Community Assessment Summary

Project Title: REHA Ukraine – Rehabilitation Support for War-Injured Individuals in Ukraine

Location: Lutsk, Volyn Region, Ukraine

Assessment Period: 2026–2029

Conducted by: Mariehamns Rotary Club in cooperation with Lutsk Volyn Pride Rotary Club, Municipal Enterprise Medical Center for Rehabilitation of Participants of Combat Actions Hostilities of Lutsk City Territorial Community and Communal Institution "HUB VETERAN"

Background

Since the escalation of conflict in Ukraine in 2022, thousands of civilians and military personnel have sustained severe injuries resulting in long-term physical and psychological disabilities. These injuries include complex fractures, amputations, spinal cord trauma, traumatic brain injuries, and stress-related disorders that require comprehensive and prolonged rehabilitation.

The scale and complexity of trauma cases have significantly increased the demand for multidisciplinary rehabilitation services. Patients often require long-term physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological support, assistive devices, and social reintegration programs. Early and intensive rehabilitation is critical to restoring mobility, independence, and quality of life, as well as preventing secondary complications.

Despite the extraordinary dedication and professionalism of Ukrainian medical staff, the national rehabilitation infrastructure has not kept pace with the growing need for post-trauma care. Many facilities operate with outdated or insufficient equipment, limited specialized devices, and constrained physical space. Access to advanced rehabilitation technologies remains uneven, particularly outside major urban centers.

In addition, healthcare providers face limited opportunities for advanced training in modern, evidence-based rehabilitation practices – especially in the areas of neurological recovery, amputee rehabilitation, and complex trauma care. As a result, therapy intensity and duration are often restricted, and waiting lists for services continue to grow.

The sustained pressure on the healthcare system underscores the urgent need to strengthen rehabilitation capacity through targeted investment in modern equipment, professional training, and integrated care models. Enhancing local rehabilitation services is essential not only for improving individual recovery outcomes but also for supporting long-term community resilience and social reintegration.

Methodology

The identification of community rehabilitation needs was based on a structured, collaborative, and multi-stage assessment process involving international and local partners, medical professionals, and beneficiaries.

1. Ongoing Professional Collaboration

Community needs were primarily identified through continuous collaboration between Mariehamns Rotary Club and Ukrainian medical professionals Dr. Oleksandr Solobchuk and Dr. Natalia Solobchuk.

This partnership enabled regular information exchange regarding:

- The evolving medical and rehabilitation needs of patients
- Current service capacity
- Equipment shortages
- Training gaps among rehabilitation staff

The long-term nature of this collaboration ensured that the assessment reflects real-time developments rather than one-time observations.

2. In-Person Consultations (2022–2023)

During 2022–2023, Dr. Oleksandr and Dr. Natalia Solobchuk visited Mariehamn in person.

These visits allowed for:

- Detailed presentations of the situation in Ukrainian rehabilitation facilities
- Structured discussions with Rotary representatives
- Clarification of priority needs
- Exploration of feasible support mechanisms

These consultations provided verified, first-hand professional insight into both urgent and systemic rehabilitation challenges.

3. Site Visit and Direct Observation (March 2025)

In March 2025, Monica von Frenckell conducted a preparatory site visit to Ukraine. During this visit:

- Direct observation of rehabilitation facilities was carried out
- Existing equipment was inspected

- Operational constraints were documented
- Identified needs were verified against actual facility conditions

This visit strengthened the reliability of the assessment by confirming previously reported gaps through on-site evaluation.

4. Local Consultations with Clinics and Patients

Additional needs assessment activities were conducted by the Lutsk Volyn Pride Rotary Club, which organized dialogues with:

- Clinic administrators
- Rehabilitation therapists
- Medical staff
- Patients and their families

These discussions focused on:

- Current rehabilitation tools and their limitations
- Gaps in service delivery
- Waiting times and patient flow
- Operational and logistical challenges

The inclusion of beneficiary perspectives ensured that the assessment reflects not only institutional capacity gaps but also patient-level barriers to effective rehabilitation.

Conclusion of Methodological Approach

The methodology combined:

- Long-term international partnership
- Professional medical expertise
- On-site verification
- Local stakeholder engagement

This multi-layered approach ensures that the identified needs are accurate, evidence-based, and grounded in both clinical practice and beneficiary experience.

Key Findings

1. Equipment Shortage

Existing rehabilitation centers lack sufficient access even to basic devices necessary for:

- Motor coordination training
- Strength recovery
- Gait and mobility assistance
- Balance rehabilitation
- Functional independence training

In many facilities, therapists must adapt treatment plans due to equipment scarcity. Some devices are outdated, worn out, or shared among a large number of patients, limiting therapy intensity and frequency. This significantly reduces the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs and slows patient recovery.

2. Local Capacity Exists

Despite infrastructure challenges, Ukraine has re-established local production of rehabilitation equipment. This development creates an important opportunity:

- Procurement can be more cost-efficient
- Delivery times are shorter
- Maintenance and servicing are locally accessible
- Sustainability of the intervention is strengthened

Supporting locally produced equipment not only addresses immediate rehabilitation needs but also contributes to economic resilience and long-term system sustainability.

3. Professional Expertise

Local clinicians, physiotherapists, and rehabilitation specialists demonstrate high professional competence and strong commitment to patient recovery. However, their capacity to deliver optimal care is limited by:

- Lack of appropriate rehabilitation tools
- Insufficient patient diagnostics and monitoring devices
- Limited access to advanced therapeutic technologies

As a result, clinical expertise is underutilized, and evidence-based rehabilitation protocols cannot be fully implemented.

4. Urgent and Growing Demand

The volume of injured civilians and military personnel continues to place sustained pressure on rehabilitation services. Regardless of how the conflict evolves, long-term

rehabilitation demand is expected to increase due to:

- Delayed complications of trauma
- Complex amputations and neurological injuries
- Psychological and psychosomatic conditions
- The need for reintegration into civilian life

Under-resourced facilities risk becoming overwhelmed without targeted intervention.

5. Rehabilitation Gaps

Recovery outcomes are currently hindered by several systemic limitations:

- Outdated or insufficient equipment
- Lack of standardized individual progress tracking systems
- Limited use of digital diagnostics and outcome measurement tools
- Restricted access to services in rural and geographically distant areas

These gaps reduce continuity of care and make it difficult to monitor patient progress effectively.

6. Educational Need

There is an acute need for structured knowledge exchange and professional education for rehabilitation staff. In particular, collaboration with international partners - especially Finnish rehabilitation specialists - is highly valued. Priority areas for educational support include:

- Evidence-based neurological rehabilitation
- Advanced prosthetic and amputee rehabilitation techniques
- Modern assessment and outcome tracking methods
- Multidisciplinary rehabilitation models

Strengthening educational partnerships will enhance long-term capacity, improve treatment standards, and ensure sustainable impact beyond equipment procurement.

The assessment confirms that while professional commitment and local production capacity exist, rehabilitation services remain critically constrained by equipment shortages, limited training opportunities, and growing patient demand. Addressing these interconnected gaps is essential to improve recovery outcomes and strengthen long-term rehabilitation capacity.

Community Involvement

REHA Ukraine is a medical rehabilitation initiative fully dedicated to restoring physical function and mental capabilities in individuals injured as a result of war. The project aligns with the Rotary Area of Focus: Disease Prevention and Treatment, and all planned activities and funding are strictly allocated to medical rehabilitation services, equipment procurement, and professional training directly related to patient recovery.

Community involvement is fundamental to the design, implementation, and sustainability of this project.

Drs. Oleksandr and Natalia Solobchuk have taken a leading role in identifying both individual patient needs and broader institutional rehabilitation gaps. Through daily clinical practice with war-injured patients, they have:

- Assessed the most urgent neurological and musculoskeletal rehabilitation needs
- Identified shortages in essential rehabilitation equipment
- Evaluated operational constraints affecting therapy intensity and outcomes
- Contributed to defining clear and measurable clinical objectives

Their leadership ensures that the project directly responds to real patient treatment needs rather than theoretical assumptions.

The medical team developed a prioritized list of essential rehabilitation equipment based on daily hands-on experience. The selection specifically supports:

- Neurological recovery (post-trauma and post-surgical cases)
- Musculoskeletal rehabilitation
- Motor coordination and strength restoration
- Structured physical therapy for trauma-related injuries

This prioritization guarantees that all procured equipment will be immediately integrated into treatment protocols and directly contribute to restoring patient mobility and function.

Local rehabilitation professionals have formally committed to:

- Proper operation and long-term maintenance of all equipment
- Integration of new tools into structured physical therapy programs
- Monitoring patient recovery using basic clinical indicators
- Participating in transparent outcome reporting

This ensures accountability, measurable impact, and sustainability of the intervention.

The project plan includes structured training sessions to strengthen professional capacity and ensure high-quality rehabilitation care. Training activities will focus on:

- Effective use of newly procured equipment
- Evidence-based neurological and trauma rehabilitation methods
- Standardized monitoring of patient progress

Post-grant continuation will be managed locally by the cooperating clinic in partnership with the Lutsk Volyn Pride Rotary Club. They will oversee:

- Equipment supervision and maintenance
- Continued professional development
- Outcome tracking and reporting
- Integration of rehabilitation services into long-term local healthcare delivery

Conclusion

Community involvement in REHA Ukraine reflects strong medical leadership, professional accountability, and Rotary partnership. The project is locally driven, clinically grounded, and fully aligned with the Disease Prevention and Treatment focus area. Through active participation of medical professionals and Rotary partners, the initiative ensures sustainable, measurable improvements in rehabilitation services for war-injured patients.