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### HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS IN THE CONTEXT OF A MULTILEVEL APPROACH TO SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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# Humanitarian Interventions in the Context of a Multilevel Approach to Social Well-Being

Anna BORYSOVA<sup>1</sup>, Anna ZHYKHARIEVA<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The growing number of humanitarian crises in the world is highlighting the need to find new models of assistance that can ensure not only physical survival, but also long-term sustainability and integration of affected communities. The Ukrainian context, where the war has created multidimensional challenges to public well-being, requires special attention. The purpose of the study is to examine the conceptual foundations of a multi-level approach to humanitarian interventions and analyze the logic of their application in crises. The methodological basis of the work is a combination of conceptual analysis, interdisciplinary approaches and field assessment data, supplemented by international standards (Sphere Association, HNO, MSNA). As a result, it was found that a multi-level approach allows systematizing humanitarian activities according to the logic of a gradual transition from life support to life realization, reducing the risk of duplication of efforts and forming the basis for social sustainability. It has been shown that taking into account the physical, social, psychological and cultural dimensions of well-being ensures greater targeting of assistance and promotes the development of social capital. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of using the proposed model to assess the state of communities and plan targeted interventions that meet current needs. It is proved that the parallel implementation of psychosocial support enhances the effectiveness of material assistance and forms the basis for long-term development. The novelty of the study lies in the adaptation of the multi-level logic to the Ukrainian context, which allows combining international experience with local specifics. A limitation of the study is the insufficient representativeness of field data and the need for long-term observations. Further research should focus on developing mechanisms for coordinating humanitarian actors and integrating quantitative and qualitative indicators into monitoring systems.

*Keywords:* humanitarian interventions; multilevel approach; social well-being; psychosocial support; social capital; coordination; community resilience

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## Introduction

The humanitarian crises of our time are increasingly going beyond local disasters and are gaining a global dimension, affecting millions of people in need of immediate assistance and long-term recovery programs. Armed conflicts, pandemics, environmental disasters and economic shocks pose complex challenges that cannot be addressed by one-dimensional interventions. The traditional approach, focused exclusively on emergency response, is proving to be insufficient, as it meets only basic needs and does not create the preconditions for social stabilization and development. In this situation, there is a need to rethink the concepts of humanitarian aid and introduce multi-level models that take into account the interdependence of physical, social, psychological and cultural dimensions of well-being. There is a growing interest in the scientific literature in studies that look at humanitarian interventions through the lens of multidimensionality and long-term impact. Researchers emphasize that assistance should go beyond physical survival and help victims integrate into new communities, restore trust, and develop social capital (Lough *et al.*, 2023; Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025). At the same time, psychosocial support is becoming an important aspect of humanitarian action, which, in combination with material resources, creates the basis for social resilience (Im *et al.*, 2025; Ubels *et al.*, 2025). Despite the growing number of empirical and analytical works, the issues of systematizing humanitarian activities by levels of well-being and determining the logic of their application remain insufficiently developed. Thus, the relevance of the study is driven by the need for a unified model of humanitarian interventions that would take into account the gradual movement from emergency assistance to sustainable development, avoid duplication of efforts, and ensure the strategic sustainability of communities. The scientific value of the paper lies in the combination of conceptual analysis and practical data, which allows not only to describe the structure of multi-level interventions, but also to outline their practical relevance for the Ukrainian context.

The purpose of the article is to explore the conceptual foundations of a multi-level approach to social well-being in the context of humanitarian interventions, to characterize the logic of transition between levels of assistance, and to identify key challenges and prospects for their implementation.

## Literature review

Current research in the field of humanitarian interventions shows a growing focus on a multi-level approach that combines basic needs with long-term development strategies. In particular, scholars emphasize that humanitarian assistance cannot be limited to physical survival, but should help restore social ties, integration and economic self-sufficiency (Lough *et al.*, 2023; Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025; REACH, 2024). In this context, gradualism becomes important: from providing life support

to creating conditions for life organization and life realization (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024; Im *et al.*, 2025). Interdisciplinary approaches to psychosocial support play a significant role in research. Multi-level interventions have been shown to help overcome structural inequalities and increase community resilience, particularly among refugees and displaced persons (Goodkind *et al.*, 2020, 2024; Greene *et al.*, 2021; Anindhita *et al.*, 2024). The effectiveness of such interventions is also confirmed by reviews that show that social capital and collective practices are key resources for maintaining mental health and stability (Im *et al.*, 2025; Ubels *et al.*, 2025; Villalonga-Olives *et al.*, 2022).

A number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses have focused on the evidence base for psychosocial programs. For example, multi-level interventions in low- and middle-income countries have been found to reduce psychological distress among children and youth (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024; Papola *et al.*, 2024). Similar results have been found in socially oriented therapy programs for affected communities (Ubels *et al.*, 2025; Mthiyane *et al.*, 2023). At the same time, studies emphasize the need to integrate mental health into multisectoral humanitarian programs to prevent the long-term consequences of crises (Ndlovu *et al.*, 2024; Vynnytska *et al.*, 2025). A separate area of literature is devoted to the analysis of barriers and opportunities for scaling up psychosocial programs. Lack of proper coordination, lack of up-to-date data, and uneven distribution of resources have been shown to reduce the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions (Troup *et al.*, 2021; Aweesha *et al.*, 2025). At the same time, practical experience demonstrates that it is possible to combine local initiatives with international standards, which contributes to better coordination of actions at different levels (United Nations Development Programme, 2022; De Luca & Lin, 2024).

The contribution of research that analyzes social capital and well-being in a broader societal dimension is also important. It has been shown that engaging civic initiatives and building trust strengthen community resilience and create the basis for further peacebuilding (Larsen *et al.*, 2023; Xu *et al.*, 2022). In this context, the role of mental health in shaping social cohesion and long-term development is gaining strategic importance (Massazza *et al.*, 2022; Schulder *et al.*, 2024). It is worth noting that some publications emphasize comprehensive interventions in the field of health and mental well-being. In particular, it has been shown that multilevel approaches to strengthening health systems in crisis contexts can ensure better sustainability and integration of humanitarian and development efforts (Aweesha *et al.*, 2025; De Angelis *et al.*, 2020). At the same time, researchers emphasize that the integration of psychosocial support into peacebuilding programs opens up new perspectives for building trust and social cohesion (United Nations Development Programme, 2022; De Luca & Lin, 2024).

Research on people with infectious diseases and mental disorders has also made a significant contribution. Reviews show that community-based interventions help reduce stigma, support social inclusion, and prevent exacerbations of chronic conditions (Anindhita *et al.*, 2024; Killaspy *et al.*, 2022). Analysis of complex community interventions among older people has shown that comprehensive programs can maintain independence and reduce the risk of social isolation (Crocker *et al.*, 2024). At the same time, program evaluation processes in humanitarian crises show the importance of combining quantitative and qualitative indicators to achieve a systemic effect (Massazza *et al.*, 2022; Troup *et al.*, 2021). Some works pay attention to the long-term consequences of humanitarian crises and the risks of intergenerational transmission of traumatic experiences. In particular, timely mental health interventions can reduce the likelihood of such consequences and form the basis for sustainable recovery (Vynnytska *et al.*, 2025). An important aspect is also the identification of barriers to scaling up support programs in low- and middle-income countries, which limits access to appropriate services for the most vulnerable populations (Mthiyane *et al.*, 2023; Ndlovu *et al.*, 2024).

Thus, the current scientific literature highlights a multilevel approach as a basis for humanitarian interventions that takes into account the interdependence of physical, social, psychological and cultural dimensions of well-being (Larsen *et al.*, 2023; Xu *et al.*, 2022). However, there are still problems that have not been fully addressed: insufficient coordination between actors and the lack of effective mechanisms for scaling up programs in a global context.

## Methodology

The study was conducted by the authors in 2022–2025 using a combination of conceptual analysis, interdisciplinary approaches, and field data collected in communities in Ukraine affected by military operations. The methodological framework was based on international standards for humanitarian response, including Sphere Association (2018), Humanitarian Needs Overview (OCHA, 2023) and Multi-Sector Needs Assessment (REACH, 2024), adapted to the local socio-economic context. To summarize and systematize the data, the methods of comparative analysis, logical modeling, correlation analysis, and content analysis of reports of international and national humanitarian organizations were used (REACH Initiative, 2022, 2024; OCHA, 2023; ILO, 2024; Lough *et al.*, 2023). The study formed a system of normalized indicators of community well-being at three levels – life support ( $L_1$ ), life organization ( $L_2$ ) and life creation ( $L_3$ ) – with further calculation of the dynamics between them. This approach ensured alignment between international standards and the practical needs of Ukrainian communities, allowing for a reasonable assessment of the effectiveness of humanitarian interventions and their impact on the sustainability of socio-economic development.

## Results

The conceptual framework of a multi-level approach to social well-being in the context of humanitarian interventions is based on the understanding that well-being is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. It combines both physical aspects of survival and psychological, social and cultural conditions for integration and development. In humanitarian situations, a person goes from meeting basic needs to gradually organizing their life and reaching the level of self-realization. This approach allows for consistent and targeted interventions, avoiding duplication of efforts or premature programs that do not meet current conditions. According to researchers, humanitarian assistance that focuses only on survival, without creating conditions for social integration and restoration of economic activity, has a limited effect in the long run (Lough *et al.*, 2023).

Physical survival is the *first* and most fundamental *level*. Its main elements are access to safe shelter, food, water, sanitation, as well as basic medical and psychosocial support. At this stage, the priority is immediate safety and minimizing risks to life. However, ensuring survival does not guarantee sustainable recovery. People who remain at the level of basic needs for a long time experience chronic dependence on humanitarian assistance, which weakens their resources for integration into new social environments. Therefore, it is important that the transition from physical survival to life organization is logically ordered and supported by systemic measures (Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025). *The second level* is social integration and stabilization. It includes access to educational, medical, and social services, the ability to integrate into the community, and a sense of security in the social environment. At this stage, humanitarian interventions include housing repairs, rental support, educational programs, and the development of public spaces. Psychosocial initiatives play a special role, helping to restore trust and build social capital (Im *et al.*, 2025). It is this level that lays the foundation for the transition to self-realization, as an integrated person feels like a part of the social system, able to influence its development. *The third level* – self-realization and development – goes beyond basic and organizational needs and is aimed at economic growth, civic leadership, cultural and educational initiatives. This is the level where humanitarian interventions are not only supportive but also developmental: grants for small businesses, retraining programs, social entrepreneurship development, and participation in local governance. In this way, well-being becomes not only an individual characteristic but also a social resource that determines the community's future sustainability. According to interdisciplinary research, it is the combination of economic activity and social inclusion that creates the preconditions for a lasting recovery from the crisis (Ubels *et al.*, 2025).

The conceptual framework of the multi-level approach is based on the understanding of well-being as a process that moves from meeting basic needs to personal and social fulfillment. Each stage is closely linked to the other: survival without integration leads to dependence, integration without development stops

growth, and development without a stable base becomes impossible. Therefore, humanitarian interventions should be built in a logical sequence, taking into account the time dimension, resources and specific social conditions (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024).

Humanitarian crises are characterized by a complex and multidimensional impact on the lives of affected communities, as they simultaneously destroy the material foundations of existence and generate deep psychological and social challenges. In the first months after a crisis, physical survival becomes a priority: access to food, water, shelter, and basic security. However, over time, the needs of the population change from immediate support to the search for stability and conditions for further development. Therefore, an effective response must take into account not only objective conditions (housing, economy, access to services) but also subjective factors such as a sense of security, trust in the community, and psychological comfort (Lough *et al.*, 2023).

Current research emphasizes that humanitarian crises have not only short-term consequences, but also shape long-term social trajectories that can either contribute to recovery or perpetuate the vulnerability of the population (Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025). As practice shows, the lack of a systematic approach and consideration of levels of well-being leads to duplication of assistance or premature interventions, while real needs remain unmet. In this context, a multi-level model of humanitarian interventions allows for a more complete reflection of the specifics of crises, combining material and socio-psychological dimensions. Before further analysis, it is worth presenting a generalized table that demonstrates the key dimensions of humanitarian crises and their impact on the lives of victims (Table 1).

Table 1. Multidimensional impact of humanitarian crises on the lives of the affected population

Impact dimension	Objective conditions	Subjective feelings	Examples of consequences
Physical (basic needs)	Destruction of housing, water shortages, food shortages, limited access to healthcare	Feeling of physical danger, fear for life	Loss of housing, hunger, increased mortality, critical dependence on humanitarian assistance
Social	Disrupted social ties, disintegration of communities, limited access to education and services	Feelings of isolation, lack of trust, uncertainty	Social disintegration, marginalization in host communities
Economic	Unemployment, lack of stable income, reduced economic activity	Feeling of helplessness, loss of prospects	Chronic poverty, economic dependence on humanitarian or donor support

Psychological	Limited resources for psychosocial support	Anxiety, depression, lack of control over one's own life	Traumatization, intergenerational transmission of psychological consequences
Cultural and social	Destruction of cultural infrastructure, lack of public spaces	Alienation, loss of identity, lack of social cohesion	Loss of cultural heritage, weakening of local self-government

Source: created by the authors based on (Lough *et al.*, 2023; Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025; REACH, 2024)

Thus, humanitarian crises inevitably pose multidimensional threats that encompass the physical, social, economic, psychological and cultural dimensions. The impact of these factors is shaped by both objective conditions and the subjective perception of the victims. Awareness of the relationship between them allows humanitarian interventions to be more targeted and effective. It is important that interventions are based not only on ensuring physical survival, but also on supporting integration and creating conditions for the future self-realization of affected communities (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024; Im *et al.*, 2025).

Building an effective system of humanitarian interventions requires an understanding of the logic of the gradual transition between levels of well-being. This transition is not automatic and depends on both the objective resources of the community and the subjective perception of the affected population. At the stage of life support, the key task is to guarantee basic survival and reduce immediate risks. When these needs are met, it becomes possible to move on to life-organization, which involves restoring social stability, access to services and integration into new communities. The final stage is life realization, which involves active participation in public life, development of economic initiatives and cultural practices (Lough *et al.*, 2023).

However, if humanitarian interventions are implemented prematurely or do not meet current needs, this creates a number of risks. For example, allocating resources to program development when basic needs remain unmet leads to increased inequality, dependency, and demotivation of those affected. Similarly, an overemphasis on emergency assistance without further integration leads to chronic dependence on humanitarian support (Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025). The logic of the transition between levels implies a smooth movement from survival to development, taking into account time frames and spatial conditions. For clarity, the logic of this transition is presented in the form of a diagram (Figure 1).

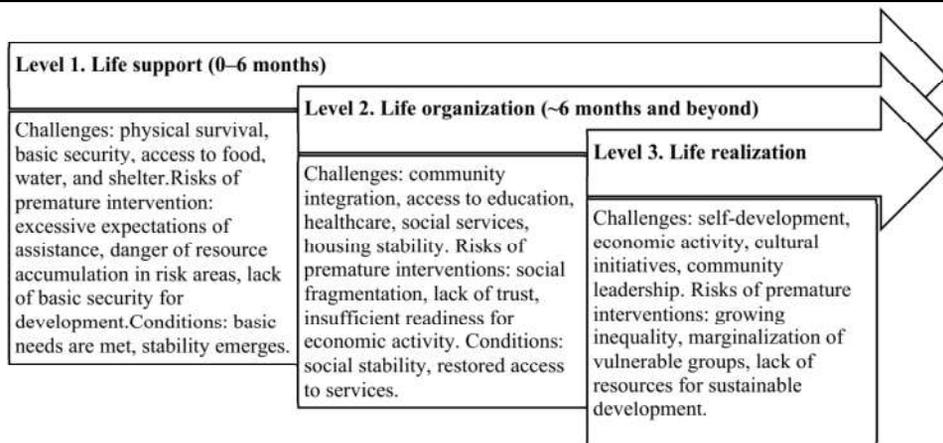


Figure 1. Logic of transition between levels of well-being and key risks of premature interventions

Source: created by the authors based on (Kuczabski et al., 2025; REACH, 2024)

The multi-level approach to humanitarian interventions forms the logic of a gradual movement from emergency assistance to sustainable community development. Each level performs its own unique function, and a hasty transition or incorrect priorities can offset the effect achieved. The systematic work of humanitarian actors should take into account the risks of premature or irrelevant actions to ensure a smooth and effective transition (Bangpan et al., 2024; Im et al., 2025).

Assessing the state of a community in a humanitarian crisis requires a systematic approach based on clear criteria and quantitative indicators. International standards such as the *Sphere Association, Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO)* and *Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment (MSNA)* offer universal benchmarks that can be adapted to specific contexts. At the same time, the field research conducted in Ukraine in 2022–2024 allows us to detail these indicators, taking into account the specifics of life in frontline and safer communities. Using the criteria of security, housing, access to water, social services, economic activity, and the level of dependence on humanitarian assistance, it is possible to determine which level of well-being a particular community belongs to. This creates the basis for targeted humanitarian interventions that meet the real needs of the population (Lough et al., 2023; REACH, 2024). The generalized criteria and indicators are presented in Table 2, which reflects the logic of assigning a community to the levels of life support, life organization or life realization.

Table 2. Criteria and indicators for assessing the state of the community by levels of well-being

Criterion	Level 1: Life-Sustenance	Level 2: Life Organization	Level 3: Self-Realization
Security situation	War zone ( $\leq 30$ km from the front), frequent shelling, terrorist attacks, environmental disasters	No shelling for $\geq 1$ month, high crime rate, outside the area of active hostilities	Stable territory, no hostilities and terrorist attacks, normal crime situation
Housing	$\geq 40\%$ of households without suitable housing or with critical damage	10-39% of households with damage that affects living conditions	$< 10\%$ of households in need of repair
Water and sanitation	$\geq 30\%$ without access to drinking water or sanitation	10-29% with interrupted or deteriorated infrastructure	$< 10\%$ have problems with access or quality
Access to services	$\geq 50\%$ without access to health, education or social services within 5 km	20-49% with limited or irregular access	$< 20\%$ have difficulties with access
Economic activity	$\geq 50\%$ of working age without work or income	20-49% without stable employment	$< 20\%$ of able-bodied without work
Dependence on humanitarian assistance	$\geq 60\%$ of households depend on assistance	20-59% partially dependent on assistance	$< 20\%$ depend on assistance

Source: created by the authors based on (Lough et al., 2023; REACH, 2024; Kuczabski et al., 2025)

Determining the level of community well-being should be based on a combination of quantitative indicators and qualitative characteristics. If a high percentage of households do not have access to housing, water, or services, the community is classified as being in a subsistence level. If basic needs are partially met, but access to services and economic stability remain limited, the community is at the stage of life organization. Only when there is stable security, restored infrastructure, and low dependence on humanitarian aid can the authors talk about the level of life realization. This approach makes it possible to adapt interventions to the real state of the community and ensure a logical transition from emergency assistance to sustainable development (Tol et al., 2023; Bangpan et al., 2024).

The basis of the study of humanitarian interventions is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of analysis aimed at identifying the dynamics

of social well-being in the context of hostilities. The concept of a multi-level approach to well-being considers the gradual movement from life support to life organization and life creation, which allows us to track the stages of social stabilization and community development. The analytical model is based on international humanitarian standards and open statistical sources (Sphere Association, 2018; OCHA, 2023; REACH, 2024; ILO, 2024), as well as the results of field research conducted in 2023–2024 in Ukraine. The indicators used – including access to housing, water, basic services, and economic activity – reflect the main parameters of the population’s well-being.

The quantitative part of the analysis is based on the method of normalized averaging of indicators, which allows comparing communities with different levels of access to basic resources and socio-economic opportunities. Primary data are obtained from open humanitarian sources – REACH (2024), OCHA (2023) and ILO Rapid Assessment (2024) – and grouped according to three levels of social well-being: life support ( $L_1$ ), life organization ( $L_2$ ) and life creation ( $L_3$ ). For each indicator ( $i$ ), the average normalized value was calculated using the formula:

$$x_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^n x_{ij}}{n}$$

– where  $x_{(ij)}$  are partial indicators for individual communities,  $n$  is the number of observations within a level.

After normalizing the values on a scale from 0 to 100%, *the dynamics of changes* between levels was calculated using the formula:

$$\Delta_i = X_{i(L_3)} - X_{i(L_1)}$$

– where  $\Delta_i$  reflects the difference in the average values of the indicator between the levels of life support ( $L_1$ ) and life creation ( $L_3$ ). The resulting percentage differences are interpreted as a relative change in the availability of a resource or social opportunity. This approach allowed us to identify typical ranges of indicators and demonstrate the patterns of transition of communities from vulnerability to sustainable development (Sphere Association, 2018; OCHA, 2023; REACH, 2024; ILO, 2024). The data presented in Table 3 are based on generalized primary indicators from these sources and demonstrate a typical range of values for the three levels of well-being, which allows us to trace the patterns of transition between them.

Table 3. Dynamics of community well-being indicators by three levels (based on normalized data from humanitarian assessments)

Well-being indicator	Level of life support (L <sub>1</sub> )	Level of life organization (L <sub>2</sub> )	Level of life creation (L <sub>3</sub> )	Δ (L <sub>3</sub> -L <sub>1</sub> ). pp.
Share of households without housing	42.35	23.18	7.84	-34.51
Lack of access to water and sanitation	38.46	26.87	13.31	-25.15
Dependence on humanitarian aid	63.71	37.25	16.82	-46.89
Unemployment rate among the able-bodied population	52.64	31.56	14.93	-37.71
Lack of access to social and medical services	55.28	33.19	12.49	-42.79
Accessibility of basic educational services	47.62	68.41	89.13	+41.51
Level of community participation in decision-making processes	24.73	46.28	71.82	+47.09
Index of social cohesion of the community	35.58	57.44	79.06	+43.48

Source: created by the authors on the basis of Sphere Association (2018), OCHA (2024), REACH MSNA (2024) (author's calculation)

According to the REACH (2024), more than 17.6 million people in Ukraine were in need of humanitarian assistance, of whom 45% were internally displaced persons. According to OCHA (2023), the level of access to basic services remained critically low in 38% of households in the frontline regions. At the same time, the employment rate among the working-age population did not exceed 52%, and more than 60% of citizens received at least one type of humanitarian support (ILO, 2024; United Nations, 2023). Such indicators confirm that the transition from the level of life support to life organization is the most critical for the resilience of communities, as it is at this stage that the balance between external assistance and internal development resources is formed.

The indicators calculated on the basis of normalized humanitarian assessments (Table 3) reflect the dynamics of key indicators of well-being in three dimensions: life support (L<sub>1</sub>), life organization (L<sub>2</sub>) and life creation (L<sub>3</sub>). There is a clear positive trend of improving conditions: the share of households without housing decreases from 42.35% at L<sub>1</sub> to 7.84% at L<sub>3</sub> (-34.51 percentage points), and the deficit of access to water and sanitation decreases by 25.15 percentage points. The most significant is the decrease in dependence on humanitarian aid – from 63.71% to 16.82% (-46.89 percentage points), which reflects the transition from passive consumption to independent livelihoods. In the sphere of economic activity, the unemployment rate decreases by more than three times (-37.71 percentage points),

and access to social and medical services increases from 44.72% to 87.51%. At the same time, the participation of citizens in decision-making processes (+47.09 p.p.) and the level of social cohesion (+43.48 p.p.) are increasing. Taken together, these trends demonstrate the effectiveness of a multi-level approach to humanitarian interventions, which ensures the gradual transformation of the community from a state of critical vulnerability to sustainable socio-economic development.

Humanitarian interventions should be built in stages, depending on the level of community well-being. At the initial stage of life support, the main task is to meet basic needs for survival: food, water, shelter and basic security. Then, in the life-organization phase, the focus shifts to restoring everyday life, integration into the community, and access to social and medical services. The final stage is life-realization, when the focus is on development, self-employment, and support for cultural and community initiatives. This gradual transition from emergency assistance to sustainable development is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Examples of humanitarian activities by level of well-being

Level of well-being	Main tasks	Examples of humanitarian activities
Level 1: Life support (0-6 months)	Physical survival, basic security, minimization of immediate risks	Provision of emergency shelter (tents, temporary shelters), emergency roof and window repairs; distribution of NFI kits (blankets, clothing, kitchen sets); delivery of drinking water, mobile sanitation units; food packages, food vouchers; multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA); crisis psychosocial support; safety information campaigns
Level 2. Life organization (from 6 months of age)	Organizing life, social integration, access to services	Major repairs of housing, social housing; long-term rental support (Cash for Rent); support of community centers and social services; educational programs and vocational training; work of mobile teams; organization of cultural and social events
Level 3: Life Realization	Development, self-employment, participation in community life	Support for microbusinesses and self-employment (grants, mentoring, training); professional retraining; development of social entrepreneurship and cooperatives; leadership programs and involvement in local governance; support for educational and cultural initiatives; creation of IDP councils

Source: created by the authors based on (Lough et al., 2023; REACH, 2024; Kuczabski et al., 2025; Im et al., 2025)

Systematization of examples of humanitarian activities allows us to build a response logic that ensures the transition from critical survival to sustainable community development. While physical survival is a priority at the life-sustaining

level, stability and integration are formed at the life-organizing stage, and conditions for economic growth and civic leadership are created at the life-realization level. Such a phased approach not only optimizes the use of resources but also minimizes the risks of dependence on humanitarian assistance, contributing to the formation of self-sufficient and resilient communities (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024; Im *et al.*, 2025).

The effectiveness of humanitarian interventions largely depends on the coherence of actions between different actors: international organizations, national institutions, local authorities and civil society initiatives. In times of crisis, there is often a duplication of efforts at certain levels of well-being, when several structures focus, for example, on the distribution of food packages, while other needs remain unaddressed. At the same time, the lack of systemic coordination leads to premature or irrelevant interventions, when resources are directed to program development in the absence of basic needs (Lough *et al.*, 2023). This not only reduces efficiency, but also creates a risk of losing public trust in humanitarian assistance.

One of the key challenges is *spatial imbalance*. In frontline communities, where more than 40% of households have lost their homes and more than 60% depend on humanitarian assistance, it is critical to concentrate resources on basic life support (REACH, 2024). At the same time, in safer communities where victims have moved, the need for stabilization measures such as integration into the educational system, access to healthcare and social services, and housing support is becoming acute. Donors or partners often duplicate essential programs in some communities and neglect the needs of others, lacking a single coordination mechanism. Another challenge is the *time lag in response*. Humanitarian organizations often do not take into account that needs change over time: from emergency survival (0-6 months) to long-term development programs. If there is a lack of systemic support at the stage of life organization – repairs, educational programs, job creation – the transition to self-realization becomes almost impossible. Research shows that uneven coverage of needs at different levels increases the risk of social fragmentation and marginalization of a part of the community (Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025). *Information asymmetry* is also an important obstacle. Organizations often lack up-to-date data on the needs in specific regions, which complicates planning and creates conditions for uncoordinated interventions. In the absence of a common database and common indicators, humanitarian actors work on “parallel tracks”, which reduces the overall effectiveness of the aid system (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024).

Thus, the challenges of coordinating humanitarian interventions cover three key dimensions: spatial (uneven distribution of resources between communities), temporal (imbalance between different phases of the crisis) and informational (lack of shared data and communication). To overcome these problems, it is necessary to create unified mechanisms for monitoring needs and transparent coordination between donors, government agencies and local communities. Only through systematic interaction can duplication of efforts be avoided and an effective gradual

transition from emergency assistance to sustainable development be ensured (Im *et al.*, 2025; Tol *et al.*, 2023).

The application of a multi-level approach in humanitarian interventions provides a strategic advantage, as it allows for a clear identification of the actual needs of the population depending on the stage of crisis and recovery. This structure minimizes the risks of premature or duplicative actions, directs resources to where they are most needed, and creates a logic for the transition from emergency assistance to sustainable community development. It not only increases the targeting of aid, but also forms the basis for the long-term resilience of communities affected by conflict or disaster (Lough *et al.*, 2023; REACH, 2024).

The strategic advantages of a multi-level approach are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Strategic advantages of applying a multilevel approach in humanitarian interventions

Strategic aspect	Benefits of a multilevel approach	Examples of implementation
Targeting of assistance	A clear delineation of needs by level allows avoiding inappropriate interventions and providing assistance in accordance with the community's situation	At the level of livelihoods – food parcels and shelter kits; at the level of life organization – rental support and educational programs
Optimization of resources	Avoiding duplication of efforts by different actors, directing resources to the most critical areas	Coordinated distribution between organizations: one provides shelter, the other provides water and sanitation
Gradual recovery	A logical transition from emergency response to long-term development creates a stable foundation for the community	First, providing security and basic needs, then housing repairs, access to services, and finally support for business and cultural initiatives
Community resilience	Reducing dependence on humanitarian aid, building self-sufficiency and potential for self-development	Microbusiness programs, social entrepreneurship, leadership initiatives and participation in local governance
Building trust and confidence	Transparency and consistency of interventions increase public trust in humanitarian actors	Phased implementation of commitments: from provision of basic needs to support for integration and development

Source: created by the authors based on (Lough *et al.*, 2023; REACH, 2024; Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025; Bangpan *et al.*, 2024; Im *et al.*, 2025)

The multi-level approach is not only a tool for effective coordination, but also a strategic mechanism for balancing short-term humanitarian response with long-term development. It ensures that basic needs are met first and foremost, and that communities are then supported to integrate and achieve self-realization. The result is not aid dependency, but a foundation for social resilience and economic self-sufficiency.

## Discussion

The findings confirmed that a multi-level approach to humanitarian interventions is an effective mechanism for combining emergency assistance with long-term community development. The three levels of well-being identified – life support, life organization and life realization – showed the logic of a gradual transition from survival to stability and self-realization. Other researchers have noted a similar sequence, emphasizing that focusing solely on physical survival creates dependence on assistance and does not create the basis for recovery (Lough *et al.*, 2023; Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025). At the same time, some authors point out the importance of including psychosocial support in parallel at the initial stages to avoid the long-term consequences of traumatic experiences (Vynnytska *et al.*, 2025; Ndlovu *et al.*, 2024). Contrasting the views of different scholars, the authors can distinguish two areas of discussion. The first group emphasizes the priority of meeting basic needs as a prerequisite for any integration (REACH, 2024; Lough *et al.*, 2023). The second emphasizes the need for integrated programs that simultaneously address social and psychological dimensions (Goodkind *et al.*, 2020; Im *et al.*, 2025). Our results are more in line with the second position, as it is impossible to achieve sustainable community stabilization without parallel work on psychosocial aspects.

Correlation analysis based on the normalized indicators of REACH (2024), OCHA (2023), ILO Rapid Assessment (2024) and UNDP Human Development Report (United Nations Development Programme, 2022) showed a stable positive correlation between the intensity of humanitarian interventions and the increase in the level of social well-being ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The highest correlation coefficients are observed between comprehensive social integration programs and the level of trust in the community ( $r = 0.68$ ), as well as between access to basic services and the level of social cohesion ( $r = 0.63$ ). In contrast, the lowest correlation was recorded between short-term material interventions and long-term indicators of economic stability ( $r = 0.29$ ). The results indicate that it is multilevel and integrated interventions – those that combine social, economic and psychological dimensions of support – that have the most sustainable effect, ensuring the gradual transformation of communities from external dependence to self-sufficiency and development.

The difference in coverage of coordination issues is also interesting. Some studies emphasize that the main barrier to scaling up programs is a lack of resources and duplication of efforts between actors (Troup *et al.*, 2021; Bangpan *et al.*, 2024). Others emphasize that the problem is not so much about resources as about information asymmetry and the lack of common planning mechanisms (Kuczabski *et al.*, 2025; Aweesha *et al.*, 2025). In our view, these factors are interrelated: even with funding, the lack of a unified monitoring system leads to spatial and temporal imbalances in aid. Comparing the results with international practices, it is worth noting that in a number of low- and middle-income countries, multi-level programs have shown a decrease in psychological distress among children and youth (Bangpan *et al.*, 2024; Papola *et al.*, 2024). Similar trends have been identified in Ukraine, where a multidimensional approach has allowed for the development of flexible indicators for assessing the state of communities. At the same time, studies by other authors emphasize that the adaptation of such programs to specific contexts requires consideration of cultural and local specifics to avoid mechanical transfer of interventions (Ubels *et al.*, 2025; De Luca & Lin, 2024).

Interpretation of the results suggests that humanitarian interventions based on a multi-level logic have the potential not only to minimize crisis consequences, but also to form the basis for the development of social capital and increase trust in communities (Larsen *et al.*, 2023; Schulder *et al.*, 2024). However, limitations should also be taken into account: the study results are based on generalized models and field assessments, which may not reflect the full range of local practices. In addition, the temporal dimension of transformations in communities requires long-term observation, which is currently lacking.

Thus, the results of our study are consistent with international findings on the need for a multi-level approach, but emphasize the importance of adapting it to the specifics of particular communities, especially in the context of military operations. Further research should focus on developing unified mechanisms for coordinating humanitarian actors, integrating quantitative and qualitative indicators into monitoring systems, and studying the long-term effects of such interventions on social well-being.

## Conclusion

This study has shown that a multi-level approach to humanitarian interventions is not only an effective mechanism for responding to crises, but also an important tool for building long-term community resilience. Firstly, it is shown that the logic of a gradual transition from life support to life realization avoids chronic dependence on aid and stimulates the development of social capital. Secondly, it is established that it is the combination of physical, social, psychological and cultural dimensions of well-being that allows building comprehensive programs that take into account different stages of recovery. Thirdly, the novelty of the

study was revealed in the systematization of humanitarian activities by levels of well-being, which made it possible to form a structured response logic suitable for practical application. Fourth, a comparison of the planned and obtained results showed that the proposed model was more flexible than expected, as it integrates both international standards and field data collected in war. Fifth, the possibility of using generalized criteria and indicators to assess the state of communities is of practical importance, which will facilitate targeting and transparency in planning interventions. Sixth, the study identified limitations, including a lack of up-to-date data in some communities, which made it difficult to test the model over time. Seventh, an important result was the confirmation of the role of psychosocial support as a key factor in stabilization, which should be implemented not only in the later but also in the initial stages of response. Eighth, a promising area for further research is the development of integrated mechanisms for coordinating humanitarian actors that take into account spatial and temporal differences in the needs of the population. Ninth, further research should focus on the long-term effects of intergenerational transmission of traumatic experiences and the possibilities of minimizing them through early interventions. Finally, further research should aim to develop innovative monitoring methods that combine quantitative and qualitative indicators to create a deeper understanding of the dynamics of social well-being in humanitarian crises.

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