needs for SV to verify – by regularly requesting field reports and by collecting beneficiary feedback – if:

- Partner NGOs/assistance providers are doing their utmost to reduce risk exposure to the beneficiaries.
- The risk threshold adopted by partner NGOs/assistance providers to deliver humanitarian aid is acceptable to SV values and principles.

Rec. 4 Maintain an active CARM across the response to quickly track users' satisfaction and verify red flags

The evaluation highlights the importance of implementing partners to promote the use of CARM across the target communities, to maintain the system operational and responsive, and to regularly report on its findings by analysing trends over time.

Since emergency projects might not have the time to conduct an adequate level of consultations with the beneficiary community during the project design phase, it is important for partners to activate a CARM to ensure that the communities can raise their opinion or complaints about any matter related to the assistance they received, or to the organisation. CARM findings represent valuable evidence which the organisation can use to review their approaches (e.g., increase quantity of assistance, change distribution site, etc.) or to address eventual discontents felt by one or more segment of the community (e.g., it can anticipate the raising of social tensions between beneficiary vs. non-beneficiary groups in a given community, provide insights concerning the reputation of an organisation in the local level, etc.).

While speaking with PAH, the evaluation observed that the organisation increased the MPCA amount upon having reviewed several complaints of recipients claiming the original value was not enough. Such an instance can be considered a best practice, where CARM evidence – possibly triangulated with other PDM information and market analysis – can inform a valid project review to enhance the relevance of the support to the local community.

The evaluation recommends SV to highlight to its partners the accountability values of CARM, to regularly access CARM findings/reports elaborated by its partners, and to discuss with the organisations how to manage eventual dynamics emerging from such evidence.

Rec. 5 Promote SV role to develop partner capacities and closely support them as needed

The evaluation observed that SV's support role and personnel's efforts significantly varied based on the profile of the partners: smaller NGOs required more regular support and coaching than larger NGOs. Specifically, the size of SV grantee organisations (in the Country of operations), and the history and the track records of their projects affected the nature of SV staff roles to support their performance.

Should SV consider supporting relatively small organisations in the future, it shall also establish its own organisational structure accordingly – i.e., by increasing the number of human resources (focal points or project officers) acting as the main liaison between SV and the partner NGO, and being responsible for the information flow between the organisations, induction for the new NGO staff, operational/financial/MEAL reporting and related coaching, and respect for quality and compliance matters.

In addition, the evaluation observed that the project reporting (either narrative, financial, or MEAL related) was not properly defined. As a consequence, SV struggled in elaborating proper donor reports and lacked access to clear project information, while the partners occasionally misunderstood deadlines and SV reporting requests. To promote an efficient reporting mechanism between SV and the partners, SV shall determine in advance its reporting requirements – including templates and required timeline – for the narrative reports and indicator progress trackers, financial reports, MEAL reports, and eventual other topics (i.e., CARM, incident reports/red flags, etc.). Such requirements should try to address the information needs of SV in the first place (and those of its donor), while also being realistic in terms of amount of required information (not to overload the partner's work). SV Focal Points should ensure that partners are capacitated and have proper understanding of the reporting requirements of an SV grant, and to regularly provide coaching as needed.

Finally, the evaluation recalls the importance to hold structured records of a project performance at both NGO and SV levels, besides the compliance with the donor requests. In fact, written evidence can significantly contribute to the organisational learning and to better steer strategic responses, especially in those cases when the NGOs are affected by turnover, and the organisational knowledge risks migrating with the personnel which just left.

Rec. 6 Consider investing more in the partnership with local organisations in light of their expertise and capacity

While the evaluation collected positive evidence about the performance and the role of major INGOs – especially PIN and PAH – it also noted that LNGOs proved being quite capable of managing the operations in the field, and to run strategic coordination with the local authorities. On this note, the evaluation brings into discussion the actual added value of INGOs against LNGOs – since the latter did not seem to fully require the technical competence of their international counterparts to effectively manage the grant.

While the evaluation recalls holding very limited evidence to draw a substantial conclusion on the topic, it still recommends SV to consider the feasibility of directly supporting LNGOs – especially by activating the suggested enhancements in SV organizational structure and capacity building role (see previous recommendation).

Rec. 7 Take stock from best practices and learning keys to deliver a flexible, humanitarian response

The evaluation collected a range of experiences by the partners engaged in SV response, which can represent a series of best practices for field partners worth replicating during future interventions for the sake of ensure a good level of flexibility and adaptation to the needs of the most vulnerable.

- Collective centres, reception centres should be equipped with standby capacity to assist eventual people with disabilities – either motorial, mental, or physical – during their stay at the facility, especially if they are alone or not adequately accompanied.
- Organisations should activate a hotline for individuals experiencing an emergency, with a team of psychologists to communicate with the individuals in need and an active referral system to support the community.
- LNGOs should rely on teams of volunteers as a standby capacity to help with distributions or unloading shipments.
- RRM initiatives shall allocate a budget line for contingency costs to cover, to be able to react timely to unforeseen events without developing new budgets and pursue budget reallocations.
- Ensure to have proper coordination mechanisms established with the local authorities in the areas of operations.

4. ANNEXES

- I. Terms of Reference
- II. Analytical Framework
- III. Projects factsheets
- IV. List of Key Informants Interviewed
- V. Program documentation