



UNPRPD MPTF
Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities



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DISABILITY AND DISPLACEMENT

UKRAINE WAR'S IMPACT ON GEORGIA

A call to urgent action

Period of coverage March – November 2023

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Summary of findings and recommendations

Findings

Data

- There is a **critical lack of reliable data** on the number of refugees with disabilities in Georgia. Existing data suggests that refugees with disabilities may not be adequately accounted for, and their needs may not be systematically addressed.

Information

- **Disorganized, outdated, and inaccessible information regarding available assistance** leaves refugees with disabilities lacking crucial support as reported by refugees.

Documentation

- Refugees face **challenges in accessing services with Ukrainian identity documents** and understanding the process to obtain or validate these documents in Georgia.
- The State requirement of obtaining refugee status is a barrier to accessing state-provided services.

Health care and assistive technologies

- Healthcare services are not fully accessible to refugees with disabilities, and there is a significant concern regarding access to necessary treatments and medications, as well as assistive devices.
- There is a **pressing need** for refugees with disabilities **to access health services beyond the basic coverage guaranteed by the state**, which often comes with restrictions resulting in unaffordable bills. Financial barriers are the main obstacle to their access to health care services.
- Respondents reported not having information on available health care services.

Housing

- Refugees with disabilities often face **high housing costs and accessibility** issues in individual housing or shared apartments. Where state led financial assistance does not cover disability-related extra costs.

Livelihood

- Refugees with disabilities find it **difficult to cover basic needs** with the financial assistance provided, and there is no cash-transfer program available which accounts for disability-related extra costs.

Education

- Refugee children with disabilities face **rejection by schools and segregation** within the education system. Additionally, adult refugees find language classes insufficiently tailored to diverse learning styles.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Current mechanisms for monitoring, evaluation, and participation are **not effectively capturing the needs and inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action**. There is an absence of a disability working group or task force within the broader coordination mechanism.

Recommendations

To the State of Georgia

Data

- Establish national data collection processes to gather detailed information on refugees with disabilities and analysis.

Information

- Make all public information regarding administrative processes and services available in accessible formats. There should also be a coordinated communication strategy to ensure that information is consolidated, accessible, and easy to navigate.

Documentation

- Assess the accessibility of locations where documents are issued, removing financial barriers to accessing essential documentation, and establish a bilateral agreement for the recognition of Ukrainian disability status.

Health care and assistive technology

- Include refugees with disabilities in universal health coverage and the review of the supply and distribution of assistive devices. It is also recommended that healthcare services be reviewed for accessibility and affordability.

Housing

- Account for disability-related extra costs in housing aid programs and consult with refugees with disabilities to understand the barriers they face in accessing suitable housing matching their requirements.

Livelihood

- Ensuring that cash transfers meet essential needs and include disability-related extra costs, reviewing food aid programs to provide sufficient nutrition, and considering the establishment of targeted programs to assist persons with disabilities in employment.

Education

- Address the segregation of children with disabilities in special schools or segregated settings, and ensure inclusive education.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Establish communication channels for consultation and create a monitoring mechanism with the participation of refugees with disabilities and Organization of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs).

To Donors

- Ensure that all funding towards humanitarian programming follows a twin-track approach,¹ adopting the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and the Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action (IASC Guidelines) as a common framework, and that the implementation is monitored with CRPD indicators².

- Consider additional funding to support the creation and sustainability of a disability working group for humanitarian action in the country that involves coordination focal points from the State, humanitarian actors and OPDs.
- Support capacity building efforts for OPDs and groups of refugees with disabilities towards their participation in consultation mechanisms and in monitoring the humanitarian response.

To Georgian OPDs and NGOs

- Continue to work with refugees with disabilities to include them in available participation mechanisms and advocate for the creation of new consultation opportunities related to the humanitarian response.

To UN entities and international community

- Engage in meaningful consultation with persons with disabilities and OPDs to understand their needs, consider their expertise, and adjust services accordingly.
- In collaboration with OPDs and other humanitarian actors, consider creating a disability working group with the participation of refugees with disabilities for the comprehensive inclusion of a disability rights perspective in humanitarian action.
- International community to increase its financial support to Georgia, and other host states, so that efforts to ensure the needs of refugees with disabilities are being met.

Background

Millions of people have fled Ukraine since the latest Russian invasion in February 2022. According to the UNHCR, approximately one-third of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes, with nearly 6.3 million seeking safety in other countries as “refugees” while 3.7 million have been internally displaced within Ukraine.³ For the aims of this report the term “refugees” will be used to encompass all persons who were forced to flee Ukraine since the latest Russian invasion in February 2022, regardless of their legal status in Georgia or their nationality. Incidentally, some data was gathered related to refugees coming from other countries.

Georgia has received nearly 160,000 refugees fleeing Ukraine since February 2022. Most of them have travelled on to other countries and approximately 27,000 have stayed in Georgia.⁴ Of those staying, approximately 62% are women, 25% are minors and 9% are over 60 years of age.⁵ The combined database of UNHCR and World Vision documents 8,000 Ukrainians, with approximately 5,000 considered as active cases based on interactions during 2023.⁶

It remains unknown how many of the 2.7 million persons with disabilities in Ukraine are among those displaced to Georgia.⁷ Under Ukrainian Martial Law, men between the ages of 18 and 60 cannot leave the country. Exceptionally, all women, men with disabilities, single fathers of children with disabilities, men sole caregivers for children with disabilities, amongst others, are allowed to leave the country. While no exact accurate data is available on the number of refugees with disabilities, evidence shows that given the complex challenges of emergencies and displacement may lead to increased disability prevalence⁸⁹.

Filling the information gap with quantitative and qualitative data is essential to adequately identify barriers that prevent persons with disabilities from accessing services.¹⁰ Some data and assessments were collected and published in Georgia during the months immediately following the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine. The available documentation at the start of the project was very minimal considering refugees with disabilities. An analysis conducted by Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Georgia and the Samaritan Association of Georgia in June-July 2022 identified the main needs of refugees in Georgia. It highlights a lack of targeted services for refugees with disabilities and older persons.¹¹ It also found that needs were being addressed on a case-by-case basis without joint and holistic consideration.¹²

Assumptions based on the IASC Guidelines

Persons with disabilities displaced by conflict are exposed to numerous risks and challenges. A lack of inclusive policies and support services can further marginalize and isolate persons with disabilities, exacerbating vulnerability to exploitation, discrimination, and violence.¹³ Firstly, inaccessible emergency communication channels among other barriers, expose persons with disabilities to higher risks by limiting access to information on services or lifesaving warning. Moreover, displaced persons with disabilities are more likely than others to lack personal documents, due to different reasons including failure to register their birth, or denial of their legal capacity.¹⁴ Thus, it is important to take this risk into account to

eliminate additional bureaucratic barriers in accessing services in internal safe zones and when seeking shelter in a host country.

Additionally, the disruption of health care services and the loss of assistive devices during the displacement can have grave consequences for persons with disabilities, such as the loss of independence and hence hindering their ability to address their own basic needs, for example accessing food, safe water, shelter and essential medications.¹⁵

The physical environment in displacement settings, including housing, may be difficult to reach due to a lack of accessible infrastructure. This creates further barriers to accessing essential services and hinders the inclusion of individuals into their new community.

The placement of children with disabilities in segregated education instead of inclusive settings deprives them of rights, opportunities and social participation. Social interaction contributes to early childhood development and reduces the risk of furthering existing impairments.

Finally, the disruption of social networks and community support systems has significant impact on the physical and mental health of persons with disabilities, which constitutes an additional barrier, and puts them at a higher risk of human rights violations during the displacement pathway and when settling in a new host country.¹⁶ Women with disabilities are particularly exposed to higher risks of violence through isolation from the community, in particular to gender based violence.

Human rights mechanisms

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has called upon States to ensure that refugees with disabilities, and persons with disabilities in refugee-like situations, have access to social protection, assistive technologies, information and adequate services, including through individualized support.¹⁷ It also recently made observations to Georgia regarding situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies, to “[a]dopt a gender- and disability-responsive strategy to ensure that critical infrastructure as well as risk information and crisis communication are fully accessible.”¹⁸ Along these lines, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities also called States, along with multilateral agencies and humanitarian organizations, to ensure that their programs are inclusive of persons with disabilities in all aspects.¹⁹

The programme

In response to the crisis in Ukraine, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF, OHCHR and UN Women (hereinafter Participating UN Organizations, or PUNOs) launched a joint programme in January 2023 titled ‘Mainstreaming a disability inclusive humanitarian response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis in Moldova and Georgia’. The project is funded by the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD).

Persons with disabilities who have fled from Ukraine to Georgia since February 2022 are the focus of the project. The UNPRPD, in collaboration with PUNOs, selected the countries of focus based on three criteria: countries that are neighboring Ukraine, low- and middle-income

countries²⁰, and countries where PUNOs have already been present and engaged in work with persons with disabilities fleeing Ukraine.

As part of the joint project, OHCHR committed to prepare a needs assessment on the situation of persons with disabilities displaced as a consequence of the conflict in Ukraine in both Georgia and Moldova. The objective of this report is to analyze high-quality data from the needs assessment, providing an evidence-based overview of the situation for refugees with disabilities from Ukraine. It aims to offer recommendations to address gaps in services, design inclusive interventions, and allocate appropriate budgets in accordance with the obligations under the CRPD. The needs assessment primarily focuses on the rights to access information, health, an adequate standard of living, and social protection, as well as the right to education. Additionally, it underscores the importance of consulting persons with disabilities in the design, implementation, and monitoring of the humanitarian response.

It should be highlighted that Georgia has been put in the situation where it has unexpectedly and suddenly had to manage the needs for tens of thousands of people fleeing Ukraine. The overarching recommendation is that the international community increases its support to Georgia, and other host states, so that efforts to ensure the needs of refugees with disabilities are being met.

Objective of the report

This report aims to identify the main needs and priorities of refugees with disabilities who have fled the conflict in Ukraine and settled in Georgia and to provide evidence-based recommendations on how to ensure that these needs are met. This includes supporting the Government of Georgia to fulfill its obligations under the CRPD, in particular with respect to Article 11, as well as International Refugee Law.

Methodology

The methodology for this project has been designed in consultation with Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) and PUNOs.

This needs assessment is based on a desk review of data collected by humanitarian actors²¹, and qualitative data collected through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs). For Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), two questionnaires were developed: one comprising 61 questions for duty-bearers and service providers (with distinctions on their relevance made in the questionnaire), particularly targeting the government; and another tailored for persons with disabilities and care and support-givers, containing 45 questions.

The KIIs centered on assessing the impact of displacement on refugees with disabilities, as well as the enablers and barriers they encounter in accessing services and humanitarian assistance provided by Government of Georgia and international actors. The focus of the FGDs was to understand the displacement journey of refugees with disabilities and to identify barriers and enablers concerning key available services in Georgia.

The KIIs and FGDs were conducted with refugees with disabilities, support persons, parents of children with disabilities, host community members, and duty bearers, as follows:

- KIIs with duty bearers (government officials): were planned with a purposive sampling method to select 9 key informants who have a direct relation with the prioritized issues. Respondents were selected from relevant government agencies from different regions of the country. The focal point for the refugee response from each institution was selected after consultations with PUNOs. Exceptionally, two contact points from one institution were interviewed in cases where more than one office or program was directly involved in the refugee response. Two key informants from this sample declined to participate or did not reply at all. A total of six interviews with duty bearers took place.
- KII with a representative coalition of OPDs: One was planned and the OPD was selected due to it being the biggest coalition of OPDs in the country.
- KII with rights holders (persons with disabilities, support persons, and parents of children with disabilities): A purposive sampling method was used to select 20 key informants who represent the diversity of persons with disabilities in Georgia. Respondents were selected seeking a representation by gender, age, and type of disability. A total of 16 interviews with rights holders took place.
- Two FGDs were held with OPDs in East Georgia and West Georgia. The OPDs were selected to represent the different regions of Georgia where they have a history of working.
- Two FGDs were held with service provider organizations in East Georgia and West Georgia, and were selected based on the relevant work that they do in their respective regions.
- One FGD was held with women refugees with disabilities. Respondents were chosen through a purposive sampling method, and a sample of women refugees with disabilities and a mother of a girl with a disability were interviewed. An initial target number of respondents was established at approximately 8. Due to availability, only 4 participants could attend.

The data was analyzed via thematic and content analysis with inductive and deductive approaches to coding. Once the report was drafted it was shared with PUNOs, humanitarian stakeholders, and State representatives to review its findings and recommendations.

Challenges in data collection

The research encountered several notable challenges. Among them was the absence of a comprehensive and regularly updated database of Ukrainian refugees, making it difficult to identify and contact respondents. Moreover, identifying Ukrainian refugees with disabilities proved particularly challenging, as none of the organizations were gathering disability disaggregated data. Secondly, refugees are widely dispersed across different regions, driven by economic hardship. This geographical spread of Ukrainian with disabilities complicated logistical arrangements for interviews and home visits particularly due to frequent changes in accommodation and accessible transport options.

Moreover, a prevalent sense of exhaustion and frustration among refugees proved to be a significant hurdle. Many had experienced dissatisfaction and felt unheard in previous interactions with authorities, leading to a reluctance to participate in the study. This skepticism stemmed from a belief that their voices were not effectively considered or appreciated in dealings with local authorities.

Although FGDs were conducted as aforementioned, many refugees were reluctant to participate and, as a result, some interviews did not take place. Individuals with disabilities showed a preference for individual interviews over participating in focus groups, citing two main reasons. Firstly, many people encountered substantial mobility obstacles, leading them to request home visits from the researcher. Secondly, they expressed hesitation in sharing their experiences within a group setting. As a result, the majority opted for individual interviews. However, some individuals did take part in focus groups designed specifically for women with disabilities, parents of children with disabilities, and other persons with disabilities, which were organized with the support of PUNOs.

Legal Framework

Georgia has played a significant role as both a transit and destination country for persons displaced owing to the conflict. According to Decree 81 of the Government of Georgia, amending Resolution 255, citizens of Ukraine are entitled to remain for two years without any additional paperwork or visa, during which they can apply for asylum. Those that wish to stay for longer than two years, they need to apply for asylum.

Georgia, as a State party to the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees (herein Refugee Convention) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), holds legal obligations to protect and uphold the rights of refugees with disabilities. Under refugee law, Georgia is obligated to ensure that individuals fleeing persecution or serious harm, such as those fleeing the conflict in Ukraine, including those with disabilities, are granted access to asylum procedures and are not subjected to discrimination based on their disability status. This includes providing a fair and effective process for determining refugee status and ensuring that individuals with disabilities have equal access to protection and assistance.

Moreover, under the CRPD, Georgia is obliged to guarantee that refugees with disabilities enjoy their rights on an equal basis with others. This encompasses ensuring equal access to healthcare, education, employment, and social services for refugees with disabilities. Georgia has a positive obligation to take measures to eliminate barriers and discrimination faced by refugees with disabilities, promote their inclusion and participation in society, and provide reasonable accommodation to facilitate their full enjoyment of rights. To fulfil these legal obligations, Georgia should establish policies and frameworks that address the needs and challenges faced by refugees with disabilities. This includes providing accessible information, support services, and meaningful participation of OPDs and other rights holders in the design, implementation and monitoring of policy and programming.

Currently, the legal framework governing refugee law in Georgia, including the Law on International Protection, Order 33, and Order 99, does not comprehensively address the

rights of persons with disabilities seeking asylum or holding refugee or humanitarian status. These legislative instruments primarily regulate asylum procedures and focus on legal status, rights and obligations, as well as social and economic guarantees for asylum-seekers, refugees, humanitarian status holders and persons under temporary protection. The existing guarantees, inherent in international law and Georgia's Constitution, complement these acts.²² The law on International Protection primarily focuses on procedures, particularly regulating the handling of requests for international protection submitted by individuals with specific needs (including persons with disabilities), and the registration of applications for international protection, issuance of asylum-seeker certificates, and initial profiling interviews.

Regarding the rights of refugees with disabilities, the law contains a general non-discrimination clause that includes disability among the protected grounds. Therefore, it can be inferred that individuals with disabilities holding relevant status should enjoy all the rights afforded to asylum seekers, refugees, and humanitarian status holders, in accordance with the principles of non-discrimination. Chapter VII of the law focuses on the rights and obligations of asylum-seekers, refugees, humanitarian status holders, and persons under temporary protection. Among other entitlements, they have the right to receive preschool and general education, access professional and higher education, benefit from the Universal Healthcare Program, or receive social assistance, the right to employment, as provided for citizens of Georgia²³. Thus, Ukrainian Refugees with Disabilities holding the humanitarian or Refugee status are entitled to the rights enshrined in the law.

In 2013, the Georgian Government adopted Ordinance 36 on "Specific Measures for Transition on the Universal Healthcare Model" for the purpose of meeting the basic health needs of refugees and asylum seekers. According to the report by the Public Defender of Georgia²⁴, the Internally Displaced Persons, Ecomigrants and Livelihood Agency launched a pilot program in 2021 to provide assistance to people with critical health needs and those living under international protection. However, no impact has yet been determined by this pilot program. Although as identified by the researcher there is no relevant information related to interventions for persons with disabilities.

The 2021 Georgian Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities does not include specific provisions for protecting the rights of asylum seekers, refugees, or humanitarian status holders. Instead, it focuses on ensuring equality before the law for persons with disabilities (regardless of status), enshrining their rights across all areas of public life, and assigning responsibilities for the overview of CRPD implementation.²⁵ Chapter II of the law sets out all rights enshrined in the CRPD. It guarantees and ensures equality before the law, independent living, inadmissibility of discrimination, rights of women and children with disabilities, right to education, healthcare, habilitation and rehabilitation, labor and employment, protection from exploitation, violence and degrading treatment, inviolability of private and family life, social protection, participation in cultural, sport, entertainment and other public activities. It also highlights the access to legal proceedings and awareness raising.²⁶

It should be noted that majority of Ukrainian refugees do not apply for asylum in Georgia. According to UNHCR data, as of January 30, 2024, there are 26,660 Ukrainian refugees recorded in the country, with only 680 of them having applied for asylum. Those who do not

apply for asylum are considered foreigners and fall under the regime of the Georgian Law on the Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons.

The government of Georgia has taken measures to provide economic support to vulnerable Ukrainians in Georgia. Government Decree 1254, extended until 1 of January 2024, ensures the provision of financial assistance of 300 GEL (approximately 110 USD)²⁷ per family for housing and 45 GEL (16 USD) per person per month for subsistence to those vulnerable Ukrainians who entered Georgia before 15 July 2022 and were accommodated in hotels. Post 15 July 2022 arrivals are supported, upon vulnerability assessment, with 10 days of emergency accommodation (in Tbilisi only) and the financial assistance (300 GEL per family and 45 GEL per person per month), regardless of the accommodation support they have received from the Government.

Decree 387 on access to healthcare under the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour, and Social Affairs of Georgia, has been extended as of September 27, 2023. It covers the citizens of Ukraine who entered Georgia as of 1 February 2022 until 1 November 2023 and who have stayed permanently on the territory of Georgia. So far, the Ministry has provided around 1,360,000 GEL (approximately 500,000 USD) in funding for the treatment of citizens of Ukraine through the State Referral Service. Most of this funding was used for surgical treatment, inpatient conservative treatment, radiation therapy, medicine, or resuscitation.

Identified need: insufficient disability disaggregated data.

A recent needs assessment performed in Georgia, covering 850 households (HHs) from all regions of Georgia, in total, 36 settlements, found that approximately 28% of refugees who were part of the study are persons with disabilities.²⁸ Another study performed by UNHCR which analyzed over 300 interviews, as well as the results of three Focus Group Discussions, found that approximately 24% of refugee respondents reported a person with disability in their household.²⁹ However, there is no reliable and systemic public data available on the number of refugees in Georgia who are persons with disabilities. This heightens the risk that humanitarian services are not planned to be accessible and inclusive, the barriers persons with disabilities experience are not identified, and persons with disabilities are excluded from accessing services that they have a right to. This includes education, health care, social support and housing.

In some interviews, State officials recognized that the State mainly relies on a checkbox in an aid application form to account for disability status. However, due to the urgency needed to provide support to incoming Ukrainians, only certain information from the form was prioritized to be processed and, as a result, some data that the State currently has cannot be disaggregated by disability status and the general data is not made easily available. There have not been any considerations so far as to the reliability and adequacy of the checkbox/form. It seems that other State institutions rely on this information, creating the false impression that there are no refugees with disabilities or that their needs are met with the regular programs.

In general, the State mainly relies on the data from UNHCR and NGOs but has not collected any information on the needs of refugees with disabilities, as confirmed by a State official during a KII. UNHCR has started a new data collection process where they agreed to include questions from the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning (WG-SS) into the routine Multi Sector Needs Assessment (MSNA). The pending results will hopefully provide further insights on the prevalence of refugees with disabilities in Georgia, that will lead to identifying their needs and barriers to accessing both international and government services.

According to state authorities, including the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs of Georgia, refugees with disabilities are required to proactively communicate their needs to the Georgian authorities. If they do not, it is assumed that they do not have unmet needs. The assumption runs parallel with a social perception that some groups of refugees are rich or receive more than enough humanitarian support. Furthermore, there is a tendency to draw comparisons between the assistance provided to Ukrainian refugees and Georgia's internally displaced persons. Such comparisons, when made without taking the context into account, can foster intolerance, and misunderstanding, thereby creating tension between groups in host communities.

The lack of disaggregated data on persons with disabilities, as well as the lack of use of international guidelines for the collection of this data, was highlighted as a concern by the CRPD Committee in its review of Georgia in 2023.³⁰ It shows that the lack of data is a general problem, highlighting the State's obligation to revise its procedures and implement measures to address their shortcomings, improving the conditions for planning, implementation and monitoring of disability-inclusive policies in the country.

The CRPD emphasizes the importance of disaggregated data in understanding and addressing gaps in implementation of the rights of persons with disabilities. Under Article 31 of the CRPD, States parties must collect appropriate qualitative and quantitative information, including statistical and research data on persons with disabilities to identify gaps in policies and programs, including those related to refugees.³¹ Data on refugees in Georgia, disaggregated by disability is necessary to enable policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and service providers to understand the specific needs and challenges faced by refugees with disabilities. Secondly, having accurate data on the number of refugees with disabilities allows for the allocation of resources and the provision of appropriate support systems. It assists in identifying gaps in services and formulating evidence-based policies that address the specific barriers faced by refugees with disabilities.

Furthermore, data on the number of refugees with disabilities helps in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness and reach of existing programs and interventions. It enables the measurement of progress and the identification of areas that require improvement to ensure the full inclusion of refugees with disabilities on a rolling basis.

Recommendations for Government of Georgia and international organisations

- Establish national data collection tools to gather data on the age, gender, and disability status of refugees in Georgia under joint international standards for identification. Ensure that all relevant agencies have access to this data and can use it when developing policy and services and allocating associated budgets.

- Use the data to monitor access to services for refugees with disabilities in numbers that correlate with official data.
- While datasets are being developed, all agencies should actively engage in meaningful consultations with rights holders and OPDs to better understand their needs and experiences in accessing services. This engagement should continue even after dataset development.

Identified need: access to information

In studies conducted in Georgia, refugees consistently report that inaccessible information is a major barrier. Over 40% of respondents in a UNHCR October 2022 assessment lacked adequate information on assistance and services, particularly regarding access to health services, which remains a priority need.³²

In a different study conducted by ASB and SSK on Situations and Needs in June-July 2022, 23% of respondents stated that receiving information about legal services was important for them.³³ Furthermore, 77% of respondents to a survey conducted in December 2023 by People in Need, stated that they do not have enough information about available services and how to access to health care.³⁴

Access to information for refugees in Georgia is inconsistent and often relies on voluntary groups and social media chats. Information on housing and healthcare programs is particularly lacking, causing confusion and duplication of efforts. Even when approaching State offices, refugees receive inconsistent information, leading to wasted time and resources. The experience with hotlines, including the Ministry of Health's 1505 line, is generally poor due to inconsistent service quality. Service providers acknowledge that a lack of coordination hinders effective referrals, as they are often unaware of the full range of available services.

Many refugees were unaware of their eligibility for primary health care packages. A common complaint is that information on treatment coverage requirements from the Ministry of Health is unclear and inconsistent. Refugees have highlighted the need for clearer information on health care services and cash transfers.

Quantitative data on access to information by persons with disabilities is not available. Accessibility is a common barrier in access to information for persons with disabilities, generally, in Georgia.³⁵ Some respondents reported instances of hostile responses from authorities when seeking information. In some cases, authorities told them to return to Ukraine if dissatisfied with the aid provided, and some refugees were even forced to copy Georgian handwriting without understanding it, exposing them to uncertainty on the legal implications. Many refugees felt that any complaints about the lack of information were seen as ungratefulness. As a result, they often expressed excessive gratitude during interviews, emphasizing their thankfulness for any assistance received and feeling they had no right to complain or voice concerns, exaggerating the actual quality of services received.

The right to access information is protected by the CRPD. Article 21 expressly recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to access information on an equal basis with others.

Implementation of this right is essential for refugees with disabilities as it enables them to understand and exercise their other rights effectively, make informed decisions, access essential services, and engage in education, employment, and social opportunities. Access to information is essential to ensuring that refugees with disabilities can integrate into their host community and meaningfully participate in society on an equal basis with others.

Recommendations to Government of Georgia and international organisations

- All public information regarding administrative process, access, and delivery of services (including social protection, health care and education), and complaints mechanisms should be widely available in accessible formats including braille, large print, easy-to-read formats, sign language interpretation, and audio recordings.
- The government should prioritize making information accessible on communication platforms most used by refugees. This includes providing clear and easy-to-read information about administrative processes, services, and complaints mechanisms.
- The State and humanitarian actors should coordinate a communication strategy for refugees with disabilities to ensure that information on services is consolidated, accessible, and easy to navigate.
- Information that is presented in electronic formats should be compatible with assistive technologies such as screen readers, screen magnifiers or voice recognition software.
- State websites should meet existing global and regional accessibility standards such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 (WCAG 2.1).

Identified need: access to documentation

On February 24, 2023, the government of Georgia issued Decree No. 81 amending Resolution No. 255 that regulates the visa requirements for visitors of Georgia. Decree No. 81 extended the period for visitors from Ukraine to stay in the country without a visa from one to two years. The Decree came as a significant measure of relief as the one-year limit was about to expire for those Ukrainians who entered Georgia during the Spring of 2022 and there is some reluctance by refugees to apply for asylum.³⁶

In general, refugees have reported facing barriers when accessing services in Georgia with a Ukrainian identity document, in spite of government decrees regulating and addressing the matter. While the Ukrainian Embassy is issuing new passports, the costs and fees are often unaffordable for refugees.³⁷

Refugees in Georgia generally encounter two key barriers related to their documentation. The first pertains to the requirement of obtaining refugee status to access the majority of State-provided services. The primary reason for the low adoption of this documentation is the prevailing hope among refugees that the situation in Ukraine will soon be resolved. Further, refugees are generally unaware of the benefits associated with refugee status and do not recognize its value. Moreover, the locations where this documentation can be obtained are not accessible, posing a challenge for individuals with reduced mobility, as only those without such limitations can easily physically reach these locations.

On the other hand, most people interviewed have a disability certificate issued by Ukraine. However, they state that the information on how to obtain this certificate in Georgia or validate their original certificate is not clear and that the procedure is extremely complicated. Therefore, they have not been able to use their certificate to access services and some were explicitly refused certain disability services due to their Ukrainian Certificate.

In accordance with the CRPD and the Refugee Convention, refugees with disabilities have the right to documentation and it is recognized that possessing such documentation is often essential to accessing services and legal rights. The CRPD recognizes that persons with disabilities, including those seeking refuge, should enjoy full legal capacity on an equal basis with others and are entitled to legal safeguards in accessing documentation relevant to their identity, nationality, and legal status.³⁸ The UN Refugee Convention, in conjunction with the CRPD, mandates that refugees, regardless of disability, should be provided with documentation to establish their status and access to rights and protection.³⁹

Recommendations to the Government of Georgia

- Undertake an accessibility audit, analyzing the accessibility of locations where documents are issued in accordance with the National Standards of Accessibility and take remedial action.
- Allocate budget for the provision of reasonable accommodation for individuals in need and adjustments to physical infrastructure to ensure access.
- Undertake an assessment of barriers faced by refugees when accessing services with their Ukrainian documentation to better inform the process and eliminate hindrances.
- Remove financial barriers to accessing essential documentation including administrative costs and replacement fees. State authorities should also work with the Ukrainian Embassy in Georgia to waive, or limit as far as possible, the fees and costs when applying for the necessary documentation from the Embassy.
- Consider establishing a bilateral agreement to create a fast-track process for the recognition of Ukrainian disability status in Georgia and vice versa or provide an alternative certification process that meets CRPD standards.

Identified need: access to health care and assistive devices

The government of Georgia has mandated that refugees have the right to access public healthcare programs, including emergency services, maternal and child health, immunization, tuberculosis and HIV, diabetes, dialysis, rare diseases, and COVID-19. However, there is no reliable data on access to healthcare services for refugees. Therefore, it is unsurprising that, in the study undertaken by UNHCR, access to health care services and treatments is highlighted as a key concern for Ukrainian refugees in Georgia. Where, 26% of respondents reported challenges accessing health services, while 27% reported not being able to afford medicines, in the previous 30 days.⁴⁰ In the study undertaken by People in Need, 62% of respondents reported not having access to health care services. 84% reported that the main reason for their lack of access was financial restraints, while approximately 5% of respondents reported mobility as the main barrier.⁴¹

Access to health care and assistive devices is one of the greatest concerns for refugees with disabilities who took part in the study, for them, it is a critical and urgent issue. Even when

they do access services covered by the public health system, such as emergency services, this can still result in medical bills which they cannot afford.

Access to health services, beyond the basic coverage guaranteed by the State, is generally expensive and most of the people interviewed rely on programs of NGOs and private agencies, discounted programs of some clinics, and peer solidarity/support. In some cases, the State does cover treatment for diseases, but not without various obstacles in the application process. For many, it is also unclear the extent of the coverage that they will get with chronic illnesses, including cancer. Most of the respondents would like to have the option of enrolling in paid health insurance programs.

Refugees encountered status-related barriers that prevented them from accessing health care services. When doing so, in some cases refugees were charged more than locals. Once refugees realized that they were treated differently and charged more, they were unaware of the legal mechanisms to appeal it. Free legal aid is not available to them and generally they did not have any information about redress mechanisms. Important to note is that some refugees reported that they paid nothing at all or were fully reimbursed by humanitarian actors.

Almost none of the study respondents were informed of the available services of rehabilitation and habilitation, and other disability services generally available for local persons with disabilities. Opportunities and services for independent living were out of the scope of what was offered, resulting in services never being requested of Georgian authorities. UNHCR provides a leaflet with health information, which includes specific references on persons with disabilities.⁴²

Information about and access to sexual and reproductive health services (SRH) is severely limited. The significant challenges in accessing any health service often push SRH to the bottom of the list of priorities for most refugee women with disabilities. Among the interviewed women, none had utilized these services and, when asked why, they explained that, while recognizing the need for SRH care, they prioritized resolving access to other medications or treatments which they considered more urgent.

As already mentioned, according to the Law of Georgia on International Protection, refugees with disabilities living in Georgia have a right to access healthcare services and assistive devices on an equal basis with others. Article 25 of the CRPD specifically addresses the right to health, emphasizing the importance of non-discriminatory access to healthcare services, including rehabilitation, early detection, and prevention. Article 20 also highlights the right to access affordable and high-quality assistive devices and technologies. Ensuring access to healthcare and assistive devices for refugees with disabilities is crucial, as it allows them to maintain and improve their physical and mental well-being and access education, and employment, among other key areas. Therefore, healthcare is an essential component in enabling full inclusion and effective participation in host communities for refugees with disabilities.

Recommendations to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Health, Labour and Social Affairs of Georgia

- Increase the coverage of Refugees in State's universal health coverage and explore options for their enrolment in free or affordable health insurance or services.
- Identify and address the barriers in accessing health services, including physical, informational, and attitudinal barriers, through the provision of gender- and age-appropriate reasonable accommodation. This review should be conducted in consultation with persons with disabilities and their representative organizations and include services which concern sexual and reproductive health.⁴³
- In consultation with refugees with disabilities, and in collaboration with companies that produce and maintain assistive devices, review supply chains, and distribution processes of assistive devices, to ensure availability, quality, affordability, and access for refugees with disabilities.⁴⁴
- Include assistive technologies as part of the Universal Health Coverage plan of publicly funded benefits.

Identified need: access to housing.

Refugee accommodation centers are not the main accommodation for refugees in Georgia as it can be in other countries with higher numbers of Ukrainian refugees. One refugee accommodation center in Martkopi (north-east of Tbilisi) is managed by the Migration Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, although placement is reserved only for those applying for asylum. According to the study by People in Need, 82% of respondents live in individual housing and 18% in collective accommodation (hotels, hostels, boarding houses). Most of them (77%) had to pay in full for their accommodation, where 15% pay only for utilities, and 7% live free of charge.⁴⁵

During the first months of 2022 during the initial full scale invasion of Ukraine, the government of Georgia provided accommodation and meals to refugees. Later, in July 2022, the government decided to end the program and adopted Decree 1254 that instead offers financial assistance. Refugees can still request emergency accommodation, but only for 10 days.

Most refugees live in individual housing or rent out rooms in shared apartments. Both the desk research and interviews indicate that despite the efforts of the government and donor organizations, affordable accommodation remains the most challenging issue for Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia due to the high rental costs. Since February 2022, due to the influx of Ukrainian refugees and people leaving the Russian Federation, the cost of rent in Tbilisi has increased markedly. The latest assessment conducted by OHCHR and World Vision, which involved interviews with 403 refugees from Ukraine, revealed that respondents allocate a significant portion of their income to accommodation needs. High rental costs severely constrain their ability to meet other basic needs. Moreover, many Ukrainians are endeavoring to reduce accommodation expenses by residing in suburban or outskirt areas or sharing flats with friends and relatives. Despite the feasibility of relocating away from city centers, 93% of respondents expressed no intention to move to another city or village due to the lesser array of income opportunities and increased commuting costs.⁴⁶

The financial assistance provided for housing does not cover disability-related extra costs due to a lack of accessibility, nor is any State support directed towards securing accessible accommodation. In one KII with a State official, it was reported that “since refugees themselves are looking for accommodations to rent, then we assume that the accommodations they chose are adapted to their needs.” However, interviewees provided evidence to the contrary, where they reported that they not only face high housing costs, but most of the housing is inaccessible and hence they face additional barriers in their activities of daily living. Some of the interviewees have looked for affordable housing by moving away from main cities, but at the cost of losing access to services and programs.

Many persons with disabilities and their family members stated that they would not have selected Georgia as an asylum country if they had been warned about the financial challenges, the lack of available support, and rising accommodation prices. The rising living expenses have reduced their access to rehabilitation, and negatively impacted social integration requirements. Despite this, many participants stated that relocating to a different country would provide extra challenges beyond their financial and logistics capacity to manage. They have been waiting for the end of the war to return to Ukraine.

The CRPD emphasizes the right of persons with disabilities to live independently and be included in the community, ensuring their equal enjoyment of their rights and preventing their segregation or isolation. It also recognizes their right to an adequate standard of living, including housing. It advocates for accessible housing, support services, and community-based programs that promote inclusion, social interaction, and participation. By upholding the right to live in the community, refugees with disabilities can exercise their autonomy, have access to essential services and opportunities, contributing to their overall well-being and inclusion in the host society.

Recommendations to the Government of Georgia and international organisations

- Account for disability-related extra costs in housing support programmes, including by allocating additional resources for refugees with disabilities and making resources available for coverage of disability-related extra costs, including house adjustments and reasonable accommodation.
- Consult refugees with disabilities and their households, ensuring a diverse representation of persons with disabilities, about the barriers experienced in safely entering and functioning within their home, and develop an action plan to address these barriers.⁴⁷
- Efforts should be made to ensure that persons with disabilities are accommodated in homes that are in proximity to essential services and community resources.

Identified need: social protection, adequate food, and employment

Other than the financial assistance provided by the Georgian government, there is no cash-transfer program widely available for Ukrainian refugees. The financial assistance covers the subsistence minimum (253 GEL as of November 2023), but UNHCR and People in Need studies report a significantly high cost of living, in particular to cover rent. Both studies also report very low employment rates, ranging from 16% to 30%.⁴⁸ Respondents in the UNHCR study

reported relying on their own funds, 28% on their savings and 22% on pension funds.⁴⁹ For 31% of the respondents, their main source of income was financial assistance from multiple sources.⁵⁰

There are other cash-transfer programmes that target specific populations, nevertheless, these are not broadly available. UNHCR targets people in vulnerable situations, including persons with disabilities. NGOs provide cash-transfers on project-based initiatives, hence, their sustainability is limited to the availability of funds.

Most refugees with disabilities find it difficult to subsist even when they have additional income, such as pensions from Ukraine. Although in general all interviewees reported receiving food packages and vouchers, they usually must supplement these with their own funds to maintain adequate nutrition.

Refugees expressed concern about the lack of sufficient food, which was particularly highlighted by those who have children. Refugees described that food packages mostly contain buckwheat, rice, sugar, and canned food. When receiving food packages, most refugees reported having issues with carrying heavy bags across town due to inaccessible transportation. Some of them declared that without the support of their relatives, they would not have been able to access food. Two respondents found that NGOs provided transportation support in these cases, but the information about this support was not known by most.

Financial assistance is used mostly towards rent, leaving no available funds to buy food that is not included in aid programs, such as fruit and meat. Some respondents did not have access to any fruits or meat for the last month. The ones who did, reported using food vouchers of around 50 GEL (approximately 18 USD), although they were not available to all.

In relation to information, for most of the participants of the FGDs the criteria to enroll for government cash transfers is unclear and unavailable. They are told to apply, but the approval and rejection criteria and responses are not consistent. Some attribute rejections to temporary trips out of Georgia, while others have left or know others who have left and returned without any consequences to their status in the cash transfer program.

In addition, none of these people have any allowances or transfers to cover disability-related extra costs, such as increased costs incurred due to the inaccessibility of public transportation when going to the doctor. These additional costs have an impact on the money available to purchase basic subsistence goods and, in general, for food, clothing and housing.

Most interviewees complained about the fact of needing refugee/humanitarian status to access most social programs. One of them, in fact, was declined for status as she is married to a Georgian citizen, and therefore has not had access to any of the programs for refugees.

As affirmed in the CRPD, persons with disabilities have the right to an adequate standard of living for themselves and their families, which includes adequate food, clothing, and housing. This right specifically includes the right to access appropriate and affordable services, assistive devices, and other assistance for disability-related needs. This also encompasses the right to

social protection, on an equal basis with others. In accordance with the CRPD, the State should provide assistance with disability-related expenses and ensure access to social protection and poverty reduction programs as well as public housing programs.

Recommendations

to the Government of Georgia and humanitarian actors

- Ensure that government cash transfers are adequate to meet the essential needs of the recipient and include disability-related extra costs.
- Consider establishing a formal program for the delivery of food packages directly to the residence of refugees with disabilities, eliminating access barriers.
- Noting that the conflict is now protracted and likely to continue in the medium-to long-term future, the State should consider developing targeted programs to assist persons with disabilities to find, access and maintain income generating activities and/or employment, they should be disability-inclusive, and these programs should specifically be tailored to support women with disabilities.

to humanitarian actors

- Humanitarian actors should review food aid programs to provide sufficient nutrition, including the availability of food of adequate quality, in adequate quantities and administered in an accessible manner.⁵¹

Identified need: access to education

According to UNHCR, around half of all Ukrainian children residing in Georgia are enrolled in Georgian schools⁵² and half of refugee children in Georgia continue education online remotely linked to their Ukrainian schools. However, this option is becoming increasingly difficult with the current conditions in Ukraine. No information readily available on the enrolment of children with disabilities in the Georgian education system, as corroborated by respondents from the Ministry of Education.

Compared to Ukrainian children without disabilities, approximately only one-fourth of Ukrainian children with disabilities continue their Ukrainian education online. However, many have never studied.

Respondents report two main problems regarding their children with disabilities' access to education. The first problem is the outright rejection of children with disabilities by schools due to a lack of resources (e.g. shortage of individual assistants) that is a common problem in educational system for all children with disabilities in Georgia. Acquiring sufficient level of assistance and conducting the timely evaluation of child's educational needs often require extensive requests for a parent, that was complicated due to the language barrier in the case of Ukrainian refugees.

One respondent reported their child with disabilities was denied a place in school and was looking for assistance to appeal or respond to the school's rejection. Some respondents were aware of the school's legal obligation to ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability. The major issue was lack of

communication with the educational authorities and knowledge about the Georgian system of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The respondents of the Ministry of Education said that they have had few requests for the assessment of children refugees with disabilities for inclusion in regular education, and that they have responded to all requests. The latter was most probably caused by the lack of awareness among Ukrainian parents of children with disabilities on the possible means of requests and existing opportunities.

Parents highlight the challenge of accessing services for children with autism and Down syndrome. They report that neither free nor paid services are available for them because of these services have a very limited capacity.⁵³ Respondents also reported bullying against their children based on their national origin. Local children perceive them as Russians due to the language they speak and express hostility against them. This could be connected with the lack of awareness-raising activities for Georgian children to welcome Ukrainian, and all other non-Georgian children.

Some adults enrolled in language classes with the goal of eventually attaining employment in the Georgian workforce. However, these respondents reported that most of these classes are targeted towards young people or ‘fast learners’, so many have discontinued classes and are yet to find alternatives.

The right of refugees with disabilities to access education is protected under international law, specifically in accordance with the CRPD and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRPD recognizes the right of persons with disabilities to education with a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity, by ensuring an inclusive education system. It emphasizes the importance of removing barriers and providing reasonable accommodation to ensure that persons with disabilities can participate fully in the education system. The CRC complements this by emphasizing the right of all children, including refugee children, to receive education that promotes their physical, mental, and social development. Together, these conventions affirm the right of refugee children with disabilities to access quality education, free from discrimination, and tailored to their specific needs.

Recommendations to the Government of Georgia and international organisations

- In consultation with refugees with disabilities and OPDs, the Ministry of Education should establish a plan to:
 - Establish a non-rejection policy for children with disabilities in general education, in compliance with Article 24 of the CRPD.
 - Establish reasonable accommodation and support measures to remain in general education, with the necessary resources and appropriate administrative structures.
- Consider proactively offering individual assessments with families of children of school age to understand their needs and how their access to inclusive education can be ensured.
 - Provide enough slots for incoming learners with disabilities with the appropriate reasonable accommodations and support.

- Address the segregation of children with disabilities by providing technical support and guidelines to schools in their efforts to effectively include children with disabilities in mainstream classes.
- Establish effective complaint mechanisms in schools for refugee children with disabilities and their parents.
- Create an awareness-raising campaign to tackle discrimination based on disability, national origin, and other grounds.
- Find and provide support to those who have never been in school for their effective inclusion.
- Provide inclusive targeted language programs for refugees with disabilities seeking language classes. Ensure that these classes cater to a diverse range of learners, including older refugees and provide reasonable accommodation.

Accountability and service coordination

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are indispensable for assessing the progress and impact of projects, especially the ability of programs to reach and support persons with disabilities. Inclusion of OPDs in these processes not only aligns with principles of participation and empowerment but also enhances the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the initiatives. Under the CRPD, persons with disabilities must be consulted and involved by the State, and their participation is necessary for the monitoring of the implementation of the CRPD.⁵⁴

In Georgia, according to two KIIs, existing participation mechanisms for persons with disabilities, such as the Disability Committees at the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from Occupied Territories, Labour, Health, and Social Affairs of Georgia, have not been leveraged to better assess the situation of refugees with disabilities and adequately respond to gaps in services and programs. While the significance of incorporating disability inclusion into humanitarian response plans has been acknowledged by humanitarian actors, concrete measures and specific indicators are often absent in most instances.

A refugee with disabilities' working group or task force is not in place as part of a broader refugee coordination mechanism, which would facilitate the mainstreaming of disability in humanitarian action. It would also facilitate the creation intersectoral referral pathways.⁵⁵ State action to assess and respond to the needs of refugees with disabilities is insufficient considering that we are on the two-year mark of the latest Russian invasion. None of the interviewed refugees confirmed any participation or being consulted by the State in planning the refugee action in Georgia. Georgian OPDs were not consulted in the refugee response, yet they informed advocating for the provision of assistive products.

Although most refugees have faced barriers, including arbitrary decisions when attempting to exercise their rights in Georgia, the vast majority are discouraged from reporting or complaining about these events. This is due to lack of information on how to do so, the language barrier, fear of reprisals and the general feeling that guests are "owed nothing". Even when encouraged to file complaints, participants did not see the point in taking the time to do so, as they feel their efforts have been ineffective when trying to access services or benefits.

Recommendations

to the Government of Georgia

- Establish a direct and ongoing communication channel to consult refugees with disabilities regarding their needs, response actions, and plans. Utilize existing participation mechanisms of persons with disabilities to continually enhance programs and services accessible to refugees.
- Establish a monitoring mechanism, working group, or taskforce with the participation of refugees with disabilities, OPDs, and involved humanitarian actors. Explore alternatives such as creating such group under the Inter-Ministerial Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which serves as a coordination mechanism under Article 33 of the CRPD.

To humanitarian actors

- Humanitarian actors should consider the creation of a social media channel or chat for refugees with disabilities.

Conclusion

The needs assessment report highlights the critical challenges faced by refugees with disabilities in Georgia, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

Despite formal rights and provisions, practical barriers persist, notably in accessing reliable data, information, healthcare, housing, and education.

The lack of disability-disaggregated data has hindered the effective planning and delivery of services, while outdated and inconsistent information leaves many refugees without essential support.

The report underscores the need for coordinated efforts by the Georgian government, international organizations, and CSOs to bridge these gaps.

Key recommendations include improving data collection processes, ensuring accessible communication, removing financial and logistical barriers to services, and creating inclusive policies that account for the needs of refugees with disabilities.

The establishment of a refugees with disabilities working group, and the enhancement of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are vital for fostering meaningful participation and ensuring accountability.

Addressing these issues is crucial not only for upholding the rights of refugees with disabilities but also for promoting their full inclusion and participation in the host society.

The international community's support remains essential to meet these challenges and to ensure a comprehensive humanitarian response.

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- ¹ United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Policy Guidance for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals: Foundations, pg. 23. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Disability/SDG-CRPD-Resource/policy-guideline-foundations.pdf> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ² See, e.g.: the [Human Rights Indicators](#) on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities by OHCHR.
- ³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Ukraine Emergency. Available at: <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ⁴ UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation with data as of December 2023. Available at: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ⁵ UNHCR, Refugees from Ukraine in Georgia, Briefing Note. April 2023, pg. 1.
- ⁶ UNHCR, Ukraine Refugee Response Update from UNHCR: Briefing Note. December 2023, p.1.
- ⁷ The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Press Release. “Ukraine: 2.7 million people with disabilities at risk, UN Committee warns.” 14 April 2022. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/04/ukraine-27-million-people-disabilities-risk-un-committee-warns> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ⁸ WHO (2022). Global Report on Health Equities for Persons with Disabilities. Available at: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240063600>.
- ⁹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019, pg. 2. [hereinafter IASC Guidelines]. Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-guidelines-on-inclusion-of-persons-with-disabilities-in-humanitarian-action-2019> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ¹⁰ IASC Guidelines, pg. 24.
- ¹¹ Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund and Samaritan Association of Georgia, Situations and Needs of the Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia: Assessment Carried out in June-July 2022. 14 July 2022. pg. 6. [hereinafter ASB and SSK, Situations and Needs].
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ IASC Guidelines, pg. 2.
- ¹⁴ Ibid. pg. 146.
- ¹⁵ IASC Guidelines, pg. 111.
- ¹⁶ Ibid. pg. 12.
- ¹⁷ See, e.g., [CRPD/C/GRC/CO/1](#), para. 16(c).
- ¹⁸ [CRPD/C/GEO/CO/1](#), para. 24(a).
- ¹⁹ United Nations General Assembly. Report by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities (19 July 2021). A/76/146, paras. 95-96. Available at: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N21/196/98/PDF/N2119698.pdf?OpenElement> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ²⁰ According to the Development Assistance Committee’s list of official development assistance recipients. Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/dac-list.htm> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ²¹ The desk review included reports from UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, People in Need, World Vision Georgia, and Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Georgia with data collected in 2022 and 2023.
- ²² i.e., The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its Protocol 1967, the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 on the Protection of Civilians in Time of War, as well as the Article 33 of the Constitution of Georgia, prohibiting expulsion or return of refugees.
- ²³ Chapter VII, Law of Georgia on International Protection
- ²⁴ Public Defender of Georgia, The Situation of Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, 2021. Available at: <https://ombudsman.ge/res/docs/2022040413242699860.pdf> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ²⁵ The Law on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Georgia. 2021. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/4923984?publication=0> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ²⁶ Ibid. Chapter II
- ²⁷ With an approximate exchange rate of 2.7 GEL per USD by the end of November 2023. It is worth noting that the subsistence minimum in 2023, according to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (Geostat), is around 250 GEL (approximately 92 USD). According to Geostat, “subsistence minimum is defined on the basis of a food basket [...] the recommended minimum food basket for a working age male consists of an optimal list of food products and includes the recommendations of the United Nations (FAO/WHO) on the normalization of the body’s need for protein and energy.” Geostat, Subsistence Minimum webpage. Available at: <https://www.geostat.ge/en/modules/categories/791/subsistence-minimum> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ²⁸ People in Need, Needs Assessment Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia, 2023, [hereinafter People in Need, People in Need, Needs Assessment] pg. 6.
- ²⁹ UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision Georgia, Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia: Profile, Intentions and Needs, November 2022, [hereinafter UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision Georgia, Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia], pg. 7.
- ³⁰ [CRPD/C/GEO/CO/1](#), para. 61(a).
- ³¹ United Nations Human Rights Council. 2021. Resolution 49/60: Statistics and data collection under article 31 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (28 December 2021), para 56. A/HRC/49/60. Available at: <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F49%2F60&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ³² UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision Georgia, Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia, pg. 8.
- ³³ ASB and SSK, Situations and Needs, pg. 21.
- ³⁴ People in Need, Needs Assessment, pg. 20.
- ³⁵ [CRPD/C/GEO/CO/1](#).
- ³⁶ Decree 81 of the Government of Georgia, 24 February 2023. Available at <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/5732020?publication=0>. [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ³⁷ UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision Georgia, Ukrainian refugees in Georgia, pg. 10.

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- ³⁸ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, arts. 5, 11, 12 and 18 read in conjunction.
- ³⁹ Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, arts. 25, 27, 28 read in conjunction with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- ⁴⁰ UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision Georgia, Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia, pg. 7.
- ⁴¹ People in Need, Needs Assessment, pg. 19.
- ⁴² UNHCR, Information Leaflet on Medical Services Available for the Asylum Seekers, Refugees and Humanitarian Status Holders in Georgia: https://help.unhcr.org/georgia/wp-content/uploads/sites/47/2023/07/shigtavsi_ENG_DD.pdf.
- ⁴³ OHCHR, Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals: Good Health and Well-being, 2021, pg. 26. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Disability/SDG-CRPD-Resource/policy-guideline-good-health.pdf> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ⁴⁴ Ibid. pg. 31.
- ⁴⁵ People in Need, Needs Assessment, pgs. 9-10.
- ⁴⁶ OHCHR, World Vision Georgia: Lives on Hold, Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees From Ukraine, Third Needs and Intentions Assessment, February 2024.
- ⁴⁷ OHCHR, Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals: Sustainable Cities and Communities, 2021, pgs. 20 - 23. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Disability/SDG-CRPD-Resource/policy-guideline-sustainable-cities.pdf> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
- ⁴⁸ People in Need, Needs Assessment, pg. 14; UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision, Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia, pgs. 6 and 13.
- ⁴⁹ UNHCR, Aktion Deutschland Hilft, World Vision, Ukrainian Refugees in Georgia, pg. 6.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ OHCHR, Policy Guidelines for Inclusive Sustainable Development Goals, Thematic Brief: Food and Nutrition, 2021, pg. 9. Available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/thematic-brief-food.pdf> [Accessed 30 January 2024].
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- ⁵³ OHCHR, Lives on Hold, Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees From Ukraine, Third Needs and Intentions Assessment, pg 18
- ⁵⁴ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General comment No. 7 (2018) on the participation of persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations, in the implementation and monitoring of the Convention, CRPD/C/GC/7.
- ⁵⁵ IASC Guidelines, pg. 70.



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