



Rapid Needs Assessment Report

Ukraine Invasion – Supporting Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia



Photo credit: CARE Caucasus

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RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT – Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia

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Introduction

Just weeks after the onset of the February 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, the country's humanitarian situation surpassed even the predicted worst-case scenarios. Neighboring countries are seeing vast influxes of refugees – largely women and children. In total, more than 4.2 million people, including 1.4 million children, have now left Ukraine in search of safety. The U.N. estimates that 18 million people will be relocated due to the conflict, including 7.1 million who are likely to be internally displaced. This massive displacement of the population is happening across the Ukrainian borders. While Poland, Moldova, and Romania have currently accepted the most refugees, Georgia is also becoming a shelter for Ukrainian people, and their number continues to rise.

According to the state, as reported to UNHCR, the available data identified 20,723 Ukrainians in Georgia before 3 April 2022. The Georgian government reports that since the war, as of 3 April March, 19,503 Ukrainians have entered Georgia and 7,329 have left the country. Out of these 14,095 adult refugees, 8,866 (63%) are female and 5,229 (37%) male. The majority, 72% (14,095), are aged 18 and over, while 28% (5,408) are below 18. UNHCR also notes that 131 Ukrainians have applied for asylum.

As there are currently no direct travel opportunities from Ukraine to Georgia, most refugees transit Poland to arrive in Georgia via plane. However, relatively smaller groups of Ukrainians have entered the country from the Russian-Georgian land border. Moreover, several hundred Ukrainian tourists arrived in Georgia before the war and are still unable to return. UNHCR protection monitoring reports reveal that Ukrainians are choosing Georgia as a target destination country for three main reasons: 1. Family ties or friends; 2. Georgian and mixed ethnicity; and 3. cultural similarities. From the beginning of the war, the Georgian population and business communities have provided significant levels of support to Ukrainians. In recent weeks, many Georgians have welcomed Ukrainians into their families. While, hotels and hostels have offered free accommodation, and health clinics, pharmacies, and other service providers have donated their products and services to conflict-affected individuals from Ukraine.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

This rapid needs assessment aims to better understand the priorities of Ukrainian refugees and the barriers they are facing in Georgia. The assessment will help CARE and partner organizations design and plan a Humanitarian Response Strategy for displaced populations inside the country. The findings will thereafter be widely disseminated among civil society representatives, the Ukraine response coordination group led by UNHCR, and governmental agencies planning to provide assistance to the conflict-affected Ukrainian population.

CARE Caucasus is part of UNHCR coordination working groups and keeps in close collaboration with all important stakeholders providing humanitarian relief to Ukrainians across the country. CARE Caucasus aims to ensure that adequate humanitarian support is provided to people in need, especially the most vulnerable groups, such as women, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities.

Overall Objective

The objective of the assessment is to determine emergency humanitarian response needs in Georgia. It moreover seeks to provide information on how CARE programs should be tailored to fit the critical needs of the conflict-affected population.

The specific objectives of this assessment are to:

1. Understand the self-prioritized needs of people displaced into Georgia by the Ukraine conflict;
2. Understand who among them (profiles) are particularly vulnerable (based on location/age);
3. Understand the main vulnerabilities and how they might be addressed;
3. Understand the current location and settlement status of displaced persons, as well as their intentions for future movements;
4. Understand their security and dignity concerns, and identify the type of information they would like to receive while in Georgia.

Methodology

The Rapid Need Assessment questionnaire was prepared on 15 March 2022 and data collection started on 17 March. Within the survey, 16 close-ended questions were included under five main sections, regarding: a) respondents and household composition; b) needs; c) security and protection; d) movement and current settlement; and e) access to information and services.

The assessment included 1) an online survey with 220 Ukrainian families in Georgia; individuals stuck in the country due to the war or who entered Georgia because of the conflict. Within the study, convenience sampling was considered the optimal method of assessment. Due to the lack of unified and consistent records on displaced Ukrainian citizens, coupled with limited access to direct communication with refugees, an online survey format was selected as a quick and easy solution for conducting the rapid needs assessment. Also incorporated were 2) ten key informant interviews with displaced people, volunteer groups, and NGO actors.

The survey was shared publicly through the CARE Caucasus Facebook page, face-to-face meetings, and peer organization channels. The questionnaire was available online – accessible via a link and QR code printed on cards that were distributed throughout airports and in places where Ukrainians tend to gather. The KIs were completed both over the phone and face-to-face with Ukrainian and Russian speaking staff.

Limitations

The small sample and survey method used limit the representativeness and disaggregation of this data. In addition, due to restricted internet access and variable digital tools, the questionnaire was not equally accessible across the target population, thus creating issues with limited selection.

KEY FINDINGS

Profile of the Respondents

The vast majority (87%) of survey respondents are female and only 13% male. The average respondent age is 40; with 58% of participants within the 35-55 age group, 32% in the 18-34 group, and only 10% aged 56 or over.

In total, the number of family members of those surveyed amounts to 650 people. The average size of a displaced family in Georgia is three, 59% of which are female and 41% male. The table below summarizes the composition of family members who arrived in Georgia alongside their distribution by gender. Out of these 650 people, 14% are children younger than five, 33% are children aged between 6-18, 41% are adults between 19-55, and 12% are aged 56 and above.

	%	Sex Disaggregation
Children <5	14%	Female - 48% / Male - 52%
Children 6-18	33%	Female - 41% / Male - 59%
Adults 19-55	41%	Female - 75% / Male - 25%
Elderly 56+	12%	Female - 68% / Male - 32%

The survey identified the particularly vulnerable groups of pregnant or breastfeeding women (n=12) and people with disabilities (n=34).

Movement and Location

The survey participants were asked when they entered Georgia – with the vast majority (80%) of respondents reporting that they arrived after the start of the war. Most of these refugees are now located in big cities, for example, 56% are in Tbilisi, 24% in Batumi, 12% in Kutaisi, however small numbers of displaced people are also living in different regions, such as Telavi, Bolnisi, Tskaltubo, Gudauri, Kobuleti, Zugdidi, Tetritskaro, and Martkopi.

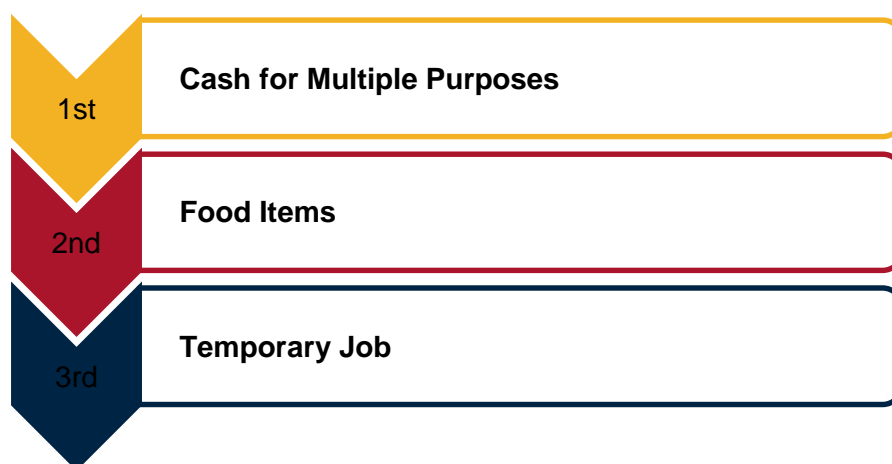
In terms of accommodation, 38% of respondents are housed with host families (relatives, acquaintances, or friends); 15% are staying in hotels, offered by the private sector for free; and 12% are residing in a hotel or rented flat, funded by the government of Georgia. While, 29% stated that they are paying for their accommodation (21% in rented houses or flats and 8% in hotels or guesthouses), and 6% indicated other forms of accommodation, including shelter provided by friends, at no cost, or via civil society organizations.

During the survey, the participants were asked if their family intended to stay in their current location, to move to another location, or to leave Georgia within the next month. Almost half (45%) of the interviewees do not plan to move or change accommodation in the upcoming month; 38% indicated that they do not know whether they will change location or accommodation; 5% are expecting to relocate to a hotel sponsored by the government of Georgia; 4% are planning to leave Georgia; 4% aim to move to relatives/friends/rented houses; and the remaining 4% indicated the answer “Yes, to another place”.

The respondents were also asked whether they expected other family members to join them in Georgia, where 53% answered “No”, 16% stated that they did expect others to join, and 31% replied “I do not know/Refuse to answer”.

Priority Needs

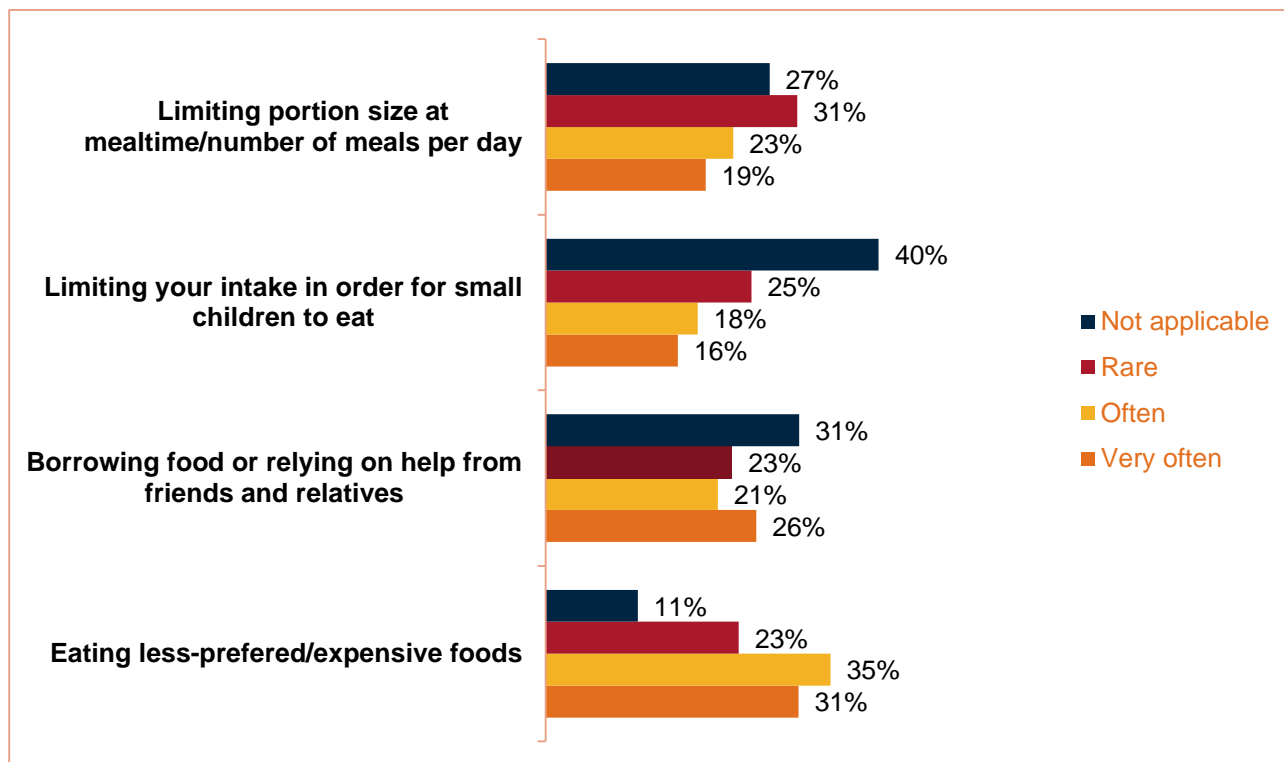
The respondents were asked to choose their three top priority needs from a detailed list. Ranked as the top priority, cash was the most commonly indicated answer, followed by food items, with temporary jobs identified as the third priority need, and accommodation and housing taking fourth place.



It is worth mentioning that these priority needs did not vary significantly between Tbilisi and the regions. The first priority need, Cash for Multiple Purposes, was emphasized across all locations. In Tbilisi, 19% of the respondents mentioned food as a priority need, while a larger percentage (32%) considered the necessity for food in the regions. The third priority was different for individuals outside of Tbilisi. Although people in Tbilisi regard jobs and employment as their third priority, people in the regions further prioritized accommodation and housing. One possible explanation for this finding being that Ukrainians in Tbilisi are more secure in terms of accommodation – there are more options for free shelter due to the concentration of private sector and volunteer groups in the city. Of those located outside Tbilisi, 17% reported that they are paying for accommodation in a hotel, whereas only 1% of Ukrainians stated the same in the capital. However, an almost equivalent number of people are renting private flats in Tbilisi (24%) and in the regions (23%).

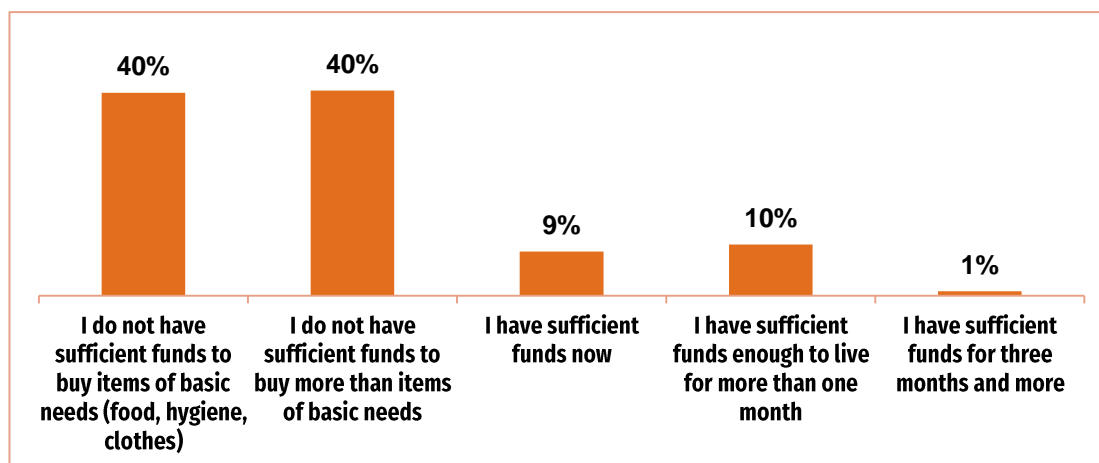
Nutrition and Food

The survey participants were asked how often in the last seven days they were eating less of their preferred and less expensive food, relying on friends or relatives, borrowing food, limiting portion sizes at mealtimes, or reducing intake in order for children to eat. Around 31% of the interviewees stated that during the last seven days they very often ate less preferred/expensive food, and 26% claimed that they very regularly borrow food or rely on friends and relatives. Comparatively, 35% indicated that they often eat less preferred/expensive food and 21% frequently borrow food or rely on friends and relatives' help. Moreover, 23% often restrict either portion sizes at mealtimes or the number of meals per day, and 18% limit their intake to help feed younger children.



Financial Stability and Employment Opportunities

The respondents were moreover prompted to specify their financial stability. Of the interviewees, 40% disclosed that they do not currently have sufficient funds to buy items for basic needs (clothes, food, hygiene), another 40% do not have adequate funds to buy beyond their essential needs, while 8% do have sufficient funds at present, 9% have enough funding for one month, and only 1% have the capital to live for three months or more.



All of the priority needs identified by the survey respondents relate to economic requirements. Multiple respondents mentioned that temporary job opportunities also constitute an essential need. Due to the high unemployment level in Georgia, it will become problematic for Ukrainian people to access employment. Moreover, Ukrainians cannot apply to every type of work, and the language barrier will be a further limitation on the job market. It is also important to consider that the majority of arrivals are women with children, consequently they will not be able to work without proper shelter and appropriate childcare services.

Healthcare

Healthcare was a much-demanded need identified by the respondents; with the specific target groups being children, the elderly, and people with special health problems. Moreover, some of the respondents mentioned that they require healthcare for pregnancy and SRHR services. While, a request for dental services was also identified. Several individuals reiterated the requirements of displaced people with special needs, including individuals with chronic illnesses, mental health concerns, and physical disabilities, as well as particular medicine for diabetes. In total, 94% of the respondents noted that they would like more information about healthcare services.

The government of Georgia announced on 5 April 2022 that Ukrainian citizens entering Georgia between 1 February and 15 April will receive free medical services, including: immunization, maternal and child healthcare, mental health management, diabetes management, and medication, as well as services related to Covid-19. It is also notable that Ukrainian citizens undergoing rare disease treatment or permanent replacement therapy will be treated and referral services will be provided when necessary.

Shelter

Over 60% of survey respondents are not paying rent for their accommodation; they are distributed across accommodation paid variously by the government, the private sector, or host families. Tbilisi City Hall is also providing free accommodation (500 displaced individuals at this point). Throughout the regions, the same scheme has not been applied, and municipalities only offer support via referrals to private sector initiatives. Volunteer campaigns were however delivered in Kutaisi, Batumi, and other Georgian cities; the local population were involved on a charitable basis and helped with accommodation issues for Ukrainian citizens.

As a result, current shelter conditions cannot be considered a sustainable solution – free hotels, hostels, and other shelters will ultimately need to revert to their typical operation. UNHCR, World Vision, and the Danish Refugee Council are currently focusing on accommodation cash assistance for Ukrainian refugees. Nevertheless, as the City Hall initiative, organized by the Tbilisi mayor, is fully booked and private sector resources are diminishing, further solutions for new accommodation must be implemented with governmental support.

Education

The survey participants identified access to education for their children as an important feature. During the key informant interviews, it was identified that certain children have been involved in distance learning from Ukraine. Some parents also claimed that they would like their children to attend Georgian schools.

The Ministry of Education highlights that various possibilities have been made available via representatives of the Georgian education sector. Primary, secondary, higher, and VET educational programs are being adapted for Ukrainian citizens on a countrywide level. Preparations to open a Ukrainian sector school have commenced and it is expected to be ready in around one month. At present, 300 families have moreover enrolled in the Georgian school. The lessons are in English, with special translation support provided in Ukrainian if required.

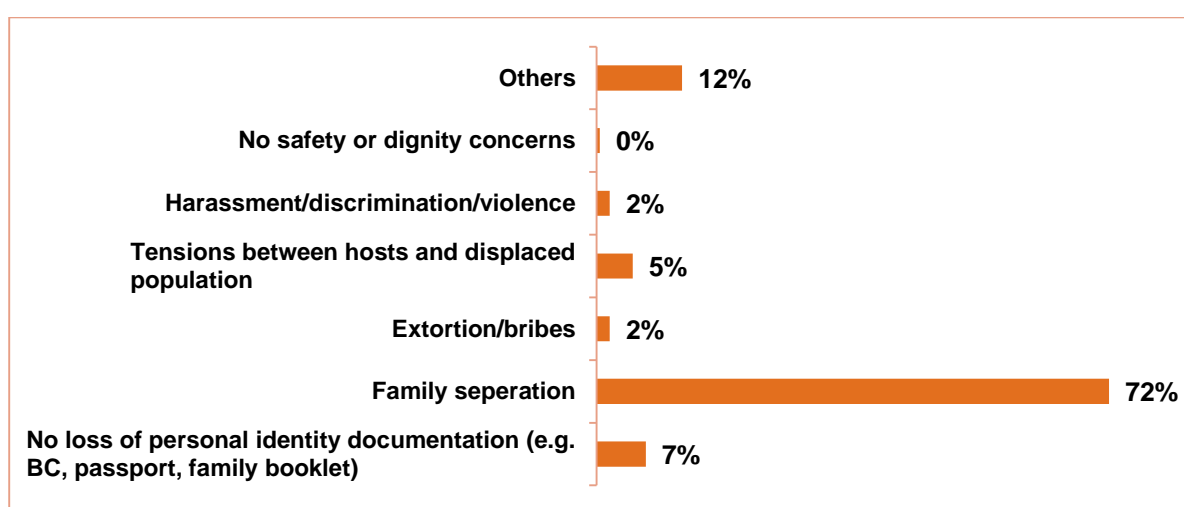
Although some refugees have already registered in Georgian schools, many families still need support with the registration process. More precisely, they require information and assistance in processing documentation. When questioned about educational priorities, some parents intend to keep their children in distance learning programs, while others prioritize registration in Georgian schools. The main challenge being that learning directly in the Ukrainian language is only available in Tbilisi, not throughout Georgia. Unless the government makes options accessible in other cities, this in turn may drive more Ukrainians into Tbilisi and place further pressure on the availability of accommodation and schooling. A few KII respondents also listed access to laptops

and the internet as an important need, particularly for children who are still undertaking distance learning from Ukraine.

Protection Risks

Protection needs were not prioritized within the primary needs of the participants, nevertheless there are several aspects to be considered. The lack or loss of personal identity documentation was regarded as a main issue for 7% of respondents, while several individuals also mentioned tensions between hosts and the displaced population. A few cases were reported concerning harassment, discrimination, and violence. As the study demonstrates, family separation remains the foremost dignity and safety issue, as indicated by 72% of the respondents.

While there are no major concerns regarding violence, there have been reported cases of sexual violence. It is significant that the majority of those surveyed by CARE Caucasus were not aware of any hotlines. It is possible that the absence or loss of personal identity documentation, or improper accommodation and shelter conditions, places vulnerable groups (women, children, the elderly) under greater protection risks.

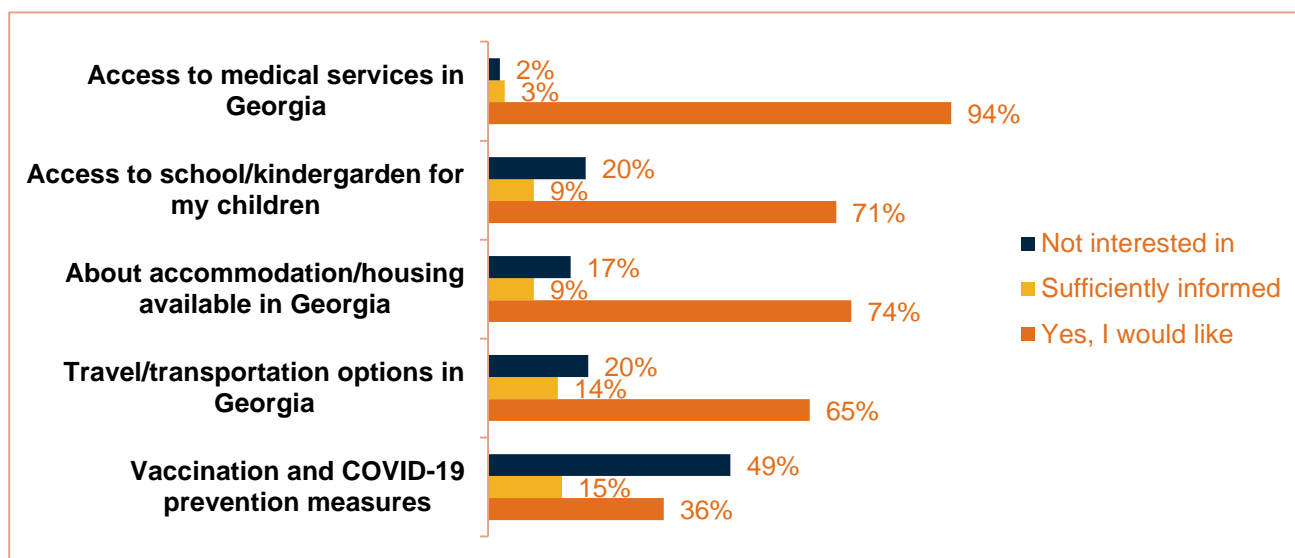


Several respondents mentioned that they require legal and administrative support for the following topics: how to receive refugee status, information about banking, notary and other legal procedures, legally staying in Georgia, passport issues, and the loss of registration documentation. Some respondents also mentioned that there were some cases of tension, due to their being confused with Russians.

Access to Information

The topic the respondents would most like to receive information on is access to medical services in Georgia. In total, 94% of the interviewees would like information about the subject, moreover 74% are interested in details regarding accommodation and housing in Georgia, 71% seek information on schools and kindergartens, and 65% are interested in local travel and transportation options. The least requested topic is COVID-19 prevention measures and vaccination.

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Of the respondents, 61% have no information on available Georgian hotlines providing essential information to people from Ukraine, while 58% do not know where to address cases of violence, security concerns, harassment, or abuse. On the other hand, 37% are aware of these hotlines and 40% know who to address in the abovementioned cases.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Livelihood Support and Economic Recovery

Economic needs were the highest priority for individuals displaced from Ukraine. While at present most basic needs are being met (particularly for those currently residing in hotels), the anticipation of change or the depletion of assistance has both the service providers and affected persons highly concerned.

As a result, humanitarian actors should:

- Provide direct cash assistance to impacted vulnerable households and families on the basis of transparent targeting criteria;
- Coordinate cash assistance schemes to avoid duplication and integrate cash with in-kind programs;
- Partner with the government to ensure the mid-to-longer term continuation of services, such as shelter, food, and distribution, in select locations;
- Partner with municipalities to help them set up hotlines and support services for the availability of accommodation in cities, wherever available;
- Explore opportunities to support displaced people with Georgian language classes and linkages to livelihoods, especially by working with the private sector.

Access to Education and Early Childhood Development

- Work with the Ministry of Education to make the Ukrainian language more widely available in schools and make Georgian language classes accessible;
- Work with the private sector, Ministry of Education, and NGOs to provide access to equipment and the internet to ensure remote education opportunities for children from Ukraine;
- Work with the government and local municipalities to provide information and support registrations for preschools and schools.

Medical Services

- Work with the media, government, and local municipalities to provide information about the available medical services;
- Provide information about COVID-related risks, restrictions, and regulations, as well as the availability of vaccinations, in the Ukrainian language;
- Partner with the Ministry of Health to develop a strategy to improve the provision of care to Ukrainians, with language support either via translators or designated medical personnel with additional language skills (potentially Russian and English), and to provide informative materials in Ukrainian;
- Work with private sector operators and online healthcare platforms to designate medical personnel with the relevant language skills;
- Ensure access to medication and assistive devices for at-risk groups and those relying on regular medical support, such as older people, children, people with disabilities, and individuals with chronic conditions.

Needs and Protection of Girls and Women

- Work with the authorities to provide better guidance and support for effective prevention, protection and safeguarding measures, including through increased screening at borders to identify individuals, especially women and unaccompanied and separated children;
- Support the respective authorities to maintain **humane, dignified, age, gender and disability-responsive border practices** e.g. by deploying women among Immigration and other border officials; by deploying more protection personnel, including child protection experts, etc.
- Work with the public sector and local municipalities to help them collect evidence from all genders to help plan gender-sensitive responses; while also aiding their understanding of the distinct needs, priorities, and capacities of women, girls, boys, and men from diverse groups;
- Support single-parent families and families with childcare support services, as many refugees seeking employments are sole caregivers;
- Ensure that girls and women have access to reproductive healthcare and childcare services;
- Ensure that girls, women, and people of all genders are aware of the risks of violence and sexual harassment, are informed of how to access the hotline and gender-based violence services, and understand effective prevention and protection measures. Work with the government to ensure that the hotline providers have relevant language skills;
- Within communities, continually update and share GBV services and referral pathways in languages and formats accessible to all groups, especially girls and women;
- Start and continue working with women's rights organizations to respond to protection risks;
- Develop accountability mechanisms that are inclusive and take account of the preferred media and communication methods used by different groups in vulnerable situations. In addition, ensure avenues for two-way communication for people in need of humanitarian support, particularly so they are able to give feedback or log complaints about services provided and receive timely responses;
- Ensure that safeguarding risks for vulnerable groups are assessed and that individuals working with the refugee population are aware of such risks, and understand how to report and follow safeguarding policies and codes of conduct;