

# Housing in Rural Hromadas Near the Frontline

Research Report



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## ● Introduction

Access to housing remains one of the cross-cutting issues faced by various social groups in Ukraine. The full-scale Russian invasion has made the need for housing more urgent and deepened existing problems in the housing sector. Today, housing is one of the most affected sectors of the economy. According to the Government of Ukraine and international organizations,<sup>1</sup> as of December 2024, about 13% of the entire housing stock in Ukraine had been damaged or destroyed, affecting over 2.5 million households. The investment required in the housing sector is estimated at approximately 83.7 billion dollars.

That said, challenges in the housing sector are not the same across the entire territory of Ukraine. In hromadas near the frontline, housing difficulties are exacerbated by proximity to the frontline, frequent bombing, and in some cases by the experience of occupation. As a result of being close to the combat line and/or the border with Russia, some hromadas suffer frequent destruction and damage to the housing stock. In addition, these hromadas are often the first place where internally displaced people arrive. That is why the task of these hromadas is to provide shelter after evacuation or to accommodate people who decide to stay in the hromada. Local government bodies in hromadas near the frontline have to overcome three types of challenges in the housing sector: 1) those that the hromada had before the full-scale invasion, 2) those that arose in most hromadas of Ukraine as a result of the full-scale war,<sup>2</sup> and 3) those caused by proximity to the frontline.

The main challenges faced by rural hromadas near the frontline include: regular bombing and the urgent need for public safety and civil protection; a high degree of damage and a large number of destroyed buildings; mine contamination of territories in hromadas that have experienced occupation; infrastructure damage; lack of water supply, gas, and electricity, limited access to drinking water; problems with transport connections, shortage of vehicles, high travel fares;

<sup>1</sup> The report *Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4)* is available at the link: <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/099022025114040022>.

<sup>2</sup> Read more on the challenges of local housing policies (particularly those related to temporary shelters) at this link: <https://cedos.org.ua/researches/zhytlova-polityka-na-misczevomu-rivni-suchasnyj-stan-vyklyky-ta-mozhlyvosti/>.

shortage of personnel and excessive workload; budget reduction; changes in the population composition, particularly an increase in the share of elderly people; an increase in the number of internally displaced people; low level of accessibility in buildings and public spaces.

In these conditions, there is an urgent need for emergency response. At the same time, the resources of hromadas near the frontline remain limited, which complicates the transition to the implementation of sustainable solutions. Our study aims to examine the housing situation in frontline hromadas, what kind of assistance they need, and whether existing policies and programs take into account the challenges and context of frontline hromadas.

## ● Methodology

The research covered two fields: social protection and housing in rural hromadas near the frontline. The aim was to describe the context and challenges of rural hromadas near the frontline in the fields of social protection and housing, to determine the ways to support the recovery process and the transition to sustainable solutions in these hromadas. To publish the obtained data, we divided the research findings into two publications:<sup>3</sup> *Social Protection in Rural Hromadas Near the Frontline* and *Housing in Rural Hromadas Near the Frontline*. This publication presents an analysis of the housing sector and housing policy in rural hromadas near the frontline.

### **Key objectives of the study:**

1. To examine the general context and challenges in the activities of local government bodies of rural hromadas near the frontline.
2. To find out which challenges and difficulties are faced by rural hromadas near the frontline in the field of social protection and housing.
3. To research the steps that can be taken by state authorities as well as international and Ukrainian non-governmental organizations to support hromadas in providing

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<sup>3</sup> Part 1 *Situation and Challenges of Rural Hromadas Near the Frontline* is a shared section in both publications.

for the population's needs.

4. To examine the feasibility of the transition from humanitarian response to long-term sustainable solutions in the fields of social protection and housing.

To carry out these tasks, we chose a qualitative method for both data collection and data analysis. Data collection involved conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews. In collaboration with IMPACT, our international partner organization, 4 hromadas were selected to more comprehensively examine the current situation with social protection and housing in rural hromadas near the frontline using their examples. In addition, as part of the project, a workshop was held for frontline hromadas from different oblasts of Ukraine. The findings from the group discussions during the workshop are included in the research report findings.

The field stage of the study was conducted in November 2024–March 2025.

In total, 50 in-depth interviews were conducted within the study. Of these, 26 interviews were conducted with representatives of local government bodies from 4 hromadas in Kharkivska and Zaporizka Oblasts (Savynska, Oskilska, Komyshevaska, and Ternuvatska Hromadas), 14 with non-governmental organizations that conducted various types of activities in these hromadas, and 10 with experts in the fields of social policy, housing, and local development.

The authors of the study conducted an exploratory visit to Savynska Hromada in Kharkivska Oblast in November 2024, during which they held in-person interviews with representatives of local government bodies. The other interviews were conducted online via the Zoom platform or by phone. Recruitment of the research participants was carried out by the Cedos Think Tank with the support of the international non-governmental organization IMPACT Initiatives.

The composition of the sample was determined by the specific characteristics of each hromada, which is why the number of interviews and the statuses of informants varied across the four hromadas. In each hromada, we conducted interviews with the head of the hromada and/or the deputy head, the head of the Department of Social Protection of the Population, the director of the Center for the Provision of Social Services,

the head of the Department of Housing and Utility Services, and head of the Commission for Reviewing Issues Related to Compensation for Destroyed Real Estate. If such positions or institutions were not present in the hromada, we spoke with the people whose responsibilities included similar duties. Additionally, in some hromadas, interviews were conducted with representatives of other departments, Centers for the Provision of Administrative Services (CPASs), as well as with starostas.

The group discussions took place during the *Housing and Social Protection in Frontline Hromadas* workshop, which was held on February 26–28, 2025, in Kyiv. More than 20 representatives from fourteen rural hromadas near the frontline were present at the workshop:

- Malomykhailivska Hromada of Dnipropetrovska Oblast;
- Komyshevaska, Novooleksandrivska, Mykhailo-Lukashivska, Stepnenska, Ternuvatska, Shyrokovska Hromadas of Zaporizka Oblast;
- Voskresenska, Mishkovo-Pohorilivska Hromadas of Mykolayivska Oblast;
- Yampil'ska Hromada of Sumska Oblast;
- Oskilska, Savynska, Starosaltivska Hromadas of Kharkivska Oblast;
- Novovorontsov'ska Hromada of Kherson'ska Oblast.

To ensure the confidentiality of the research participants, the obtained data was accessible only to the research team. The quotes used in the report have been anonymized and do not contain any information that could identify a person.

**The study has a number of limitations:**

- **The study is not representative of all rural hromadas near the frontline.** Its goal was to describe the cases of 4 hromadas, as well as to collect the experiences of other hromadas during the workshop, identify the main difficulties faced by the hromadas, and determine their needs. The ability to draw conclusions about the prevalence of problems among all rural hromadas near the frontline is limited.
- **The study does not include a comparison with hromadas that are not located near the frontline.** Some of the problems described in the report may not be specific to frontline hromadas and may potentially occur in other

hromadas.

- **Limited representation of the experience of local associations and volunteer initiatives which are not officially registered.** We spoke with organizations mentioned by representatives of local government bodies during the interviews in the context of providing assistance and working with different population groups. All of them had the status of officially registered non-governmental or charitable organizations. At the same time, some local initiatives may not have official registration and may carry out unsystematic activities, so they might not have been mentioned by local authorities, and the research team did not conduct interviews with them. The activities of such initiatives require separate research.
- **Uneven representation of the experiences of hromadas from different oblasts.** Despite the inclusion of findings from the workshop for hromadas in the research report, this study is more representative of the situation typical for hromadas in Kharkivska and Zaporizka Oblasts. Frontline hromadas in other oblasts may face different difficulties that may not have been sufficiently covered in this study.
- **This study focuses on hromadas located more than 15 km from the combat line.** The findings of this study cannot be extrapolated to hromadas located closer to the frontline, where, in particular, mandatory evacuation of families with children has been declared. These hromadas may face different problems and needs that are not covered by this study.



# Part 1 ● Situation and Challenges of Rural Hromadas Near the Frontline

Hromadas near the frontline face challenges related to or caused both by their proximity to the combat line and by the generally low level of infrastructure development in rural hromadas. Bombing, damage to infrastructure and destruction of buildings, land contamination with mines, shortage of transport vehicles, and the need to constantly respond to these challenges place a significant burden on local government bodies.

In February–March 2022, Russia occupied parts of Kharkivska and Zaporizka Oblasts. In particular, 22 out of 56 territorial hromadas in Kharkivska Oblast were under occupation (in Chuhuivskyi, Bohodukhivskyi, Iziumskyi, Kupyanskyi, and part of Kharkivskyi Districts). Most of Kharkivska Oblast was de-occupied during September 2022.<sup>4</sup> About 70% of Zaporizka Oblast was occupied during February–March 2022 and remains under occupation as of March 2025 (47 out of 67 hromadas in Melitopolskyi, Berdianskyi, Vasylivskyi, and Polohivskyi Districts are partially or fully occupied).<sup>5</sup>

First and foremost, most of the hromadas that were the focus of this research suffer from **regular bombing** by Russia. This especially affects those hromadas or settlements where bombing with guided aerial bombs, artillery systems, and FPV drones is possible. Because of this, local authorities have to constantly work on **ensuring public safety and civilian protection**. In particular, hromadas need to equip stationary and mobile bomb shelters. In addition, there remains a need to improve the systems for alerting the population about the threat of bombing, to provide workers of critical infrastructure and local government bodies with personal protective equipment, to organize first aid training, and so on.

For de-occupied hromadas, **land contamination with mines** is a significant challenge. The demining process is quite lengthy and cannot cover all requests. Priority is given to demining critical infrastructure and residential buildings. At the same time, there is no capacity to clear agricultural land.

Some representatives of local government bodies reported that they had an **evacuation plan** for the population and ensured the availability of sufficient resources: fuel, vehicles, and one

<sup>4</sup> More details about the course and consequences of the war in Kharkivska Oblast can be found in OPORA Civil Network's publication [Political Map of Kharkivska Oblast: Trends of Two Years of War](#).

<sup>5</sup> Order No. 376 of the Ministry for the Development of the Hromadas and Territories of Ukraine "On the Adoption of the List of Territories Where Hostilities Are (Were) Conducted or Territories Temporarily Occupied by the Russian Federation."

representative of a hromada said she would take part in a bus driving training for women in order to be able to evacuate people if necessary. Some hromadas acknowledge the need for an evacuation plan, but local government bodies require assistance in developing and practicing it, as within the resources of the hromada they cannot prepare for this on their own.

Another challenge is the **damage to infrastructure** as a result of hostilities and bombing. During conversations, research participants mentioned damaged power lines, water supply and sewage systems, and so on, as well as a lack of funds and specialists to restore them. This highlights the need for repair equipment and specialists who can carry out repair work.

For some hromadas, a significant difficulty is the **lack of centralized water supply and access to drinking water**. During the interviews, people spoke about situations where it is necessary to drill a well in a village, but due to the small population, donor organizations do not want to fund such projects. At the same time, they deliver drinking water to the population. In addition, some settlements are not connected to the gas supply.

Representatives of all the hromadas we spoke with reported significant **problems with transport infrastructure and transportation links** in their hromadas. First and foremost, the transport network remains underdeveloped: the quality of some roads is low, and access to certain villages is difficult. In some hromadas, railway connections with suburban electric trains are helpful. At the same time, due to railway track damage, railway service is sometimes temporarily suspended.

An additional challenge is the **lack of vehicles**. In the hromadas of Kharkivska Oblast that were once under occupation, vehicles have been destroyed as a result of hostilities or stolen by the Russian military. The hromadas have lost both public transport, which provided regular passenger transportation, and social transport, such as social taxis.

The **fare** for scheduled buses and minibuses, according to the informants, is not affordable for the population of the hromadas. In addition, private carriers do not travel to settlements near the combat line. This creates barriers to accessing medical and social services. In some hromadas, regular free social buses operate, which may run daily or less frequently, once a week, to ensure that the population can receive medical and administrative services. In organizing such

transportation, hromadas are mostly assisted by non-governmental organizations. At the same time, representatives of some hromadas reported that donor organizations denied their request for social transportation due to concerns about the security situation.

Difficulties also arise in the provision of administrative services. Some of the hromadas that participated in the study **have Centers for the Provision of Administrative Services (CPASs)** within the hromada. Some hromadas **had difficulties in opening them** due to the requirements for CPAS premises. Furnishing and equipping with technical devices was carried out with the support of donor organizations. Several informants reported having mobile CPAS suitcases.

At the same time, some hromadas **did not have a CPAS**, which created difficulties for the population and the need to travel to other hromadas to receive administrative services. In addition, some hromadas lacked vehicles that would allow CPAS workers with mobile suitcases to travel to remote starosta districts. One representative of local government bodies also mentioned a lack of funds to purchase devices for the mobile suitcases.

## The work of local government bodies

Representatives of the local government bodies of frontline hromadas that participated in the study face many challenges in their work: a lack of budget funds, a shortage of personnel, the need to quickly master new skills and to attract funding.

First and foremost, these are limited revenues in the hromada budgets. **The existing revenues do not cover all necessary expenses** under conditions of destruction caused by the war, changes in the population composition (more on this in the next section of this part of the report), and an increase in the number of people in need of support from the hromada. The technical equipment of the premises of village and rural town councils, social service institutions, and centers for the provision of administrative services is also insufficient.

One of the biggest challenges faced by local government bodies is the **shortage of personnel**. In almost all the hromadas we spoke with, vacancies had remained open for a long time, and they were unable to find people to fill them. For example,

in one of the departments of a rural town council, there is only one person instead of three. One person may combine several functions and be responsible for the duties of several different positions. According to the informants, the barriers to employment are the low salaries, as well as the mismatch between education or skills and the job requirements.

The shortage of personnel can sometimes lead to the merging of several departments into one. People working in such a department have to figure out issues that are outside their area of competence on their own. The lack of staff leads to **excessive workload for employees and irregular working hours**. In addition, the workload has increased due to activities related to the provision of humanitarian aid, communication with regional military administrations, non-governmental organizations, and so on.

The majority of the representatives of local government bodies whom we spoke with aimed to develop their hromadas and attract funding. To do this, they also often had to work overtime and make efforts to understand the financial and legal aspects of the projects being implemented in their hromadas.

For effective work, hromadas need data about the population; however, local government bodies face difficulties in **collecting data and accessing existing data**. For example, during interviews, the need for access to the unified IDP register<sup>6</sup> and the register of war veterans<sup>7</sup> was mentioned. In addition, local government bodies face the issue that ministries, non-governmental organizations, and other institutions request data from hromadas, but they often require different data and documents. This creates difficulties in the work of local government bodies and highlights the need to unify these requests.

Some representatives of local government bodies also had the impression that state authorities had a lack of understanding of the particularities of the challenges and problems faced by rural hromadas near the frontline. They spoke about situations

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<sup>6</sup> According to paragraph 9 of the [Resolution](#) of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On the Approval of the Procedure for the Creation, Maintenance, and Access to the Unified Information Database on Internally Displaced Persons,” local government bodies are recipients of information from the Unified Information Database on IDPs.

<sup>7</sup> According to the [Resolution](#) of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine “On the Unified State Register of War Veterans,” local authorities are providers of information to the Register but cannot submit their own requests for information from the Register.

in which they received assignments from ministries without receiving proper explanations on how to implement them or what their goals were. Some research participants felt that state authorities only perform a supervisory function, while they are not ready to provide support to hromadas to the extent that they require it. Some informants did not feel that the context and challenges of their hromadas were taken into account or reflected in legislation, public discussions, or in the focus activities of organizations that unite hromadas and were created at the initiative of state authorities.

Several informants mentioned the **impact of the level of media coverage of a hromada** or settlement on the amount of donor assistance received and opportunities for cooperation. For example, after the de-occupation of Kharkivska Oblast in 2022, some hromadas faced situations where **non-governmental organizations bypassed them**, as they primarily offered assistance to those hromadas whose stories were covered in the media. Because of this, they had to make additional efforts to attract non-governmental organizations.

Another problem mentioned by some representatives of local government bodies was the lack of understanding by international organizations of the context in which local governments operate under martial law. For example, according to one informant, international organizations did not want to cooperate with their hromada because its government body is named “Military Administration.”

## Changes in the composition of population

Research participants reported that the composition of the population in rural hromadas near the frontline changed after the beginning of the full-scale invasion. First and foremost, there has been a general **decrease in the population numbers** in such hromadas. Hromada representatives whom we spoke with shared that the population decreased by one-third, and in some cases, by half.

Part of the population left the hromadas for safer regions of Ukraine or abroad. Research participants reported that the number of children in hromadas near the frontline has decreased, as parents with children are more likely to try and

move to safer regions. According to the informants, a significant factor for leaving is also the impossibility of offline studies in schools. At the same time, in hromadas located 20–30 km or more from the combat line, families with children remain. This has highlighted the need for the **construction of underground schools and bomb shelters** for them.

Among those who have left, the majority are people of working age, while **among those who remained in the hromadas, the majority are people of retirement age**. In particular, in some hromadas, according to the informants' estimates, half of the population consists of people aged 65 and older. During the interviews, representatives of local government bodies and non-governmental organizations emphasized that **older people, people with disabilities, and low-income families are more likely to remain in hromadas near the frontline**. They are unable to leave due to a lack of financial resources, and in the case of population groups with limited mobility, also due to logistical difficulties. Research participants also mentioned that some elderly people were left without support from relatives who had evacuated from the hromadas, and therefore now require assistance from local authorities and social protection institutions.

In addition, **internally displaced people** from hromadas and settlements located closer to the combat line have relocated to hromadas near the frontline. These people also require support from the hromadas to which they have moved. Representatives of local government bodies shared that they had encountered difficulties with keeping records of IDPs in the hromadas, as some people do not register as IDPs, and others leave the hromada without notifying local authorities. As a result, research participants encountered discrepancies between the number of officially registered IDPs in the hromada and those actually residing there. Some informants spoke about cases of abuse of the opportunity to obtain IDP status in order to receive financial or other types of support. These refer to cases where people may have moved within the same settlement or between neighboring settlements of the hromada. Representatives of non-governmental organizations also emphasized the challenges of verification and preventing duplication of assistance for internally displaced people.

As a result, the share of the population in need of various forms of support from the hromada has increased in hromadas near the frontline. This creates a significant burden on hromada budgets under conditions where budget revenues may have



decreased due to the departure of population and a decline in employment levels.

## Employment

Representatives of all the hromadas that participated in the study reported **a shortage of jobs** in the hromadas and, as a result, **a high level of unemployment among the population**. According to the research participants, this is the main obstacle to the return of the working-age population, especially young people, to these hromadas. In some rural hromadas, these problems existed even before the full-scale war due to the absence of large enterprises. As a result of the war, some enterprises ceased their activities.

Representatives of local government bodies reported that **the problem of unemployment affects villages the most**, especially those that are remote from the hromada center or other settlements. This is related, in particular, to limited transport connections and the lack of opportunity to commute to work in another settlement and return home. In addition, a large share of people are employed in agriculture in the rural hromadas that were the focus of this research. Some of them have lost the opportunity to continue working due to land contamination with mines, including agricultural land – this is typical, for example, in Kharkivska Oblast. Demining is taking place in the hromadas, but its pace is not sufficient to ensure rapid return to work for people engaged in agriculture.

Alongside the lack of jobs, according to research participants, another challenge is the **shortage of qualified workers**. During the interviews, the informants mentioned a lack of specialists in engineering, medical, economic, and legal fields, social work specialists and others.

The largest employer in some hromadas is the local government and educational institutions. However, there is **a problem of mismatch between the education and skill level** of job seekers and **the requirements of the available vacancies**. This leads to situations where a village or rural town council has unfilled vacancies for months or even years. To address this issue, one hromada involves specialists from a neighboring urban hromada by organizing daily bus transportation.



Another challenge mentioned by representatives of de-occupied hromadas is the need for additional background checks of people when hiring them into local self-government bodies regarding possible collaboration with occupation authorities.

Vacancies also remain unfilled in professions where the share of employed men used to significantly exceed that of women (for example, construction, repair work, truck driving, etc.), which is a result of the mobilization process. Hromada representatives whom we spoke with mentioned a shortage of workers in emergency services, repair and construction crews, and so on. At the same time, due to mobilization, some men avoid official employment and therefore do not consider such vacancies for themselves. This highlights the need to train women in these professions.

Another barrier to employment is the shortage or absence of preschool education institutions (due to security factors, among other things). Therefore, because of the need to care for children, parents have fewer opportunities for employment.

Representatives of local authorities shared that they **lack data on the unemployed population**, as people may be registered with employment centers in different settlements. This complicates the search for solutions to reduce the unemployment rate.

The potential solutions to the personnel shortage mentioned during the interviews included various strategies. First and foremost, these include **retraining and professional development** of people. In several hromadas, there was successful experience in implementing such programs, within which people acquired a different profession, and women were trained in professions where the share of employed women was significantly lower than that of men. However, representatives of local government bodies reported that despite the existence of retraining programs, people do not join them, and they also mentioned the unsystematic nature of these programs.

In some hromadas, unemployed people are involved in **socially useful works**. In particular, informants spoke about the Recovery Army,<sup>8</sup> through which it was possible to create jobs

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<sup>8</sup> Recovery Army is a project through which people who have lost their jobs can carry out socially useful work to rebuild the country. See more: <https://me.gov.ua/Documents/Detail?lang=uk-UA&id=89190821-886b-45dd-b5d5-8918eaa00198&title=ArmiiaVidnovlennia-VidbudovumoKrainu>.

for between 8 and 100 people in different hromadas. At the same time, not all of these positions remained filled due to people's unwillingness to participate.

## Transition from humanitarian response to sustainable solutions

We asked study participants whether rural hromadas near the frontline have the capacity to transition from humanitarian response and meeting the basic needs of the population to development and the implementation of long-term solutions. This capacity primarily **depends on proximity to the combat line**. Representatives of local government bodies from hromadas located closer to the frontline spoke about difficulties in medium- and long-term planning due to uncertainty about the further course of the war. For them, the priority is still to meet the population's basic needs and maintain the current level of social and administrative service provision.

Representatives of hromadas located 30 km or further from the combat line said that for them, the issues of development and long-term solutions were relevant. They emphasized the need to begin the transition from humanitarian response to other solutions that would help their hromadas become self-sufficient.

During the interviews, the informants emphasized the need to expand employment opportunities for the working-age population, particularly through job creation, support in job search, and courses for professional development or retraining. If people are confident that they can make a living independently, they are more likely to stay in the hromadas and contribute to their development. Accordingly, representatives of the hromadas spoke about the importance of support from non-governmental organizations and **the need to transition from in-kind aid to measures that can help the working-age population independently ensure a decent standard of living**. Such measures can help hromadas be more resilient in the event of the termination of funding or support from non-governmental organizations or donors.

At the same time, maintaining support for the population unable to work is important. In order for local government bodies to effectively assess the population's need for social services, training and **support in data collection and analysis** are necessary. According to the informants, this will help create evidence-based plans for supporting the population and opportunities for the development of the social protection sector.

Among the possible paths for transitioning toward long-term solutions, research participants mentioned **the need to develop the capacity of local government bodies and municipal institutions**. They pointed out the unsystematic nature of support from non-governmental organizations and also expressed concerns that funding or projects may end. At the same time, the institutions and government bodies present in the hromada have the ability to work with the population on a systematic basis, so developing their capacity may help transition to sustainable solutions.

"That is, money needs to be invested, this is my opinion, in strengthening the existing municipal infrastructure. I mean, that it will remain in the future, you have to strengthen it. [...] Well, I understand that NGOs may have a different view on this now. You shouldn't be handing out a bunch of subgrants to different NGOs so that they come for a year, I don't know, and hire three psychologists. And then the project ends, and those psychologists disappear. You have to somehow strengthen the capacity of local self-government bodies and the service providers established by them."

*Expert in the field of social protection*

Representatives of local government bodies also spoke about the need for training in project management, grant application writing, the functioning of the public budget, and so on — both for government representatives and for the population. Many of them mentioned that exchanging experiences with colleagues from other hromadas is important. Such communication promotes the formation of partnerships, new projects, and also provides ideas for solutions and community development. For some research participants, the experience of traveling abroad and communicating with international partners was also valuable.

Some research participants identified **engaging hromada residents in decision making and strengthening civil society** as the foundation for hromada development. Engagement helps government bodies to better understand the needs of the

population, find optimal solutions, and establish dialogue between different groups of people, among other things.<sup>9</sup> During the interviews, informants also gave examples of successful involvement of hromada residents in writing project proposals, rebuilding premises, and volunteer projects. These residents later initiated the creation of youth councils and other initiatives in the hromadas. According to the research participants, thanks to civil society, a hromada becomes more resilient to challenges and can become less dependent on external aid.

“It is [population engagement] that can actually further give a strong push toward community development and internal change within the hromada. Because it's like... it seems to me that it can work like a kind of chain reaction. After all, good examples are inspiring. Someone will look at someone else, and be like: oh, great, my friend went there, or my acquaintance, or, say, my grandmother's grandmother told me about it, and I also want to join in.”

*Representative of a non-governmental organization*

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<sup>9</sup> Read more on engaging residents in decision making in hromadas in the guide on [\*How to Engage Residents in Decision Making in Hromadas: An Overview of Examples\*](#).

## Part 2 ● Housing Conditions among the Residents of Hromadas Near the Frontline

## Condition of the existing housing stock

As a result of hostilities and bombing by the Russian army, in some frontline hromadas **a significant portion of residential buildings are damaged or destroyed**. In one of the hromadas, according to the estimates of the study participants, this share reaches 90% of the entire housing stock. Hromadas that were under occupation and on whose territory active combat took place are, in some cases, completely destroyed. At the same time, some informants said that in their hromada the level of destruction is not significantly higher than in other Ukrainian hromadas. Such a situation can be observed mainly in hromadas that were never under occupation and are not subjected to frequent bombing.

According to the informants, **no new construction is being carried out in rural hromadas near the frontline**. Cases where residents build on their private plots on their own are not either. The study participants said that private construction used to be more widespread, as new specialists moved to the hromadas due to open vacancies in the agricultural sector. However, currently, the number of jobs in the hromada is low, and people who move to the hromadas (mostly due to forced displacement from other regions) rent housing or buy existing houses.

In terms of the structure of the housing stock, in rural areas most housing consists of detached houses (according to the State Statistics Service, almost 94% as of 2021).<sup>10</sup> The number of apartment buildings in rural town hromadas is small. The utilities in such buildings, as well as their general condition, are already outdated today and require major repairs. The majority of housing in the hromadas whose representatives we spoke with was built before the 1990s (according to the State Statistics Service, as of 2021, about 90% of housing in rural areas was built before 1990).<sup>11</sup>

Some study participants said that there was **a significant number of vacant housing units** in their hromadas. The owners of some of these houses are unidentified or have left

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<sup>10</sup> This refers to data across Ukraine:

[https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2021/zb/07/zb\\_cdhd\\_21.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2021/zb/07/zb_cdhd_21.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> This refers to data across Ukraine:

[https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat\\_u/2021/zb/07/zb\\_cdhd\\_21.pdf](https://ukrstat.gov.ua/druk/publicat/kat_u/2021/zb/07/zb_cdhd_21.pdf).

the hromada for other regions of Ukraine or abroad.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, some of these houses constitute abandoned housing, while others are private property that is currently not in use. Abandoned housing is not under the hromada's management. Informants said that they would like to have the opportunity to house people who have lost their homes or internally displaced people in such buildings. However, most of these houses **require major repairs**, and their rooms are currently unfit for residence.

Some owners who have not lived in their houses for a long time do not sell them or rent them out to other people. This creates **a situation where a certain share of houses in the hromada remain vacant, while at the same time there are people in need of housing**. Prolonged disuse of houses sometimes also leads to negative consequences. For example, one informant said that the condition of such houses may deteriorate over time and eventually become derelict. In cases where a house is divided into two parts, the derelict condition of one part may affect the neighboring dwelling (in particular, roofing problems may cause flooding of the neighboring unit).

Representatives of local government bodies reported that there were **no residential units in the hromada's municipal ownership**. Therefore, local government bodies cannot help with the accommodation of people who have lost their homes.

## Accessibility

According to the study participants, **the level of accessibility** in rural hromadas near the frontline **is low**. This applies to public spaces and public institutions as well as private establishments and housing. As a result, people with limited mobility not only lack access to many services but also are not always able to move within their own homes. Informants expressed concern about this situation, but at the same time they are unable to significantly improve it within the resources available to the hromada.

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<sup>12</sup> In late 2024, the Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine on Additional Measures Related to Providing Internally Displaced Persons with Housing," which, in particular, aims to create a system for registering real estate of various forms of ownership that can be used for setting up housing for IDPs.



## Housing reconstruction

According to the informants, **comprehensive reconstruction in rural town and village hromadas near the frontline is generally not taking place**. Study participants said that currently it is rather about localized, emergency repairs after bombing. The hromadas have **established Commissions** to Review Issues Related to the Provision of Compensation for Real Estate Damaged as a Result of Hostilities, Terrorist Attacks, or Sabotage Caused by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (hereinafter referred to as Commissions). These Commissions handle the review of compensation applications, the inspection and assessment of damaged or destroyed properties, the preparation and verification of documents, and the provision of compensation to applicants for destroyed property.

Hromadas that have established Commissions face difficulties, particularly due to a lack of staff. Informants reported that the Commissions were generally formed from existing employees of local government bodies. Therefore, this activity has become an **additional workload for these people**, often leading to overwork and irregular working hours. The Commissions also **lack specialists** in specific fields due to their absence in the hromada and the inability to find professionals for open vacancies. In addition to staffing issues, the Commissions face other problems in their work. For instance, study participants said that difficulties arise during the **verification of destruction**, the confirmation that the damage has been caused by hostilities, and the confirmation of the time when the damage occurred. The Commissions need to substantiate the circumstances of the housing damage, which often becomes a challenge due to the lack of necessary expertise and means to conduct an expert examination.

Study participants reported that compensation for destroyed or damaged housing is paid within the framework of the eRecovery program. Non-governmental organizations also provide **assistance in the form of materials** for housing reconstruction or carry out repair work themselves. It is important to note that non-governmental organizations mainly provide assistance in cases of **minor damage** (for example, damaged windows). In cases of more severe destruction or the need for major reconstruction, the work is mostly organized by the homeowners, local authorities, or the reconstruction does not happen at all.



The option where non-governmental organizations carry out repair work themselves seemed more convenient to the informants. This is because residents and local authorities often find it **difficult to find repair crews** due to their absence in the hromada and the unwillingness of crews from other settlements to travel to frontline areas. As a result, some residents try to repair their homes on their own or seek help from acquaintances who are not professional repair workers.

Another problematic aspect during reconstruction is **the preparation of cost estimates and planning of the work**. Informants reported that there were generally no specialists in the hromadas who could carry out this work. Meanwhile, the services of private specialists are mostly expensive and cannot be covered from the hromada's budget.

**Assistance from non-governmental organizations is not consistent.** Organizations usually cooperate with the hromada for a certain period of time, so after bombing, there is not always an opportunity to receive help with repair work. Because of this, informants shared that they would like to have repair crews in the hromada and also have a permanent possibility to purchase materials for housing reconstruction for the hromada's residents. In their opinion, this would make the housing reconstruction process faster and allow for more flexible response in emergency situations.

Study participants reported that **the restoration of utilities in houses** – particularly water, gas and power supply – **is problematic**. As a result of the occupation, this infrastructure was damaged or destroyed. However, after de-occupation, only a few households returned to some villages or areas. Therefore, non-governmental organizations mostly do not agree to help with infrastructure restoration due to the small number of beneficiaries of such assistance. Informants also said that if new utility networks are installed, the cost of utilities for residents may be too high.

Another problem in the context of reconstruction is that **buildings which are not residential** or not part of critical infrastructure are **currently mostly not being restored**. As a result, due to destruction, the hromada cannot use its available public buildings, particularly for setting up centers for the provision of social and administrative services. Aid is also generally not allocated for the reconstruction of private non-residential buildings. Informants noted that these are often utility buildings which serve as the basis for people's

professional activity in villages and rural towns. Therefore, if the owners do not have the funds to carry out repairs, they are unable to continue their work.

There are also difficulties in the reconstruction of housing that has been **repeatedly damaged**. Despite the fact that in hromadas frequently subjected to bombing, the situation of repeated destruction is quite common, it is mostly not taken into account in aid programs and measures. In particular, according to informants, if a house is damaged more than once, the likelihood of receiving repair assistance from non-governmental organizations is significantly lower. In such cases, organizations are more likely to provide materials to cover the damage (film, plywood boards) rather than carry out repairs again. Difficulties also arise in the work of the [Commissions](#). After repairs are carried out, the Commissions must conduct an inspection of the completed work and prepare a report; however, in the case of repeated destruction, such inspection is not possible. As a result, people are also unable to submit an application for housing restoration after new damage.

“There is a problematic issue — for example, when I say that if a person received compensation and didn't do the first repair, and then there's another strike, and a second repair needs to be done. But the system is built in such a way that we have to first make a verification report, upload it into the system, and only then consider a new application for compensation.”

*Representative of the local government bodies of a rural town hromada*

## Title documents and the residential status of buildings

Informants reported that **not all residents of hromadas near the frontline have documents confirming their ownership of housing**. This is due to the fact that people may have lost these documents because of fire or the destruction of their homes. In addition, sometimes people did not formalize these documents in time — for example, they did not complete the inheritance procedure. Study participants explained such cases by people's lack of awareness about the inheritance procedure. People mostly find out that they lack title documents when they want to submit an application for housing restoration

after destruction. Informants noted that information about the housing owned by some residents had not previously been entered into the State Register of Property Rights to Real Estate.<sup>13</sup>

“The problem is that our people are not used to the idea that documents need to be put in order. And many still didn’t have documents, well, technical passports. They haven’t yet been entered into the real estate register. And because of this, there are delays. People have to go to another hromada to see a state registrar. We don’t have our own yet.”

*Representative of local government bodies*

Informants also spoke about other difficulties related to documentation. In particular, they mentioned the problem of restoring a damaged house that is divided into two parts and inhabited by two separate households. Not all owners of such housing have properly formalized documents. For example, both parts of the house could have had the same postal address and been recorded in the register as a single property. In the case of total destruction of only one part of the house, its residents cannot receive the amount of compensation provided for destroyed housing. Since only half of the house is damaged, according to legal regulations, it cannot be recognized as destroyed. People can only claim compensation for damaged housing. However, according to the informants, this amount is not sufficient to restore the building.

In addition, some informants spoke about the impossibility of obtaining compensation for destroyed or damaged housing in **settlements that do not have the official status of a village or town** (in particular, this referred to summer house cooperatives). The issue of the status of such settlements falls under the purview of local authorities. Therefore, according to the informants, they are considering the possibility of including such settlements into the territories of existing villages or towns.

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<sup>13</sup> The State Register of Property Rights to Real Estate was created in 2013. Information about real estate transactions — such as sale, purchase, or inheritance — carried out after 2013 is automatically entered into the register. As for real estate that was, for example, purchased or built before 2013, the owners could initiate the entry of information into the register themselves.

## Part 3 ●

# Accommodating People Who Have Lost Their Homes

Hromadas near the frontline have accommodated both internally displaced people and people whose housing has been damaged or destroyed. That is why we asked representatives of local government bodies and experts from NGOs how the need to provide housing for these people is being addressed.

Informants reported that internally displaced people and those whose housing has been destroyed **usually live with relatives, in rented housing, or, with the consent of the owners, are accommodated in housing that was not being used.** There are also cases when people buy housing for themselves or live with people they previously did not know.

One of the ways to provide housing is renting from private individuals. Informants noted that in hromadas near the frontline, there are significant **difficulties related to renting housing.** Among the problems mentioned were high rent prices, poor condition of housing units, including the lack of utilities. In addition, rental relations are often not officially registered in documents. In rural town and village hromadas near the frontline, the practice of signing contracts between tenants and landlords is not widespread. Accordingly, some informants noted that internally displaced people and those whose housing in the hromada has been destroyed may need legal and informational support regarding the formalization of rental agreements. The housing supply on the rental market may also be insufficient in the hromadas. One informant gave an example of people who were forced to move to another region after their home was destroyed because they could not find alternative housing in their hromada.

Representatives of local government bodies indicated that there was **no social housing** in their hromadas. At the same time, some clarified that there were a few apartments in their hromadas that were provided or planned to be provided to orphans after they reach adulthood. In some hromadas, there are also employment-related apartments for doctors, and in one hromada this unit was used as social housing for IDPs. Informants also recalled that dormitories used to exist in the hromada, but later this type of housing stock was dismantled and transferred to private ownership. Study participants pointed out that maintaining housing in municipal ownership is costly, and the hromada budget cannot cover these expenses.

There was generally **a consensus among representatives of local government bodies on the importance of having a social housing stock in the hromada.** Some emphasized that it is

important not to transfer such housing into private ownership in order to preserve the existence of this stock in the hromada. However, representatives of local authorities were also concerned about how to manage this housing if it remains in municipal ownership, how to establish rules for residence and encourage residents to take care of the housing; they were also concerned about the cost of maintaining and servicing such housing.

However, they saw different ways of creating this housing stock. Some representatives of local government bodies said that their hromada **needed to build such housing**. Other informants noted that there was no need to build new housing in their hromadas. They pointed out that there is **abandoned housing in frontline hromadas that could be transferred to municipal ownership** and provided to people when needed.

In the context of transferring housing into municipal ownership, some people mentioned the need to **conduct an inventory of the housing stock**. One hromada was in the process of carrying out such an inventory at the time of the study. They planned to transfer housing that has no owners to the hromada's balance sheet, carry out all necessary work such as reconstruction, repairs, and furnishing, and then provide it to people who had lost their homes. Some informants pointed out the challenges associated with this process: it can be complex and costly. Therefore, hromadas turned to non-governmental organizations for assistance.

Informants had different views regarding the appropriateness of creating **temporary accommodation facilities in hromadas near the frontline**. Some hromadas arranged or had plans to arrange temporary accommodation on their territory, including by using residential and non-residential buildings in municipal ownership (dormitories, educational institutions, etc.). On the other hand, experts noted that it would be more appropriate to provide IDPs **with the opportunity to live in social housing with better conditions**. They argued that temporary accommodation facilities in many frontline hromadas do not meet an adequate quality level and do not provide people with decent living conditions. They also noted that the temporary housing created at the beginning of the full-scale war is gradually being dismantled. This happens because there is a need to return these buildings to their original purpose. For example, this applies to the buildings of educational institutions.

Informants shared the view that one of the options for quickly providing people with housing in hromadas near the frontline could be the **installation of modular houses**. In their opinion, such housing cannot be a solution for permanent or long-term residence. However, in emergency situations, when a person has lost their home, a modular house could be useful. At the same time, informants noted that installing such houses is too costly for local budgets and also requires the installation of necessary utility connections. Several representatives of local authorities and NGOs said that **international organizations** had created projects for installing modular houses in their hromadas a few years ago. However, these **projects were not implemented** due to the internal regulations of those organizations concerning work and housing placement in areas near the frontline.

## Part 4 ●

Need for Support from  
Non-Governmental  
Organizations and  
the State Government



## Assistance for frontline hromadas from non-governmental organizations

Representatives of local government bodies noted that **they relied to a large extent on assistance from non-governmental organizations in the restoration of the housing stock.**

According to informants, NGOs supported hromadas by providing building materials, carrying out repair work, and offering legal assistance to those who have lost their homes. At the same time, according to representatives of local government bodies, some organizations that worked with them in 2023–2024 have suspended or completely ceased their activities due to the worsening security situation.

We asked representatives of non-governmental organizations to explain what influences their organizations' decisions to cooperate with a hromada. One of the key factors is safety, particularly proximity to the frontline and inclusion in the list of territories where hostilities are ongoing or where hostilities are possible.<sup>14</sup> Some NGOs have their own safety protocols that make it impossible for them to operate in hromadas near the frontline.

*"This is sometimes the decisive and first thing that affects our ability to work. We have safety procedures, we have a safety department. That is, there is a territory where we do not work. [...] Well, for example, light and medium repairs, they will not take place in areas 0–10 kilometers from the line of contact."*

*Representative of a non-governmental organization*

Informants said that the distance to the frontline also affects the complexity of repair work that NGOs are willing to undertake. That is, **in hromadas located closer to areas of hostilities, organizations may only provide materials for light repair work**, particularly to prevent further deterioration of the housing stock. In contrast, NGOs are more actively implementing **reconstruction projects and more complex housing repairs in areas located more than 30 km from the combat line.**

Another factor, according to representatives of non-governmental organizations, is the **advisability of investing**

<sup>14</sup> This refers to the status of territories in accordance with the order "On the Approval of the List of Territories Where Hostilities Are (Were) Taking Place or Temporarily Occupied by the Russian Federation."

<https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1668-22#Text>.

**resources in housing reconstruction in hromadas near the frontline.** They linked their concerns to the experience of repeated destruction of previously repaired buildings.

One of the problems mentioned by some representatives of local government bodies is **the lack of repair crews in frontline hromadas** and the unwillingness of builders from other hromadas to go to areas near the frontline. This state of affairs was explained by the outflow of specialists from the hromada due to the security situation and mobilization measures for service in the Defense Forces. Study participants also noted that people whose housing was damaged often cannot organize repair work on their own. This mainly referred to elderly people and other population groups with limited mobility. Therefore, representatives of local government bodies emphasized the **positive experience of cooperation with organizations that provided their own repair crews or independently found contractors.**

The views of another group of local government representatives differed: they noted that it might be easier for residents to independently find people for light repair work. Instead, what they expect from non-governmental organizations is the provision of the necessary materials to start the work.

Among the difficulties in cooperation with NGOs in the field of housing reconstruction, informants **pointed to a lack of consistency in approaches to providing assistance.** One informant recalled a case where an organization replaced only the windows, while the doors or roof remained damaged.

*"[...] But I want to tell you — there is this serious problem — the people, the humanitarian organizations that come, they, for example, do the windows, don't do the doors. That is, they did the windows, the doors were left undone. They provide assistance selectively [...]."*

*Representative of local government bodies*

In addition, representatives of local government bodies noted that NGOs are limited to light and medium repairs. They **do not work on major repairs or the construction of new housing.** Some informants explained this situation by their limited resources and the need to report on the number of aid beneficiaries. A representative of one of the non-governmental organizations mentioned that more complex work requires the involvement of construction equipment.

Informants mentioned the importance of legal assistance with **the preparation of title documents for private households**, which is provided by NGOs. This may involve either one-time consultations or even full support and the provision of funds for document preparation. Such measures are useful for residents of hromadas in the context of housing restoration, as a complete set of necessary documents is required to apply for state compensation programs. A representative of one of the organizations stated that their priority is to assist people who do not have the full set of required documents to receive aid from other NGOs and cannot apply for state compensation programs.

One of the interviewees shared how their organization provides emergency assistance to people who do not have documented proof of ownership of destroyed housing: they install modular houses on a plot of land located next to the destroyed house. However, in conversations with representatives of other non-governmental organizations, we heard that they are not willing to provide funds for the installation of modular houses in frontline hromadas due to their proximity to the frontline.

In addition, representatives of local government bodies spoke positively about the practice of **monitoring the targeted use of funds**, carried out by NGOs. In their opinion, this will, for example, help prevent cases where one household accumulates excess building materials.

As an example of good practice, informants mentioned the approach in which **one organization purposefully covers the housing needs of a specific hromada**. In the opinion of representatives of government bodies, this would allow the nature of assistance to be adapted to the challenges faced by a particular hromada.

Some study participants pointed out that **assistance in the construction of social housing** could be a significant form of support from non-governmental organizations. This would make it possible to provide permanent housing for IDPs who do not have acquaintances or relatives in the hromada, and **to provide temporary housing** for those who plan to leave the hromada later. Meanwhile, one representative of local government bodies noted that there is no need to build new housing, as there is enough vacant housing in the hromada that requires restoration. The assistance they need relates to transferring this housing to the hromada's management and

carrying out repair work so that it can later be used as social housing.

Representatives of local government bodies also noted that one of the unmet needs is **assistance with architectural expertise and project-estimate documentation**. This problem is explained by the lack of relevant specialists on the ground and the significant cost of preparing the necessary documentation. Some informants noted that NGOs could help solve part of these problems by sending their specialists to work locally in the hromadas.

## Needs for support from the state government

Study participants said that in addressing housing-related challenges, they **lack support from state and regional government bodies**. This is related both to the failure to take into account the situation of frontline hromadas in current policies and measures, and to the lack of cooperation with the local level and the absence of guidance on how to act in specific situations.

Representatives of local authorities also noted that their work is complicated by the **lack of clarity regarding the state's overall plan for the reconstruction of destroyed settlements**. There is a lack of understanding about which settlements will be included in recovery programs and which likely will not. In particular, one informant mentioned that in some hromadas there are villages with a very small number of residents. As a result, local authorities are faced with the question of the future direction for such settlements: whether to relocate residents to a neighboring settlement or to rebuild and develop the existing one.

"The villages we had, well, for example, [village name], right now there are two families living there, 5 people. If we restore the water supply system there, which would pump water for two families, what would the cost of water be? Would they use it? And more than a million would be spent on restoring the water supply. So, economic practicality. Or we could say, let's build a street there, near [city name], with infrastructure and everything, we'll relocate you there, name the street [village name], and you'll live there. Or we'll give you all certificates, and you can look for housing across Ukraine. That is, if we want to keep this territory populated... Then we need to keep people here. We need to build housing here."

*Representative of local government bodies of a village hromada*

## ● Conclusions

In this study, we focused on the challenges and needs faced by frontline rural hromadas in the housing sector. We also examined the work of non-governmental organizations and their cooperation with hromadas near the frontline on housing issues.

Housing sector challenges in rural hromadas near the frontline **have worsened since the start of the full-scale invasion.**

These hromadas face a dual burden: to the pre-existing problems common to other hromadas in Ukraine, additional issues have been added, related to the full-scale war and their location in frontline areas. A significant portion of housing in hromadas near the frontline is destroyed or damaged, and the number of people in need of housing has increased due to forced displacement and destruction. Local government bodies are dealing with these situations with limited resources. They function under conditions of reduced hromada budgets, a lack of specialists, security challenges, and uncertainty regarding the state's plans for the recovery of specific settlements.

In rural hromadas near the frontline, no new construction is taking place, and almost all housing was built before 1990. Most of the housing stock consists of detached houses. The existing multi-story buildings have outdated utility systems and rooms that are in poor condition.

There is abandoned housing in the hromadas, as well as houses whose owners have lived in other settlements or countries for a long time. However, for various reasons, hromadas do not use these houses to accommodate IDPs or people who have lost their homes. In particular, this is due to the fact that abandoned houses are not in municipal ownership and require major repairs. As for the homeowners who have not lived in the hromada for a long time, they are not always willing to rent their houses out to other people.

**The level of accessibility**, both in housing and in public spaces of the hromadas overall, **is low**. This creates significant difficulties for people with limited mobility. Representatives of local government bodies were generally aware of this problem but shared that they would not be able to resolve it within the limits of the hromada's current budget.

As a result of the war, in some hromadas **around 90% of the housing stock is damaged or destroyed**. At the same time, according to study participants, **comprehensive reconstruction is not taking place**. The work and measures currently being carried out are more of a targeted or

emergency response to bombing. The implementation of such repair work also faces a number of problems. In particular, these include a lack of qualified workers, the absence of repair crews in the hromadas, and the unwillingness of crews from other towns or cities to come to frontline areas.

In some hromadas, Commissions were established to review issues related to providing compensation for destroyed or damaged housing. In many cases, **working in these Commissions became an additional workload** for the existing staff of local government bodies. This leads to staff being overworked.

Residents of frontline hromadas mostly receive funds for housing reconstruction through the eRecovery program. Non-governmental organizations also provide support in this process. NGOs often assist specifically with non-complex repairs by providing construction materials and sometimes even by organizing the work of crews. However, according to representatives of local government bodies, **assistance from NGOs is not consistent**. However, hromadas need constantly available opportunities to request materials or support in organizing repair work.

The information obtained during the study indicates that **people often face difficulties in trying to receive compensation** for damaged or destroyed housing. For instance, difficulties arise in cases of repeated destruction due to the inability to confirm the results of the previous repair; due to the absence of title documents or a technical passport, or improperly registered housing in cases where two separate households live in one house divided into two parts; and due to the lack of settlement status in the localities where people reside.

In addition, informants noted the need to regulate the issue of restoring damaged or destroyed non-residential buildings belonging to residents of rural hromadas, as these structures are often the foundation of households' professional activities.

Given the situation described above, **local government bodies generally do not have the capacity to assist with the accommodation of people** in need of housing. Therefore, people who have lost their homes due to hostilities or forced displacement mostly live with relatives. Some of these people also live in privately rented housing, are placed in vacant housing with the consent of the owners, live with strangers, and, in rare cases, purchase housing themselves. When renting



housing from private individuals, people face situations where the rent is too high, the rooms are in poor condition, or the unit lacks utilities. In rural hromadas, people rarely sign rental contracts between tenants and landlords. Another important point is that, despite the availability of vacant housing, **the supply on the rental market** in rural hromadas near the frontline is quite low. Therefore, people are not always able to find housing and are forced to relocate to another hromada.

**Social housing is generally non-existent** in rural hromadas near the frontline. According to representatives of local government bodies, some hromadas have public housing intended for people in need of social protection or people of certain professions, but the number of such units is limited. Study participants **emphasized the relevance of creating social housing for their hromadas**. They believed this was appropriate to achieve in various ways: through the construction of new housing or through transferring existing abandoned housing into municipal ownership and carrying out major repairs. Alongside this, they raised the issue of the need for an inventory of the housing stock, as hromadas do not always have up-to-date information about available housing, its condition and owners.

Frontline rural hromadas **actively cooperate with non-governmental organizations**. This cooperation takes place in the field of reconstructing housing and civil infrastructure. However, as noted by informants, there are certain problems in the process of this cooperation. One of the main issues is the unsystematic and temporary nature of assistance. In addition, **non-governmental organizations support the population only with minor repairs**, lacking the capacity or resources to carry out more complex and large-scale reconstruction work.

During the study, we also asked representatives of local government bodies about the support their hromadas needed most from non-governmental organizations. Study participants pointed to the **need for assistance with social housing**, particularly in terms of its furnishing and construction. In addition, representatives of frontline hromadas expressed the need for support in the areas of architectural expertise and the development of project-estimate documentation. Support in organizing repair work, namely practices when NGOs independently find repair crews, is also important for the hromadas.



According to study participants, one of the still-unresolved problems is the lack **of clarity regarding plans for the reconstruction** of destroyed settlements, as well as the priorities and methods of reconstruction. This is especially relevant for de-occupied frontline villages to which only a few households have returned. In such settlements, the cost of housing and utility services is significantly higher than in others, which complicates the provision of necessary services to the population. In this context, representatives of local government bodies expressed concern about the plans for such settlements and whether a decision will be made to rebuild them.

For rural hromadas near the frontline, the transition from humanitarian response to long-term solutions is complicated by the security situation. Although representatives of local government bodies recognize the need for housing, particularly social housing, large-scale construction in these areas is not possible. That is why the issue of inventorying existing real estate and converting it into housing for internally displaced people is especially relevant for frontline hromadas. These hromadas require more comprehensive and sustainable support in the housing sector. The highest priority areas are: 1) the restoration of damaged and destroyed buildings (both residential and non-residential); 2) support in providing housing for people who lost it due to the war; 3) consistent access to assistance in obtaining construction materials and finding crews to restore houses.