

## CONDITION AND PROBLEMS OF INSTITUTIONAL CARE FACILITIES FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE AND/OR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN WAR-TORN UKRAINE

In the context of the full-scale military aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, evacuation teams from the State Emergency Service, the National Police of Ukraine, and charitable organizations (including the East SOS Charitable Foundation) are working daily to rescue civilians, including people with limited mobility from frontline areas (particularly elderly individuals and persons with disabilities). Due to poor living conditions, loss of family members, or the evacuation of social workers who previously cared for them, and deterioration of their condition, many evacuees – who had either lived independently or lost family ties during the full-scale invasion – have no choice but to seek shelter in institutional care facilities (geriatric homes, psychoneurological residential care facilities, and territorial centers).

However, the 259 existing inpatient care institutions – as reported by NGO Human Rights Centre ZMINA, citing the Ministry of Social Policy – are already accommodating around 23,000 people and face a critical shortage of spaces to accommodate elderly evacuees and persons with disabilities. As a result, people are often left waiting for evacuation in a “queue of life,” while remaining in active combat zones exposes them to serious risk due to ongoing Russian shelling.



Photos: Psychoneurological Residential Care Facility with a Geriatric Unit

Statistics from the East SOS Charitable Foundation highlight the severity of the situation regarding evacuation and the accommodation waiting lists for elderly and/or disabled people during the first 2 weeks of May 2025:

- **49 people** were awaiting evacuation from the frontline to transit shelters;
- **132 evacuees** were residing at the transit Social Adaptation Center for People with Disabilities operated by the NGO “Ocean of Kindness” (“Океан Добра”) in Dnipro, awaiting further resettlement;
- **only 18 people** were transferred to long-term accommodation during this period.

This urgent situation prompted East SOS to monitor institutional care facilities. From May 19-21, 2025, the international monitoring mission “East SOS”<sup>1</sup> visited inpatient and assisted living facilities for elderly people and people with disabilities in the Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Vinnytsia, Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Lviv regions. These visits identified numerous challenges rooted in the social protection system, significantly worsened by the war.



Photos: Regional Nursing Home for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons

## KEY FINDINGS

### FINANCIAL VULNERABILITY

Visited facilities are primarily funded through local and regional budgets, supplemented by 75% of residents' pensions. However, since the minimum pension in Ukraine is just UAH 2,500 UAH (~€53), this co-financing barely covers basic food costs, as noted by many facility managers. Meanwhile, the actual monthly cost of care per person ranges from UAH 13,000 to 16,000 (€279-360). Due to insufficient local budgets, facilities are often forced to procure essential items on their own (such as adult diapers, food, and medicines), depend on donors, or carry out repairs without external support.

<sup>1</sup> The mission was organized and conducted by the Ukrainian Charitable Foundation “East SOS” as part of the project “Support for vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups in war-affected Ukraine” with the financial support of the European Union.



## INFRASTRUCTURE INACCESSIBILITY

Many rural areas lack suitable infrastructure and support services for elderly people and people with disabilities. Some visited facilities did not have elevators, leaving residents stranded on upper floors for years. Several were located in remote areas with little or no access to public transportation. Few facilities had adapted vehicles for transporting elderly or disabled individuals.

## OVERCROWDING

Large regional facilities (with over 200 residents) and smaller territorial centers (30-70 residents) are overcrowded and cannot accommodate additional evacuated elderly people or people with disabilities. Efforts to renovate and repurpose former medical buildings into care facilities are hampered by the lack of targeted funding at the state or local level.



Photos: Regional Residential Care Home for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons

## STAFF SHORTAGES

Junior medical staff are paid minimal wages (often minimum wage, 8,000 UAH or ≈€170) and are burdened with high workloads, caring for up to 40 patients on 24-hour shifts. These working conditions make it extremely difficult to attract and retain qualified personnel and to ensure quality care in institutional facilities that respects the dignity of residents.

## LIMITED IMPACT OF CMU RESOLUTION NO. 888 (AUGUST 6, 2024)

In August 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy launched a pilot project under Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 888 to provide social services using a “money follows the person” model. The idea was to fund inpatient and assisted living care for internally displaced elderly individuals and persons with disabilities through the state budget. While the resolution could have theoretically stimulated the creation of new institutional care facilities in host communities and address the problem of a shortage of places, its implementation requirements (outlined in Paragraph 7) are so unrealistic that most existing institutions cannot participate in the program. These include:

- a cap of 35 residents per facility for inpatient services;
- a requirement that residents be housed in single-occupancy rooms, or shared by two if both agree;
- proximity limitations requiring service locations to be within 800 meters of public transport in urban areas, and the presence of public transport in rural areas.

According to publicly available data as of the date of this report, 1.5 years after the resolution’s adoption, **only 22 institutions** across Ukraine are participating in the pilot program.

The lack of stable funding, adequate medical resources, and adequate staff is resulting in violations of the right to a dignified life for elderly individuals and people with disabilities.

Photo: Residential Care Unit for Permanent Stay at the Territorial Center for Social Services





## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the monitoring mission's results, the East SOS Charitable Foundation recommends the following to the Ukrainian government and international donors:

- ✓ **ensure sustainable funding**, including funding from the state budget, for institutional care facilities of all sizes;
- ✓ **improve working conditions** and raise salaries for care staff;;
- ✓ **provide material** (e.g., personal hygiene items (including diapers), medicine, food, cleaning products, repair of premises and their adaptation to inclusiveness requirements) **and non-material** (e.g., leisure activities in accordance with the profile of service recipients, psychosocial support for service recipients, psychological support and professional training for staff);
- ✓ **collaborate with civil society** to advance deinstitutionalization and develop supported living models adapted to wartime conditions, with a phased transition plan;
- ✓ **revise the implementation of Resolution No.888** in cooperation with civil society organizations to remove impractical conditions that currently exclude most institutions (particularly, revise the requirements outlined in paragraph 7).

This document intentionally does not disclose the names of residential care facilities visited during the international monitoring mission. This is to prevent potential stigmatization of particular institutions or allegations of substandard living conditions, as in most cases, staff members work under resource constraints and make every effort to ensure the basic needs of residents are met.

The findings and recommendations presented herein are informed by recurring observations that, in our view, are characteristic of the majority of similar facilities operating within the territory under the control of the Government of Ukraine. The highlighted issues and systemic challenges can be verified through visits to any other residential care facility with a similar profile.