

In-kind donations, cash transfers and local procurement in the logistics of caring for internally displaced persons

The case of Polish humanitarian NGOs and Ukrainian IDPs

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate humanitarian supply chains in the context of the Ukrainian crisis as example of complex emergency. The paper focuses on a selection of support modes: in-kind donations, cash-based assistance and local procurement.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper adopts a case-study approach and interpretive paradigm. Findings are based on the analysis of primary sources including interviews with three Polish humanitarian organizations, internal documents, and secondary sources such as published reports.

Findings – Findings indicate that in a middle-income urbanized country such as Ukraine non-standard modes such as cash transfer programs and local procurement can be employed, since the necessary infrastructure and market are operational. However, each mode has limitations, so they should match the local context and the needs of diverse social groups.

Research limitations/implications – The findings and recommendations are specific to the case analyzed, Ukraine, and its socio-economic context. The research contributes to discussions about mode selection, stressing the links between mode, stage of the disaster response and local context.

Practical implications – Applying cash transfers and local procurement can reduce supply chain costs, such as transport and warehousing. Shortened supply chains enable faster responses and increased agility.

Social implications – Cash transfers and procurement involve the local community and beneficiaries, and can better fulfill needs maintaining people's dignity. However, for vulnerable groups and those in conflict zones, in-kind goods are a better option.

Originality/value – The author argues that the much-discussed dichotomy of cash or goods does not reflect reality; local and regional procurement should be added as important support modes in middle-income countries in crisis.

Keywords Procurement, Ukraine, Urban, Conflict, Supply chain management, Refugees, Donations, Humanitarian logistics, Payments, Cash transfer programmes, Internally displaced person

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Unlike events in the Middle East and Mediterranean, the Ukrainian conflict has disappeared from the front pages (UNOCHA, 2017) and become “the forgotten crisis” (WFP, 2016). Nevertheless, by mid-2017 the Ukrainian people were in need as the conflict triggered mass migration. More than 1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) were residing across the country (Dean, 2017), mainly in eastern and central parts (Smal, 2016) and in the Kiev area



(Ivashchenko-Stadnik, 2016). The condition of the Ukrainian economy has directly influenced provision to IDPs, since it was the government that carried out most social support. Many such efforts were supported by international humanitarian organizations (HOs), including from neighboring Poland. Assistance was initially in the form of in-kind donations; later, cash transfers and local procurement were introduced.

Cash transfers as a mode of assistance are emerging in humanitarian settings (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016) but in-kind help remains the predominant mode (Aker, 2013; Smith and Mohiddin, 2015; World Bank, 2016). There is much discussion about the advantages of cash over in-kind, as well as the conditions under which cash or goods should be favored (Bailey and Harvey, 2015; Doocy and Tappis, 2016; Tamburelli, 2016). This paper adds to this discussion and answers the following questions:

- RQ1. Under what conditions, and why, were in-kind goods and humanitarian convoys initially employed?
- RQ2. Why was cash assistance implemented at a later stage of the conflict?
- RQ3. How and why was local procurement used in Ukraine?
- RQ4. What factors influenced the selection of the mode of assistance?

This paper is structured as follows: first, complex emergencies and support modes are discussed. Second, this study's methodology is presented. Third, an overview is given of the situation of IDPs in Ukraine and the national and international response to the crisis. The fourth part of the paper discusses how Polish HOs have supported IDPs using funds provided by the Polish government. Several modes of support are presented and discussed, from initial convoy-based, through family-to-family parcels, to cash transfer programs (CTPs) and local procurement, focusing on the conditions that influence the choice of the mode. The fifth part summarizes lessons learned from the operations in Ukraine. The conclusion to the paper gives recommendations to academia and professional practice on improving decision-making to select the most suitable support mode to fit the local context and meet the needs of beneficiaries.

2. Complex emergencies and response modes

This literature review discusses complex emergencies and cash-based support. There have recently been several reviews and papers focused on cash transfers in humanitarian settings (see Bailey and Harvey, 2015; Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Doocy and Tappis, 2016; Harman *et al.*, 2016; Heaslip *et al.*, 2016; Smith and Mohiddin, 2015; World Bank, 2016); accordingly, this review covers papers mainly focused on support in mid-income countries.

Recent conflicts in Syria and Ukraine, and earlier wars in the Balkans in 1990s, can be classified as complex emergencies. Unlike natural disasters, complex emergencies are man-made, and in such an event, response and social intervention are interlinked (Albala-Bertrand, 2000). Complex emergencies are related to internal and international conflicts, societal breakdown, technology failure and economic crisis (all of which can exist simultaneously), and can be triggered by slow-onset natural disasters, such as water shortage or climate change. Complex emergencies affect production units, service offering and flows, resulting in shortages, homelessness and displacement (Albala-Bertrand, 2000). In complex emergencies, mortality rates are substantially higher than the population baseline, from direct effects (conflict), as well as indirect (malnutrition and diseases) (Salama *et al.*, 2004). The vulnerable part of the population is at the greatest risk (Burkle, 1999). In the Ukrainian case some of the factors required to consider it as complex emergency were fulfilled (conflict, weak state, displacement), however not all were. While weak, the Ukrainian state still exists and provides services. Nevertheless, the Red Cross (IFRC, 2017a, b, c) clearly refers to the conflict as a complex emergency. What is specific to the Ukrainian situation, similarly to Syria, is that the conflict is in a mid-income country that has had

developed institutions and infrastructure, and large urban and industrial areas. In such conditions, humanitarian responses are different than when they occur in remote low-income regions where markets are not functioning.

2.1 Cash transfer programmes

The existence in a country of a functioning market, infrastructure, urbanization and good levels of education among the population requires different forms of assistance as opposed to in-kind support. Urbanized areas offer access to financial and telecommunication networks, creating opportunities to use Cash Transfer Programmes (CTPs) (ECHO, 2013).

As was noted earlier, CTPs in humanitarian assistance are perceived as a new approach and rarely applied. However, as conflicts in urban areas increase so too does the possibility of using cash as assistance (Smith and Mohiddin, 2015). In fact, in urban areas, outside of refugee camp settings, cash was the only alternative for supporting refugees in Syria (ECHO, 2016). Cash can be used to fulfill a variety of needs: water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), food, shelter, preparation for winter, and multi-purpose cash transfers (ECHO, 2016; Smith and Mohiddin, 2015). It can be given conditional on work, training or other specified targets, or unconditional (ECHO, 2013). Depositing cash as aid into bank accounts requires the existence of a banking system and its high use among the population (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016). It also requires an economy based on cash, bank cards or mobile transfers (ECHO, 2016; Smith and Mohiddin, 2015). Direct cash transfers, in banknotes, are also possible, including outsourcing transfers to providers such as Western Union (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016), as well as e-payments, in the form of prepaid cards or mobile tokens (Smith and Mohiddin, 2015).

Beyond cash, vouchers can also be used as a form of CTP (ECHO, 2013; Heaslip *et al.*, 2016). Vouchers have limitations – they are restricted for use with specific suppliers or services (ECHO, 2013) – and should not be treated as equivalent to cash (ECHO, 2016). Vouchers can have a cash value, to be used for payment, or can be exchanged for certain goods only, i.e. commodity vouchers (Doocy and Tappis, 2016). They require distribution in paper or electronic format, and a network of organizations that accept vouchers as means of payment. Since cash-based assistance is still under development there are different terms in use, depending on the purpose, condition and means of transfer, such as cash or vouchers (see Harvey, 2007). In the present study, the term “cash transfer” is applied to all cash payments transferred to beneficiaries and treated as a subset of the broader category “cash-based assistance,” which includes all cash transfers as well as vouchers.

The benefits of CTPs include flexibility; a household can decide what and when is needed (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016), a problem can be addressed fast, and CTP gives a short-term response and can improve food security (Doocy and Tappis, 2016). Cash shortens supply chains and reduces the costs of transportation, warehousing and other logistical activities (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016), resulting in lower total supply chain costs (Kovács, 2014). Cash injection can revive local markets, or create them, by initially stimulating product flows, and in the longer term, increase production (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016), as it has positive multiplying effects (Doocy and Tappis, 2016; Peppiatt *et al.*, 2001).

However, there are also issues related to cash: risks such as theft, misuse, corruption and insecurity; problems to fulfill anti-terrorist regulations and the inability to help the most vulnerable groups in the society (Aker, 2013; ECHO, 2013; Heaslip *et al.*, 2016).

Sabates-Wheeler and Devereux (2010) summarize the advantages and disadvantages of in-kind goods such as the food vs cash argument. They identify some of the main issues:

- Advantages of food – donor food available, immediate access, addressing nutritional needs, self-targeting, favors women and the elderly.
- Advantages of cash – cost-efficiency, beneficiary choice, more fungible, stimulates production and market growth.

- Disadvantages of cash – limited donor resources available, inflation, use for non-food items, harder to target, favors men, security risks.
- Disadvantages of food – transport and storage costs, spoilage and theft, disincentive production, competition with local markets and trade.

Another problem is related to coordination, such is the case in Syria, where different cash and voucher systems (WHO, ECHO and UNICSF) were used at the same time, with some donors reluctant to deliver cash instead of goods (ECHO, 2016).

The popularity of cash, and interest in this mode of support, is growing, and recent experiences have been analyzed (for reviews of literature from 2000 to 2015, see Bastagli *et al.*, 2016; Harman *et al.*, 2016); also, journals such as *World Development* and *Food Policy* are covering cash transfers in non-emergency response settings.

3. Methodology and case-study HOs

The research adopts a iterative qualitative approach grounded in the interpretative tradition (Klein and Myers, 1999; Walsham 1995). It develops three case studies of HOs based on literature review and interviews. Applying the principles of a hermeneutical case-study, the research moves back and forth from the data to the literature, each time creating new meaning and renewed understanding of the studied phenomenon and its context (Cepeda and Martin, 2005; Klein and Myers, 1999). The stages of research, many of which overlapped, are outlined as follows:

- (1) The author has followed the conflict closely since it began in 2014. To better understand the experiences of the IDPs in Ukraine and the nature of Polish and international humanitarian support, online resources such as Ukrainian, Polish and Russian language news sites (via YouTube) were used to analyze the Polish response, and other secondary documents used to understand the context (see Bowen, 2009).
- (2) Next, secondary sources were analyzed to understand the context of the response of Polish and international HOs involved in support provision for Ukrainian IDPs, such as updates, reports, news, press releases and interviews.
- (3) In parallel, a review was conducted of the literature on support modes used in the humanitarian context to respond to complex emergencies. This identified IDP-related issues via scholarly journals focused on the topic. This study represents one of the first attempts to analyze humanitarian assistance delivered by Poland, one of the “new governmental donors” (Oloruntoba and Kovács, 2015), and there is scarce research focused on IDPs and humanitarian support in Ukraine. As such, there is very limited coverage in peer-reviewed literature, so in order to identify relevant papers, Google Scholar was interrogated using the following English-language search terms (and their Polish equivalent): Ukraine, Conflict, Humanitarian, Refugees, IDP.
- (4) After this review of secondary sources and academic literature, four research questions (*RQ1-RQ4*) were specified, the formulation of which was influenced by the author’s experience in supply chain research and the review of the academic literature, which discussed support modes and, significantly, their selection. While it largely focused on cash vs in-kind, this discussion also introduced the triad of cash vs in-kind vs local procurement, so this topic was explored further.
- (5) Finally, the data were collected and analyzed. The study examines secondary data about the case-study HOs as well as documents received from these HOs. It also uses interviews conducted by the author with members of those HOs (Table I).

Face-to-face interviews (six in total) were conducted in Polish and took place July to September 2017, all, except one, in the Warsaw offices of the HO concerned (one was

undergoing office changes). Additional details and issues were clarified via e-mail communication or telephone conversations following the interviews. Total length of interviews was 4 hours 50 minutes. The key informants were interviewed; their main roles related to logistics and country coordination in Ukraine. Data collection was halted when saturation point was reached, with no new themes emerging, and was inevitably by the limited time available to complete research (Voss *et al.*, 2002).

Recorded interviews were transcribed into text. Transcripts were analyzed to identify how humanitarian support is delivered, and, mainly, to establish links between mode of support and context. This was completed in paper and electronic formats, frequently returning to the voice records. Incomplete findings, and differences between sources were revealed during analysis and when data sources were triangulated, all issues were resolved by follow-up conversation and re-examination of data sources. Qualitative content analysis was applied in order to identify categories and patterns, identified earlier in the literature and emerging from the data. At the first stage of analysis, content was categorized, matching support mode (in-kind, cash, procurement) and stage of conflict (from just after the violence broke out to the period of “frozen” conflict). The second stage of analysis sought to identify the issues that influenced humanitarian operations at each conflict stage for each mode. The findings were translated into English by the author, who is a native Polish-speaking researcher familiar with the terminology of supply chain and humanitarian logistics. Respondent quotations included in this paper have been carefully translated from Polish and edited in English in order to retain and convey the original meaning. Every effort was made to present the opinions of respondents accurately and although the act of translation inevitably introduces a degree of influence on data, the author’s native language skills removed the need for translators and meant that shared meaning could be created between interviewer and interviewees. It also meant the study was able to consider and analyze additional primary and secondary sources in Polish.

Reporting reflected the sensitivity of the topic and its ongoing presence, in line with recommendation made by Halldórsson and Aastrup (2003).

Due to the complexity of the conflict, and paucity of HOs supporting Ukrainian IDPs, the decision was taken to focus on major NGOs in Poland that received funding from the Polish Ministry of Foreign affairs (2014-2016) to support Ukrainian IDPs (Table II). The first call, in 2014, was for distributed to selected HOs only, and was later made open to competition. In addition, the HOs were running projects financed from other sources; such projects are also described. The case-study HOs are: Caritas Polska (Caritas Poland); Polska Akcja Humanitarna (PAH) (Polish Humanitarian Action); (PCPM) Polish Center for International Aid.

While a small number of HOs are analyzed, they had substantial resources, their actions were widely covered in the media, and they reported results of the initiatives, meaning data were accessible. The research has several limitations, including a lack of primary data from Ukraine: all interviews were conducted in Poland; Ukrainian partners were not interviewed. Some HO personnel were involved in the early stages of the conflict but left the organization; thus, their views have not been captured. Findings are specific to Ukraine, although lessons can be drawn and applied to other countries where similar conditions exist.

Table I.
Data sources

Primary data	Secondary data
Face-to-face interviews with 6 respondents (total time 4 h 50 min)	Reports by international HOs
E-mail correspondence	TV news, YouTube
Follow-up telephone conversations	Interviews with the media
Internal documents (e.g. reports, guidelines, regulations)	Reports by Polish HOs
Visual materials (photographs taken in Ukraine)	Press releases and media reporting

Table II.
Overview of case
study HOs

HOs	Caritas Poland	PAH – Polish Humanitarian Action	PCPM – Polish Center for International Aid
Foundation year	Reactivated in the 1990 after closure in 1950	1994. Earlier support for Sarajevo in 1992	2005
Part of network	Yes, Caritas	No	No
Organization type	Religious based	Independent	Independent
Scope of operations	Middle East, South Asia, Africa, Europe, South America and Caribbean. Strong presence in Poland	44 countries, actions in Poland	40 countries, mainly abroad
Main activities	Development and humanitarian aid. Various	Development and humanitarian aid. Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)	Development and humanitarian aid. Emergency Medical Team (EMT) under WHO certification.
Involvement in Ukraine	Since 2014	Since 2014, permanent mission since 2015	Since 2014
Webpage	http://caritas.pl	www.pah.org.pl/en	http://pcpm.org.pl/en

4. Summary of the case: IDPs and refugees in Ukrainian conflict

This section provides an overview of the situation and response of the Ukrainian authorities; it is based on academic literature and reports by international organizations. The aim here is to familiarize the reader with conditions in Ukraine and integrate the respective literatures on humanitarian support.

After the annexation of the Crimea (in early 2014), clashes broke out in eastern Ukraine (mid-2014), which developed in some areas into a full-scale regular conflict, and many people were forced to move from the region. Besides the conflict, a lack of clarity about the future and shortages of basic necessities including food, medicines, water, electricity and gas contributed to displacement (Szabaciuk, 2016). In 2014 the movement of people was unorganized and chaotic, initiated by the individuals themselves (Semigina and Gusak, 2015). By the end of the year, 82,300 people were considered IDPs, while around 321,000 had left the country (UNHCR, 2014). Further restrictions of the movement of goods to and from the separatist republics, imposed by the government, created disruption of the market and shortages (UNOCHA, 2016). The decision to stop pensions and transfer other social benefits to separatist-controlled areas, the closure of the banks in 2014, and the further suspension of payments in 2016 all resulted in an increased number of people registered as IDPs (Szabaciuk, 2016).

IDP registration was necessary to receive payments (UNOCHA, 2017), so until the legal residence of a person was confirmed pensions and other social funds were frozen (UNHCR, 2017b). Additionally, in June 2015, the government blocked the flow of commercial supplies to the areas not under its control (ECHO, 2017). Manufacturing, agriculture and supply chain flows were disrupted (Tamburelli, 2016), and even though Ukraine has food surplus, there was disruption of production, processing and distribution (WFP, 2014). In areas where the government lost control, public authorities, state agencies and medical institutions soon pulled out, together with workers and their families (Khandii and Semenenko, 2017). Many people left their homes with limited or no resources (WFP, 2014). Ukrainian IDPs are from a diverse range of social, ethnic and religious groups (Ivashchenko-Stadnik, 2016), and thus have different capacities to cope with resettlement. After the conflict had started the economy declined (Khandii and Semenenko, 2017), foreign investments decreased, government debt rose (WFP, 2015) and food prices increased (IFRC, 2017b). Workers lost their incomes (Tamburelli, 2016), and to afford food they had to save on health and education (IFRC, 2017c). Refugee camps and camps for IDPs are not in use in Ukraine so problems, well-known in Africa and the Middle East, do not exist (see Black, 1998).

Challenges in Ukraine are different; IDPs still live in rented, or collective housing, in many cases not suitable for winter conditions since many such buildings were not created originally for habitation (Dean, 2017). The majority of IDPs must cover the cost of rented accommodation themselves (Dean, 2017; WFP, 2014).

As result of the conflict, approximately 23,000 people were injured and 9,700 killed (UNOCHA, 2016). The UNHCR (2017a) lists the number of IDPs in Ukraine at 1.8 million, with an additional 270,000 seeking asylum abroad. Many migrated in the face of ruinous conflict and deteriorating economic conditions, with over 1 million moving to Russia and 130,000 to Belarus. In addition, several hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians have relocated to Poland on working visas (Fomina, 2016). Data by WFP (2017) indicate that 4.4 million people are affected; from that figure, 3.8 million need humanitarian assistance, 620,000 are food insecure, and 300,000 are IDPs (WFP, 2017). According to UNOCHA (2016), people are in need of protection (4.4 m), WASH (4.1 m), health and nutrition (2.2 m), food security and livelihood (1.1 m), shelter (600,000) and education (600,000). The majority of IDPs (800,000 to 1 million), are in government-controlled areas UNHCR (2017a). People in need are in both government- and separatist-controlled areas, as well as the gray zone between them (UNOCHA, 2016). However, statistics might not be reliable. Since Ukrainians that move to Russia do not need visas and registration, the number of people who have moved to Russia is likely to be higher than official data suggests (Szabaciuk, 2016). Similarly, the number of people who have left the Crimea is very probably different to official statistics (Uehling, 2016). Some males decide not to register to avoid conscription into the Ukrainian army (Smal, 2016), while other individuals are unable to provide the required paperwork (Bulakh, 2016). The gap between various official statistics can be as high as 760,000 people, due to differences in registration methods among Ukrainian agencies (Smal, 2016). Nevertheless, even the lowest set of statistics states that 1 million people have been displaced (Smal, 2016). Despite this lack of certainty, no less than 4 percent of the population was displaced internally (Ivashchenko-Stadnik, 2016). To complicate the situation further, some individuals registered as IDPs might in fact live in their original home in the separatist-controlled areas, but are registered to get financial support – they are regularly crossing the border between separatist- and government-controlled areas to collect money (Semigina and Gusak, 2015; Szabaciuk, 2016). This is not easy, however, as there are only five crossing points and a frequent exchange of gunfire in the area (UNOCHA, 2017). Queues at the crossing points can be up to 300 vehicles, as 400-500 thousand people make the crossing every month (UNHCR, 2017b).

4.1 The Ukrainian response

The Ukrainian Government bears responsibility for most of the costs related to IDP support. However, a initial response to the crisis has been inefficient and chaotic (Szabaciuk 2016; Tamburelli, 2016). Ukraine has little experience in IDP provision beyond the resettlement in 1986 of over 116,000 people after the Chernobyl nuclear accident (Ivashchenko-Stadnik, 2016). The government was ill-prepared both for the events of 2014 and for the large flow of people they created (Uehling, 2016). Access to territories not controlled by the government was restricted (IFRC, 2017c). Support for IDPs is officially categorized in Ukraine as social work (Semigina and Gusak, 2015) and was the subject of corruption, bureaucracy, a lack of political agreement (Uehling, 2016), poor coordination (Tamburelli, 2016) and inefficient transport infrastructure (WFP, 2015). These factors negatively influenced Ukraine's preparedness for a complex emergency and its capacity to provide assistance to IDPs. In addition, security problems and infrastructural damage soon emerged in the conflict areas (WFP, 2015). The Inter-agency Coordination Unit for IDPs was established but had no necessary resources (Tamburelli, 2016), and there was no adequate response from the government, which at the time was battling other problems. There was a slow approach to create legislation such as a declaration of humanitarian crisis (Tamburelli, 2016). Several NGOs were created in early 2014

during the protests; after Maidan, when the conflict broke out, they re-focused their activities on helping IDPs (Uehling, 2016).

Since, in the Ukrainian context, IDPs are living among the local population, not in isolated camp settings, it is difficult to separate support targeting IDPs and for the local population affected indirectly by the conflict. Both groups require support. A clear distinction is possible in the cases where there is a need for accommodation. In other cases, targeting is based on the documentation provided, however not all IDPs are registered with the authorities for reasons mentioned earlier. While individuals living in the areas under separatist control are not IDPs, there is still a need for support since social transfers have been frozen for certain periods and the market declined.

4.2 International support for Ukrainian IDPs

As Szabaciuk (2016) states, the scale of needs most likely surpasses that which the Ukrainian state can provide, even if it does carry the responsibility for most of associated costs. Assistance is provided by international and national bodies. The Logistics Cluster and Food Security and Livelihood Cluster include various international organizations (WFP, UNICEF, WASH, AICM, UNHCR, WHO, WCHO), as well as local and international NGOs (see WFP, 2017). International Red Cross and Red Crescent, along with various other branches, answered the ICRC Ukraine Emergency Appeal to provide assistance to IDPs in the form of healthcare, food, shelter, psychological support, emergency response and capacity building (IFRC, 2017b, c). International organizations work with partners from both government- and separatist-controlled areas.

4.3 Polish support for Ukrainian IDPs

Poland's situation is unique. Just 30 years ago it was at the receiving end of humanitarian help to counteract the shortages and rationing that followed the implementation of martial law in 1981 (Piotrowicz 2009). Thus, among the older generations there are still memories of being supported and, in reviewing the literature, there is a tangible sense in which some Polish people would like to "pay back" for earlier assistance. The Polish Prime Minister has stated, "Someone remembered us in 1981; today, we feel that we should seek solidarity with those who need assistance" (PP, 2014).

Poland was involved in humanitarian and developmental assistance to Ukraine even before the Maidan protests. During them, the Polish government helped fund the medical treatment of IDPs and those injured during the clashes. In September 2014 they sent 320 tonnes of goods to the Ukrainian army; convoys with blankets, food and medical items. Beyond the government, Polish local authorities, organizations (religious, academic, professional), and citizens organized themselves to provide assistance in the form of donations of clothing, food, first aid treatment for the injured, delivery of medical supplies, including ambulances and first aid kits, hearing aids for children, psychological support, training for medics and emergency services. Help was targeted at different regional areas; government-controlled, separatist-controlled, and Crimea. Informal groups were created, often using social media, to support first the Maidan protests, then civilians or even soldiers engaged in the conflict. Polish nationals of Ukrainian descent, together with others, were mobilized to support Ukraine (Fomina, 2016).

After the annexation of Crimea, in 2014, help was intensified and formalized, starting from the November 2014 when the Polish Government set aside 3 million zloty from the budget reserve for aid in Ukraine. Organizations were invited to apply for the finances and provide a description of the intended projects. The application process was repeated yearly.

5. Findings and discussion

The following section gives an overview of some major initiatives, focusing on mode of assistance, type of the goods and logistics-related issues. Data used includes both primary

and secondary sources (Table I). Findings are presented, interpreted and compared against the literature. First, in-kind support is overviewed and discussed; convoys and small parcels. Second, the focus is shifted to CTPs and local procurement.

5.1 *The logistics of in-kind support for Ukrainian IDPs*

There were two large convoys which delivered goods from Poland; the first in December 2014 and the second six months later. Previously, in November 2014, shipments of goods (food, clothing, hygiene supplies) organized by Caritas Poland, were taken by road. Since mid-2015 only small shipments have been made.

The first convoy, December 2014. Three HOs were involved: Polish Red Cross (PCK), Caritas Poland and PCPM. A convoy of 33 trucks transported 150 tonnes of goods: food, hygiene supplies and parcels with goods for infants and children. Products were bought in Poland. Having sent a request for pricing to wholesalers, the HOs prepared the cargo. Parcel preparation varied between HOs. A logistician at Caritas Poland planned and coordinated transport from the wholesaler to a local Caritas warehouse, parcel consolidation was then arranged using volunteers, including homeless persons, the care for whom forms another branch of Caritas' work. The entire process is arranged internally, including planning, process design, selection of suitable packaging and storage:

We ordered goods [to be delivered] to the warehouse, we had to unpack all, prepare parcels, one kilo of flour, one kilo of sugar [...] each item was packed in to a larger box [...] then each box was sealed and placed on the pallet.

This was made possible by virtue of the fact that Caritas Poland has its own warehouse (although external storage space was also used) and access to volunteers. Caritas Poland delivered 2,800 parcels, 2,800 jackets, 460 heaters and 2,000 sleeping bags. PCPM, which focuses mainly on cash-based assistance and therefore does not retain a sizable warehouse for in-kind goods processing, ordered for shipment 5,000 food parcels and 2,000 parcels of items for infants – packing and labeling were done by a wholesaler. Polish Red Cross send 28 tonnes of goods on 80 pallets. Since the aim was to deliver the goods in time for Christmas, the operation was brisk. The culinary contents of the parcels reflected local traditions. Transport was provided, mostly, by the Polish firefighting organization Straż Pożarna, with 30 trucks of various types and sized from different units (with a further three vehicles rented commercially) and 73 personnel, two drivers per truck and spare drivers who volunteered for the trip. Caritas Poland and PCPM delivered pallets to a selected location in Warsaw, where they were loaded onto trucks, a process regarded both the interviewees from those HOs as unnecessary. There were problems related to required customs documentation since the trucks were a different size or volume than had been agreed, and the shipments were coming from multiple providers, so documents had to be created again. The entire operation attracted rolling media coverage and wide political involvement. As a result, large numbers of journalists and TV crews on-site caused significant disruption, and security services had to check the vicinity where the convoy was formed before government officials could visit. Both factors slowed the loading process:

They [the media] all the time disturbed our work, all the time they requested interviews, for press, for TV, there were many officials.

After initial issues with cargo preparation, customs clearance at the border was smooth, since it was arranged by both Polish and Ukrainian Governments. Police on both sides of the border assisted the convoy. From the initial decision to organize a convoy to Kharkov to the its delivery took just 23 days. As trucks had different fuel tank capacities frequent stoppages were made to refill. Representatives from Polish organizations traveled with the

convoy, and on the Ukrainian side of the border there was cooperation from local organizations that addressed the needs of beneficiaries and distributed parcels.

The second convoy, June 2015. The second convoy was like the first but with an improved logistics processes based on earlier experience. Again, Caritas Poland, PCPM and other HOs were involved. The collection of 164 tonnes of goods (138 of which was food), valued at 1.5 million zloty, was optimized, eliminating a central point for loading. This time, 22 firefighting, plus some commercially rented trucks, collected parcels directly from organizations. Less media and political involvement reduced disruption to operations. Caritas Poland prepared 96 tonnes of food and hygiene supplies (4,300 parcels), PCPM (40 tonnes, 6,000 parcels). In addition, there were beds and blankets (from government reserve stores), medicines, sleeping bags and school items for children. Parcels were distributed in areas of Zaporizhia, Donieck and Mariupol. In Kiev, the Polish convoy met with German transport, organized from Ukraine, to transport goods procured locally.

Except transport funded by the Polish government there were several smaller transports, more targeted, or initiated by local units. PCPM shipped medical supplies to two hospitals in Kharkov, bought with private funds. It also distributed mattresses to the IDP centre in Romashka. It was not possible to buy mattresses in Ukraine; but a Polish company donated them. In 2015 Caritas Poland shipped, at the request of Ukrainian partners, a heating stove for the Caritas centre, since it was cheaper to buy in Poland. There were also goods transported in 2015/16. Caritas Poland, sent home appliances, financed by the Małopolskie Province, to IDPs and orphanages locates across the Ukrainian border, operated locally by Caritas-Spes, Lviv. Because organizations must be approved by the Ukrainian government to receive goods from abroad, only a few HOs could do this at the beginning of the conflict. Initially, only one Caritas branch in Ukraine was able to receive donations. This changed over time as more HOs in Ukraine were approved by government and were able to accept humanitarian donations. For smaller shipments, the time required for border crossing was an issue because even these types of transportation are not exempt from customs clearance. While on the Polish side it was possible to speed up the process, this was not the case in Ukraine, where waiting times could vary from hours to days. The conditions of border crossings have changed over time. Before the Maidan protests, it could take even over a year to be accepted through the border. During and after it, crossing became easier, even smooth in the case of shipping medical supplies; afterwards the long waiting times and lengthy custom procedures returned.

Due to the time needed for the border crossing, food needed long expiry dates (at least six months). Some categories of items are problematic, for example clothing must be brand new as disinfection costs are higher than the value of the shipment. Medicines should be accepted for the Ukrainian market as well as for sale on Polish territory; one large shipment of medical supplies was not sent due to such issues. An ambulance, over ten years old, could not be accepted due to the environmental impact as per EU emission standards that were introduced in Ukraine, even though it was in better shape than many of the ambulances used in Ukraine. As the conflict progressed it was also hard, at times impossible, to find Polish companies willing to transport goods to Ukraine. Ukrainian truckers were used instead. This was related to perceived safety and insurance conditions. When transporting medicines specialized trucks are needed to assure transport standards. Donations by individuals were also troublesome to manage. However, there was a way to eliminate border crossing problems by, rather than sending convoys with parcels for further distribution, mailing goods as individual parcels.

"Family to family," small parcels for Ukraine. Though not financed by the Polish ministry, this method was initiated by the government in partnership with the state-owned postal operator, Poczta Polska, which provided free parcel postage to Ukraine for nearly a month.

This idea was not new – such a solution was found in the 1980s when German, Swedish and other post offices sanctioned free postage to Poland. The initiative was successful; over 25,000 parcels were delivered in March 2014. Of that number, over 9,000 went through Caritas. Individuals were able to post one parcel weighing up to 20 kg, half of which could be food, as well as clothing and hygiene supplies. Food would require long expiry dates and meat products were not permitted. Second-hand clothing was discouraged, but personal correspondence was encouraged. Such parcels, posted by individuals to individuals, were exempt from custom duties. To guarantee data protection, names were not given, only the number and description of family. Each parcel had to be marked “For Ukraine.” Parcels were sent individually, or delivered to local Caritas offices across Poland. Parcels were addressed to the Ukrainian parish and redistributed by the Catholic Church in 96 parishes. The religious faith of recipients was not taken into consideration. Beyond material value, the aim was to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people. Assuming the weight of a parcel to be 18 kg, with 25,000 parcels being delivered, this means over 450 tonnes of goods were distributed via this method.

5.2 In-kind support for Ukrainian IDPs – discussion

Despite the relatively short distance involved in delivering goods from Poland to Ukraine there were two convoys only, which seems to support the view of Lentz *et al.* (2013) that such an approach has a high cost, both monetary and organizational. The convoys were used as an immediate response solution (Kovács and Spens, 2007), set up and completed at short notice. While two convoys enabled the delivery of over 300 tonnes of goods, which addressed acute needs, an important role was to demonstrate solidarity with Ukraine. Convoys were used to raise awareness; there was wide media coverage and reporting of the event in all media channels:

I think it was about media coverage [...] there was high pressure, that convoy should leave that way, as the convoy, escorted by police [...] convoy should be visible [in the media].

The Polish Government and society were able to show support; this was reflected by the inclusion of the Polish firefighters and the central loading point, if otherwise unnecessary, where politicians and media could meet. When sending from Poland, there are two options for load consolidation; using your own infrastructure (not an available option for all organizations), or paying for service. The use of firefighter infrastructure for cross docking was not as efficient as would be the case if commercial infrastructure was used, or even that owned by Caritas. Solidarity demonstration came at the price of decreased efficiency.

There were advantages of the goods shipment too. The transport of goods was used when the delivery location was in close proximity, just across the Polish-Ukrainian border; such items were unavailable or too expensive on Ukrainian territory. As one interviewee pointed out:

The most important is safety of the convoy, this is first, but convoys can be used when local purchasing is not possible [...] we are sending goods only when analysis shows that it is economically viable.

There was also agreement among interviewees that convoys are not the most efficient solution:

Operation costs, transport costs are high, there is no point buying items in Poland and transporting them to eastern Ukraine.

There was also a difference between standardized goods, bought from wholesalers and included in the convoys, and unsolicited donations, a distinction in line with previous findings (Holguín-Veras *et al.*, 2012; Kovács and Spens, 2007). One interviewee observed:

To prepare documentation to ship donations given by individuals is a nightmare, each item is different; value, size, type.

Items, often brand new, but donated in Poland by individuals were too complex to process and ship, as detailed documentation for border agencies was needed (e.g. the value of each individual item). This, in one example, resulted in over six-month-delays in sending goods collected by one small NGO. Using family to family parcels enable goods to be delivered directly from individuals, also to demonstrate support, as well as to reduce the burden of managing in-kind donations. However, it remained a one-off action.

5.3 *Cash-based assistance and local procurement – findings*

In 2014 Caritas Ukraine appealed for funding to help IDPs. In response, Caritas Poland transferred €20,000. Later, cash was used to cover rent, winterization (preparation for Winter conditions, i.e. by providing warm clothing, bedding, insulation and heating for buildings) and pay for services (cash for work). In the same year, PCPM distributed to a thousand IDP families prepaid VISA cards, issued by the Polish bank, to co-pay for rental accommodation and cover other critical winter-related needs. This was necessary as IDPs from Donetsk were displaced in August 2014 with only few basic items and were not prepared for the temperatures that dipped to minus 22°C (-7.6°F) by November. Cash assistance was given to the IDPs in coordination with UNHCR, although Ukraine-based guidelines were at the nascent stage at that point in time. Since need was urgent in 2014, PCPM provided a winterization grant in cash to a thousand IDP families. In the following year, PCPM supported 1,167 IDP families and individuals in the Kharkov region (from Polish Aid funding). A system of selecting beneficiaries was established to assure that those in need would receive assistance. This system was based on visits before assistance and further monitoring to determine needs and confirm status after the bank card distribution. Caritas Poland, in 2014, covered rents for IDPs in six cities in western Ukraine and transfers for rent were continued in 2015. The support was restricted to four months to assure people would not become dependent on transfers.

In 2015-2016 PCPM implemented another cash-based assistance program closer to the front line using USAID – IOM funding. It included cash for rent to assist families that had to pay for rented accommodation and cash for work to stimulate local employment of conflict-affected population. Under the latter scheme, 400 individuals were employed for 20 days in largely laboring jobs that involved cleaning up the destruction left by the conflict. Cash payments were possible as there were funds available for this and the banking system was operating as normal, so transfer and cash withdrawals was also a viable option. PAH used cash for families and single mothers in need, providing support for food, hygiene items, medical supplies and preparation for the winter months. A monitoring system was set for all programs.

Case organizations procured locally: goods, logistics, and other services, including for IDPs. In 2014-2015 Caritas Poland bought warm clothing for IDPs as part of a Polish-funded winterization project, the HO bought locally, and distributed food, medicine, clothing and hygiene supplies. In 2016 it founded several projects, purchasing locally equipment for a canteen which provides food for elderly and homeless in Kiev as well as the homeless and IDPs in Kryvyi Rih. And at Christmas and Easter in the same year, impoverished people living in Zhytomyr received parcels thanks to funds from Caritas Poland. PCPM have a similar record. In 2015 it distributed sanitation sets to 1,370 families (4,800 people) in the Donieck and Luhansk areas, some 10 km from the ongoing fighting. The content of these packages was locally procured, and included hygienic goods as well as 2,750 water filters. Later, in 2016, PCPM continued distributing non-food items, this time funded by IOM. PCPM used locally procured materials and services to prepare an IDP centre, in Romashka, for the winter months, particularly harsh in this region. The project value was 970,000 Polish zloty and covered insulation, furniture and heating in eight buildings, accommodation was given to 410 IDPs (having expanded from 120 originally), which was

the largest IDP collective center in Ukraine. Materials were bought from local supermarkets, as speed was the key factor in the face of the coming winter. Indeed, work was completed in 30 days, employing 60 local workers and fulfilling SPHERE requirements). Rent-free accommodation was assured for a two-year period and in 2016 sport facilities were added. That year, ten primary schools were renovated and 20 equipped with furniture and computer equipment. Caritas Poland, in 2016, financed the renovation of and equipment for three medical centres and services for over 6,000 beneficiaries (from MSZ funding), as well as refurbishing a rehabilitation centre for children (from own sources).

PAH support includes provision of food for people in need, operating eight canteens which provide hot meals (in early 2015, these canteens served 10,000 meals monthly). In addition, there are four canteens which provide food for those without mobility; food is distributed by car directly to people in need. In all cases, the food served in PAH canteens is procured locally. PAH also procured locally winterization and hygienic kits, as well as medical supplies for local hospitals. Goods were procured in Ukraine with assistance from local partners. In 2014-2015 Caritas Poland financed psychological support for IDPs and organized holidays for children. In addition, Caritas Poland sent volunteers, such as social workers, medics and psychologists to help Ukrainian IDPs. Similarly, PAH ordered services such as an information centre that offers legal and psychological support, help with searching for employment, skills improvement, and play groups for children.

However, local procurement is not the answer in all situations, and there are things to consider. Items might not be available in certain areas. Those discussed in this paper, for example, were procured in western Ukraine, as in the eastern part the market was not fully operational. Problems arose with the donation of medical supplies to Ukrainian hospitals – some of the hospitals refused the donated medicine, even if procured in Ukraine, because they had agreements with local commercial suppliers. Local procurement requires local partners and knowledge, which takes time to develop. The procurement process and criteria were designed to assure that value for money is achieved, not just the lowest price. In the case of food products, it is important to assure that what is provided has certain nutritional value; in the case of hygiene supplies, needs were determined by surveys. As one interviewee stated:

When we procure locally we look at best price and best quality.

Procurement procedures were dependent on the time available, and the more urgent the need the simpler by necessity the approach. The distribution of procured items should be organized, and parcels tracked, so there would have to be monitoring and reporting systems in place, which can take time to implement. For monitoring purposes, the invoices were forwarded to Poland to be scanned, checked and approved.

5.4 Cash-based assistance and local procurement – discussion

In Ukraine cash-based approaches were widely used, which confirms the work of Rohwerder (2016). Bailey and Aggiss (2016, p. 11) state that “Ukraine was ideal for cash programming, with functioning markets, a strong banking system, several delivery options and financially literate people.”

The findings of this study confirm a preference for cash as mode of assistance, and a shift away from physical goods (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016; Rohwerder, 2016). Similarly, as in Creti and Jaspars (2006), Harvey (2007) and Heaslip *et al.* (2016), findings indicated cash and local procurement (Lentz *et al.*, 2013) as the quicker and more cost-efficient modes, comparing to in-kind shipments. While Lentz *et al.* (2013) focused on long-distance shipments, in the case of HOs presented here buying locally or sending cash was perceived as more efficient, despite the fact the countries share a border and thus shipments are short-distance. WFP (2015) and Bailey and Aggiss (2016) also found cash to be the most effective modality and most important part of the humanitarian response to the Ukrainian conflict.

In Ukraine only 20 percent of food assistance took the form of in-kind support, e.g. food parcels, whereas the remaining 80 percent was in different forms of cash (WFP, 2015).

At the same time, there was no confirmation by interviewees of the negative effects of cash (outlined by Harvey, 2007; Heaslip *et al.*, 2016; Peppiatt *et al.*, 2001), such as corruption, security misuse, theft or problems with the fulfillment of legislation. Interviewees also did not perceive any misuse of cash, such as on temptation goods, which confirms findings by Evans and Popova (2014). Similarly, Bailey and Harvey (2015, p. 3) point out that “unsurprisingly people tend to spend the additional income from cash transfers on the goods and services that they most need.” This view was strongly supported by interviewees in the present study.

Interviewees did not mention that cash transfers resulted in price increases (which did in fact occur), but it is important to keep in mind that the scale of cash support was low when compared to the whole size of the market, and that there was still the possibility of importing goods to Ukraine. Interviewees pointed out that cash transfers stimulate the local markets since that is where beneficiaries spend it, a finding in line with the literature (Creti and Jaspars, 2006; Heaslip *et al.*, 2016) but which requires further analysis.

The case-study HOs used various types of cash transfer, like those listed in Heaslip *et al.* (2016) and Bailey and Aggiss (2016) – unconditional, conditional, and cash for work. The case-study HOs were not the only one to use cash, however. For example, WFP used cash-based assistance in the form of vouchers. IFRC (2016a) provided unconditional cash grants, cash for food and vouchers for specific type of goods, such as food and pharmaceuticals.

Cash was used for two types of programs. First, CTPs for payments directed toward certain groups of people. The second approach was to procure goods locally, then distribute to beneficiaries. CTPs started in 2014 and were growing gradually, replacing almost all in-kind goods flows. The sources of cash were funds from the Polish government, donations collected from Polish citizens (such as church collection and donations via text message), and grants made available by international organizations. However, trust levels in Poland are still low and many individuals are reluctant to donate cash to NGOs, preferring instead to give goods, even if purchased brand new to donate them. Nevertheless, cash was preferred by interviewees:

We prefer cash and local procurement; our stance is that best way is to procure everything locally. We can buy locally most of goods, we just need money.

All case organizations clearly favored local procurement, a finding in line with Matopoulos *et al.* (2014) who indicates the benefits of the use of local resources, such as cost efficiency, better use of local knowledge and reduced lead times. One interviewee stated:

Products which are needed are available locally. Buying locally means we can reduce costs, eliminate the burden of organizing transport, shorten the response time and stimulate the local market.

Local procurement was common in Ukraine, as WFP procured all food commodities locally (WFP, 2016). Ukraine is major food producer, so in-kind parcels were locally procured and delivered to designated points (WFP, 2014). Food was mainly procured from the western part of country and transported to the east (WFP, 2016).

Changing to local sourcing, particularly when compared to transcontinental shipping, has reduced delivery time by up to 60 percent (Lorentz *et al.*, 2013). Although shortened response times were mentioned in interviews, they were not calculated. Local procurement has a positive impact on overall supply chain performance; moreover, it creates a shift from the “push” to the “pull” supply chain model, based on the buy-to-delivery principle (Skoglund and Hertz, 2012). The shortened chain, achieved by reducing transportation and cutting out several parties, enables a better response to local demand and reflects cultural and dietary differences (Kovács and Spens, 2007). The latter of these points was confirmed by interviewees. Procuring locally shortens the information flow, enables a clearer identification of needs and shortens the response time, all of which improves supply chain agility (Oloruntoba and Gray, 2006; Oloruntoba and Kovács, 2015).

Distribution of locally procured in-kind support was still required. Cash was not the best support mode for the most vulnerable groups in the society, in line with earlier findings (Aker, 2013; ECHO, 2013, Heaslip *et al.*, 2016). As Peppiatt *et al.* (2001) found, direct food support was more suitable in the case of elderly people, with lower mobility, and in areas with limited access. Gentilini (2007) listed location (remote vs near markets) as a key issue in mode selection. However, as findings suggest, near markets is not about distance, but the capacity to reach them, something that is determined by a myriad of factors including health conditions, gender, age, and the state of the conflict. Thus, the case-study HOs distributed goods to those in greatest need and for further redistribution. Access was another issue. In-kind assistance was in place in areas not controlled by government, as well as delivered to social institutions and hospitals (WFP, 2015). Parcels to non-government areas were delivered in batches and then distributed (WFP, 2015). In-kind goods were distributed in preparation for winter: blankets and warm clothes (WFP, 2014). In the humanitarian supply chain, the fulfillment management of the “last mile” delivery is an issue (Kovács and Spens, 2007). This was confirmed in the case of Ukraine; since not everyone was able to use cash, there was a need to set up a distribution network to reach, among others, those unable to leave their homes.

6. Lessons from humanitarian support in Ukraine

This section aims to answer the research questions and draw lessons from the case-study HOs. The discussion in the previous section is synthesized with the focus on humanitarian supply chain and logistics issues. Next, the selection of the mode is explored and, finally, the external contextual issues that impact humanitarian operations in Ukraine are discussed.

The first research question (*RQ1*) is related to conditions, and reasons for why in-kind goods and humanitarian convoys were initially employed. The initial immediate response to the crisis was dominated by in-kind donations transported by road. This mode was selected due to the urgency of the situation, the availability of goods in stock and the possibility to procure, consolidate and transport goods. At the same time, it was a clear demonstration of support and promotion of the cause, which in turn resulted in increased cash donations from the Polish population. Convoys and in-kind donations are visible and tangible, which makes them conducive to media coverage. In-kind donations are also suitable for cross-border delivery and for providing specialized goods that are unavailable or too expensive locally. The provision of small cross-border parcels were more a symbol of solidarity than a long-term solution. After initial in-kind support, assistance to Ukrainian IDPs shifted to cash. This shift addresses *RQ2*. After focus on in-kind donations, HOs were able to better understand the context and establish cooperation with local partners. This supported the shift to cash-based assistance. The majority of IDPs moved within and to urban areas, or near urban centres, which, together with the existing banking system and telecommunication infrastructure, enabled a reduction in transport costs through various conditional and unconditional grants. Cash was given to fulfill immediate needs; beneficiaries were frequently able to decide themselves how to spend it. However, cash was not the best solution in all cases, and there was a move toward local procurement as a form of assistance, which addresses *RQ3*. Local procurement was introduced and used as a mode of support alongside cash-based assistance. This was made possible by the fact that the majority of goods were available locally, the market was functional, and there was no need for long-distance transportation given geographical proximity. Local procurement enabled the provision of in-kind goods as well as services for collective use (equipment for schools, canteens and hospitals, preparation for winter) as well as basic items for those who were unable to use cash-based programs for various reasons. This brings us to the *RQ4*.

This research confirms that a different approach to humanitarian support is required for urbanized mid-income transitional economies such as Ukraine than for remote and

underdeveloped regions. The context changed as the conflict progressed and with such changes came the possibility of using different modes of support (Table III).

To provide efficient humanitarian support it is necessary to match the mode of assistance with local conditions. Goods, partially prepositioned from Polish stock, were favored as a fast response at the early stage of the conflict. This is largely in line with the literature (Kovács and Spens, 2007; Oloruntoba and Gray, 2006). In the Ukrainian case, there was an immediate switch from long-distance transportation. Once inside Ukraine, the case-study HOs matched different cash approaches and in-kind donations with the needs of specific groups. The Ukrainian case confirms that cash transfers and in-kind support were mutually complementary as a combined form of intervention (Heaslip *et al.*, 2016; Peppiatt *et al.*, 2001). However, certain areas and groups of beneficiaries were better served by in-kind donations (even when locally procured) than they would be by cash.

Through both cash and local procurement, it was possible to shorten humanitarian supply chains. Typically, “traditional” assistance in the form of goods given to beneficiaries dominates humanitarian flows (Smith and Mohiddin, 2015; World Bank, 2016). This was not observed in Ukraine, where goods were in the minority except during the initial response and in circumstances where items were unavailable or too expensive to procure locally. The Ukrainian case confirms that focusing on in-kind donations is not always an optimal solution, particularly in mid-income economies. Interviewees stated that logistics is the major cost factor in humanitarian operations. This accords with several studies: Creti and Jaspars (2006), Doocy and Tappis (2016), Harvey (2007), Heaslip *et al.* (2016) and van Wassenhove (2006). As a result, there was a drive toward modes which aim to shorten the humanitarian supply chain by reducing the need for transportation, storage, personnel and other logistics activities, and instead increase cash usage. Despite the move toward cash and local procurement, all support modes were used in Ukraine; and there is a clear link between the stage of the conflict and the type of the mode (Table III), as well as between the mode and local conditions (Table IV).

Faced with several options there is the issue of how to select the “right” support mode. A structured selection of mode was proposed in the literature. However, such decision support tools are mainly focused on the in-kind vs cash dynamic. Mode selection depends on external conditions specific to the local market and on supply chain functioning (Tamburelli, 2016). The WFP used several types of assistance – cash, vouchers, in-kind – but always matched the mode of assistance to the particularities of the context. In Ukraine that context included:

- A: calm areas; fully controlled by the Ukrainian Government; no fighting; stable flows and prices.
- B: tense areas; former areas of fighting, now controlled by the Ukrainian Government; some disruption; recovery.
- C: active conflict; poor access; ongoing disruption.

Stage of the conflict – driver	Support mode	Goals
Initial stage of the conflict – immediate response	Primary in-kind goods via cross-border delivery	Basic items delivery, building awareness, demonstration of support, stimulate donations
After entry into the country – building local network Urgent and non-urgent needs	In-kind, cash, vouchers – exploring different options	Creation of network with local partners, understanding local context
Stable humanitarian network – cost efficiency non-urgent needs	Context dependent – cash, local procurement, goods for specialized items only	Cost efficiency, short and responsive supply chain, optimization of the mode of support according to the context

Table III.
Stage of the conflict
and support mode

Type of support	Advantage	Disadvantage	Barriers and conditions
Cross-border convoys, in-kind goods	Fast response Use of prepositioned goods and donations Builds awareness Shows solidarity	High cost High effort needed Security risks Logistics infrastructure availability	Border crossing Local distribution Trucking companies not willing to transport to Ukraine
Small parcels, in-kind goods	Builds awareness Shows solidarity Removes border crossing procedures	One-off event Content not fully controlled	Lack of continued support from transport or postal operator High delivery costs
Cross-border shipping, specialized goods	Goods not available or too expensive to buy locally Short distance transport only	Restricted to narrow set of goods and short distance close to border Long time to respond	Border crossing Local market analysis needed before order can be made Need for transport across border
Cash-based assistance	Involves beneficiaries Targeted Rapid response Maintains dignity	Not suitable in all settings and for all beneficiary groups	Need for financial resources Lack of trust by donors Need for control mechanisms Working banking system and infrastructure
Local procurement of in-kind goods and services	Involves beneficiaries Demand driven, agile Shortens supply chain Support for local market Reflects local traditions	Time needed to establish sourcing Problems with "last mile" distribution Not suitable in all settings and for all beneficiary groups	Availability of goods, services and suppliers Need for control, reporting and tracing mechanisms Quality standards and control for goods

Table IV.
Advantages and disadvantages of support modes

While cash and vouchers are preferred, and were used in contexts A and B, it is not possible to use them in all areas, so in-kind are used when vouchers are not suitable and supplies not available (WFP, 2014). ECHO (2013) designed a decision tree that listed the conditions for cash usage: local situation, market and program/context analysis. The use of CTPs requires an existing market, relatively stable prices, availability of goods and services, and a means of distribution (ECHO, 2013). The case-study HOs analyzed an array of factors when deciding on which mode to adopt at any given stage, including market structure. Decisions had to consider: procurement (where, what, when and how to buy) and means of distribution to beneficiaries in each social group in the selected area.

Some of the problems that were faced by the case-study HOs are unique to complex emergencies in urbanized mid-income countries. Such countries differ from underdeveloped rural and remote regions in conflict situations. In Ukraine, differences include the relationship of humanitarian assistance and IDP provision with the social support system, perceptions and difficulties around neutrality and access, and the importance of the role played by local partners in influencing humanitarian operations, including logistics.

The national social support system in Ukraine was unable to respond to the crisis. The weakness of its institutions, the fragmentation of its society, levels of poverty and difficulties facing its economy all reduced Ukraine's ability to cope with the crisis on its own. From the start, the conflict damaged production and affected society, in line with Albala-Bertrand's (2000) analysis of complex emergencies. Ukrainian institutions had limited capacity to deal with the crisis even in those areas it controlled. The main focus of humanitarian efforts targeted the population in eastern Ukraine and the areas in which IDPs had arrived. There was no requirement for humanitarian assistance across the entire country at the same level. In line with Rohwerder's (2016) argument,

humanitarian support had to be provided not only to IDPs but for the poorest parts of society, and this would be affected by the prevailing economic conditions and government decisions such as the freeze on social transfers or the requirement for registration to receive social support. In line with Burkle (1999), the case-study HOs focused on certain groups of people in need. In countries like Ukraine where social systems are established, there is a need to look at humanitarian transfers as part of, and linked with, the local social protection system (Gentilini, 2007). However, the problem arose of how to identify IDPs and people in need since registration as a IDP was a prerequisite of receiving assistance and such registration was not always possible or sought after, for the reasons mentioned earlier.

In the Ukraine, the media reported on events, the news was circulated and shared across the country and beyond, and different actors pursued their views and interests. This naturally enough brings about questions on the perception of neutrality. Albala-Bertrand (2000) points out that in complex emergencies there are various political actors in the conflict. HOs might not be perceived as neutral due to their international or national origin. All three case-study HOs apply the principle of neutrality in their operations, however, when Polish media and officials publicized their work a general feeling of support and solidarity with the Ukrainian nation was promoted. While the evidence from this study suggests that the HOs remained neutral throughout, this was not always perceived to be whole population. That perception, influenced the ability for these HOs to operate in certain areas of the country.

As with other studied humanitarian settings, issues were observed relating to access, or more specifically non-access to certain areas in Ukraine. This appears to confirm reports from other HOs which operate in Ukraine, as discussed in Bailey and Aggiss (2016) and the Logistics Cluster (LC, 2016). Problems with access arose throughout the country especially in non-government-controlled zones. In regions where HOs were unable to operate directly, the solution was to work in cooperation with local partners which deliver assistance acting as representatives of HOs.

Local partners played a key role. Caritas was able to operate almost immediately, having two branches in Ukraine (Caritas Ukraine and Caritas-Spes), one of which had all the necessary government permits to receive support. Other HOs, however, had to establish local contacts. Similar problems were encountered by other global organizations since there was no or limited presence of the UN system or humanitarian agencies in Ukraine, even if there were some development actors (LC, 2016). As time passed local NGOs were established and approved by the government to deliver support, a feature identified by Rohwerder (2016) who concluded that humanitarian assistance in emergencies is often organized in cooperation with local civil society actors.

Interviewees raised other more general issues, not specific to complex emergencies, that influenced humanitarian logistical operations in Ukraine. These include an inclement winter that restricted the movement of convoys and triggered measures to prepare for cold weather (see Uehling, 2016), and issues around border crossing, custom procedures and the requirement for certification of NGOs. While Bailey and Aggiss (2016) cite language differences as a barrier, this was not indicated by interviewees. This might be a result of the similarities between Polish and Ukrainian and the wide knowledge of Russian among Poles.

7. Conclusions and recommendations

This paper contributes to discussions about the advantages of cash transfers over in-kind support, as well as the conditions under which cash or goods should be favored (Bailey and Harvey, 2015; Doocy and Tappis, 2016; Tamburelli, 2016). The findings confirm that the literature is not adequately addressing local procurement as a mode of assistance,

instead focusing on cash vs in-kind. In settings such as Ukraine there is a need to balance all three modes:

- (1) in-kind goods;
- (2) cash-based assistance; and
- (3) local procurement.

The observations of the Ukrainian conflict confirm that cash-based assistance shortens the supply chain, so in-kind can be phased out, with some exceptions. In countries with developed infrastructure, existing and stable markets, an educated population and surplus food production conditions exist that support direct cash transfers as well as local and regional procurement. In such situations these modes can replace the costly transport of goods that often take place in high-risk environments. Thus, a large part of the “traditional” humanitarian supply chain can be eliminated: long-distance transportation, reloading, consolidation, storage, and associated form-filling requirements. This speeds up delivery and reduces overall supply chain costs, changing the “push” to “pull” and creating a more agile chain.

However, local procurement is not a panacea for all solutions. Convoys and in-kind support are an important tool to provide an immediate response in urgent situations. Despite the cost associated HOs should maintain capabilities for this mode, including logistics infrastructure (warehouses, access to people and equipment), coordination, process management, and cooperation with emergency services, government agencies and transport providers. In addition, there should be periodically a test of such cooperation in practical settings, testing the delivery of prepositioned goods and emergency procurement, and confirming the capacity for immediate response (in this case, HOs and firefighters working together provided a test result on the cooperation component). Another factor of significant importance is the “last mile” logistics – the delivery of goods to beneficiaries whom are unable to use cash.

Local procurement needs further attention, as current decision support tools frequently omit it in their focus on in-kind vs cash. While decisions should take into account procurement and distribution to beneficiaries, there are also ways to optimize local procurement. For example, despite the emerging use of purchasing consortia to buy goods (Kovács and Spens, 2011), the case-study HOs, and others operating in the local area, procured items separately – despite buying similar products. Pulling together buying power and using cooperative purchasing might result in lower prices. However, this could be restricted by product and supplier availability (Pazirandeh and Herlin, 2014), thus further market analysis would be required in this area. At the same time, supplier verification procedures should be put in place to eliminate unwanted suppliers (Kovács and Spens, 2007), as they generally are in the commercial sector (Piotrowicz and Irani, 2010). Thus, future work must be done on understanding and implementing procurement as a strategic tool for humanitarian support and the revival of local markets. Procurement in emerging markets, especially in those experiencing conflict, is a challenge since local organizations operate in a context vastly different to that in developed countries (Piotrowicz and Cuthbertson, 2015). There are clear limitations and risks. In such situations, procedures and processes that support local procurement, including reporting and monitoring, need to be established. This needs further attention, including a working definition of procurement and supplier selection criteria. For example, favoring a high volume of goods will likely exclude local small suppliers. So, procurement rules should look at the overall effect on the region, not merely price and quality. This can be challenging when the market is weak and goods are not available in expected volume.

It is also important to design tools that can determine the selection of “optimal” modes, that is ensuring that decision-making about modes of support consider the stage of the conflict, the needs of the different beneficiaries and the external context. Moreover, there

should be monitoring mechanisms and flexibility built into the system so that the humanitarian response to dynamic changes (e.g. deterioration or improvement in local conditions) can be adjusted accordingly.

This study also identifies a need to work on the development and testing of various cash-based solutions, analyzing costs and impacts of different options from traditional (banknotes, vouchers, bank transfers) to more advanced (mobile payments, prepaid cards, e-vouchers). Technology may reduce costs and improve traceability but it is arguably more prone to disruption and infrastructural damage. Skills are required in HOs to control that risk, as are better financial skills, particularly since cash is becoming more widespread as a mode of assistance. Thus, financial institutions and technology providers should both be present in humanitarian operations and clusters.

There are also practical issues related to HOs operating in eastern and central Europe. Polish organizations, compared to their counterparts in western Europe, have fewer years of experience and less resources available. In Ukraine, the lack of organizations familiar with humanitarian work negatively influenced the capacity for humanitarian to be provided from within the country. The international humanitarian community should focus on involving individuals and organizations from regions where local HOs are not widely present. This would facilitate the flow of knowledge, exchange of best practice and procedures and, as a result, strengthen the capacity of local organizations to provide humanitarian responses in cases of regional emergency as part of international humanitarian network.

It is still of great importance that the international community continues to support Ukrainian state, not just in current socio-economic reform but also in capacity-building to cope with IDP provision internally so that the need for external humanitarian support is reduced. Here, the experiences of international development organizations from other regions as well from other post-communist countries can be applied.

This research indicates several directions for future study. Despite the fact that procurement is of critical importance to the humanitarian context, surprisingly few studies examine it (Balciik and Ak, 2014). Studies have been conducted of the links between procurement and collaboration (Herlin and Pazirandeh, 2015; Pazirandeh and Herlin, 2014; Tomasini and van Wassenhove, 2009) and procurement processes (Bagchi *et al.*, 2011; Ertem *et al.*, 2010; Falasca and Zobel, 2011; Trestrail *et al.*, 2009). But there is still need for further work, both academic and by HOs, to develop the methods and decision support tools to match the context of a country, the stage of the complex emergency, procurement processes, type of the goods and market conditions. On this point, comparative analyses with other regions, such as Syria, would be useful, as well as studies of practices used by different HOs around the world.

There is also need to explore the further operations of HOs in the Ukrainian context as well investigate more fully the role of Polish organizations. Neither area is present in the current literature. Topics for research might include knowledge transfer or international cooperation, as well as specific aspects such as the uses of cash-based technologies, or medical assistance.

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