

## “Duty of Care” package for local humanitarian responders in Ukraine

A review, driven by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the Humanitarian NGO Platform in Ukraine, and the Alliance of Ukrainian Civil Society organisations, has been carried out with the aim to establish a response-wide accepted DoC package that can be integrated into donor budgets and enhance the safety and well-being of local humanitarian workers and volunteers.

Review methodology involved extensive interviews and focus group discussions with various stakeholders, to gather insights on current practices and challenges related to DoC.

The review defines DoC as a moral or legal obligation to ensure the safety and security of personnel from physical and mental harm, emphasizing the need for a common understanding and implementation of safety and security standards among humanitarian actors in Ukraine. It should be applied beyond an organization “own” staff and downstream to implementing partners. DoC it is not limited to providing the right equipment or to improve safety and security management including mental health; it embraces several aspects such as aid delivery mechanisms, coordination, and fair partnership principles.

Key findings reveal significant gaps in the existing regulatory framework, as Ukraine lacks specific legislation on DoC, relying instead on broader labour protection laws and highlighted the challenges faced by local responders, including inadequate access to personal protective equipment (PPE) and insurance, which are crucial for their safety during humanitarian operations.

### **Duty of Care minimum package**

The proposed DoC minimum package for NGO staff and volunteers working in front line areas should include the following features:

- 1) Accident and life insurance for NGOs/CSOs staff and volunteers.
- 2) Psychosocial support (PSS) measures.
- 3) Individual first aid kits (IFAK).
- 4) Personal protective equipment (PPE).
- 5) Training on the usage and application of DoC minimum package items coupled to an introductory training on safety and security management.

The rationale behind the proposed minimum package is that no equipment should be distributed without first building the capacity of the people who will use it.

Donors and large NGOs providing sub-grants to local organisations should raise awareness of the possibility of including DoC packages in project proposals and how to access them.

Minimum reporting standards on the use of DoC packages should be established, while providing clear, simplified procedures for local organisations to use.

Additional optional measures can be considered in the DoC packages in terms of equipment, and soft measures.

### **Recommendations**

#### **Minimum Duty of Care package**

- The definition of a minimum and optimum DoC packages should be widely discussed and finally adopted by all actors within the humanitarian community. A non-binding common framework agreement signed by donor agencies, UN agencies and NGO/CSO umbrella organisations could be a valuable tool for harmonising safety and security practices and procedures.
- Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to commit to the principle of DoC and endorse the minimum DoC package.

### **Recommendations to Donors**

#### **Funding and financial management**

- In order to promote localisation, Ukrainian NGOs/CSOs are calling for more flexible funding, lean procedures and medium to long-term funding. Projects should include overheads costs for covering structural and administrative costs that are not directly linked to the project activities, supporting the organisations in its core functions. It is recommended that donors make this mandatory for their partners (ie. Include in contracts) or, at a minimum, use it as a non-mandatory criteria when evaluating proposals and budgets.

### **Adaptive support packages**

- Taking into account the diversity of humanitarian actors operating close to the front line and their different levels of compliance following due diligence assessments, it is recommended to offer them support packages adapted to their internal organisation

## **Recommendations for humanitarian aid implementation**

### **Coordination**

- Foster humanitarian coordination between actors at Oblast and, in some cases, in Hromada level, increasing the level of synergy, especially in evacuation operations and assistance in hard-to-reach areas, through co-working spaces, coordination centres, information-sharing events between large INGO, NNGO and smaller organisations.

### **Capacity Building**

- Focus capacity-building support and organisational development in the form of mentoring rather than short “conducted and forgotten” trainings. It is recommended that this approach is adopted by the “funding organisation”.
- A coordination mechanism for existing capacity building initiatives is highly needed in order to avoid duplication of efforts and to standardize the contents. NGOs/CSOs umbrella organisation should play a role in coordination of these initiatives.

### **Data protection**

- Coordination centers and other organizations that accumulate data on beneficiaries, local actors, volunteers should allocate resources in project budgets for the development of data protection measures given the sensitivity of these data.

### **IDP support and evacuation issues**

- Increase understanding of why and to which extent people are returning to insecure areas through an evidence gathering research to inform the response and reduce the risk of causing harm.
- There should a lobbying and advocacy action of humanitarian actors toward the Government in order to clarify the legal framework on evacuations

## **Recommendations to INGOs/NNGOs/CSOs**

### **Local organizations’ responsibilities**

- Local organisations must ensure compliance by their employees and volunteers with safety and security standards such as reporting about cases, adopt mandatory training on humanitarian principles, and appropriate use of equipment.
- In a medium/long term perspective, local organisations should consider to specialise and professionalise. The organisational strengths, the knowledge and experience acquired in this emergency phase will be useful in the recovery and reconstruction phase in which the civil society will have an important role to play.

### **Information sharing**

- Promote bi-lingual information sharing among UN, large INGO, NNGO and smaller organisations. The circulation of information regarding risks and incidents can help ensure the safety and increase awareness of those who provide assistance to the frontline areas.

### **Partnership agreements**

- Promote the establishment of consortia, based on fair partnership principles, between more structured organisations with smaller and young organisations in order to build organisational capacities at local level.