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Food in Emergencies: The organisation of food provision for Ukrainian refugees living in Norway from a human rights perspective

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## Abstract

**Background:** The right to food is fundamental, ensuring individuals and communities have access to sufficient, adequate food that meets their dietary needs. Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 forced millions of Ukrainians to seek refuge in various countries, including Norway. Providing shelter and enough food to the Ukrainian's seeking refuge in Norway posed challenges putting their rights, including the right to food, at potential risk...

**Objective:** To analyse the organisation of food provision for Ukrainian refugees living in Norway from a human rights perspective

**Method:** We used a qualitative research design, conducting eight in-depth interviews with representatives of public authorities and organisations involved in assisting refugees. Participants were selected using purposeful and snowball sampling methods. We used thematic analysis to analyse the data.

**Result:** The findings revealed that the different organisations strived to protect the right to food. Interpretations varied, with some emphasising basic nutritional access and others recognising food's cultural and psychological significance in maintaining dignity and identity. Two primary models were involved in food provision: a centralised model, in which refugees received prepared meals at no cost, and a decentralised model, in which financial allowances were provided for self-prepared meals. The main challenges included logistical constraints, cultural adaptation issues, and limited financial and material resources, impacting food availability and satisfaction. Finally, the collaboration was characterised by partial, ad hoc partnerships among organisations, with limited information-sharing and coordination, though some successful collaborations were noted with local municipalities and businesses.

**Conclusion:** The overall results showed that the Norwegian government and assisting organisations responded adequately to the sudden influx of Ukrainian refugees, emphasizing the role of NGOs and public-private organisations in upholding refugees' rights to food. We recommend enhanced collaboration, benchmarking and pre-emptive planning for similar humanitarian situations to strengthen future responses.

**Keywords:** Food aid, Right to food, Food security, Ukrainian refugees, Humanitarian assistance.

## Sammendrag

**Bakgrunn:** Retten til mat er grunnleggende og sikrer at individer og lokalsamfunn har tilgang til tilstrekkelig og passende mat som dekker deres ernæringsbehov. Russlands invasjon av Ukraina i februar 2022 tvang millioner av ukrainere til å søke beskyttelse i ulike land, inkludert Norge. Å tilby et sted å bo i og tilstrekkelig mat til ukrainerne som søker beskyttelse i Norge, skapte utfordringer som satte deres rettigheter, inkludert retten til mat, i potensiell fare.

**Formål:** Målet med studie er å analysere organiseringen av matforsyning for ukrainske flyktninger i Norge fra et menneskerettighetsperspektiv.

**Metode:** Et kvalitativt forskningsdesign ble benyttet, med åtte dybdeintervjuer gjennomført blant representanter for offentlige myndigheter og organisasjoner som bistår flyktninger. Deltakerne ble valgt ut gjennom strategisk og snøballutvalg. Dataene ble analysert ved hjelp av tematisk analyse.

**Resultat:** Funnene indikerte at de ulike organisasjonene forsøkte å ivareta retten til mat. Tolkningene varierte; noen la vekt på grunnleggende ernæringstilgang, mens andre anerkjente matens kulturelle og psykologiske betydning for å opprettholde verdighet og identitet. Matforsyningen innebar to hovedmodeller: en sentralisert modell der flyktningene mottok ferdiglagde måltider uten kostnad, og en desentralisert modell der økonomisk støtte ble gitt for selvforberedte måltider. De største utfordringene inkluderte logistiske begrensninger, kulturelle tilpasningsspørsmål og begrensede økonomiske og materielle ressurser, som påvirket mattilgjengelighet og tilfredshet. Samarbeidet var preget av delvise, ad hoc-partnerskap mellom organisasjoner, med begrenset informasjonsdeling og koordinering, selv om noen vellykkede samarbeid ble notert med lokale kommuner og bedrifter.

**Konklusjon:** De samlede resultatene viste at den norske regjeringen og bistandsorganisasjonene reagerte adekvat på den uforutsiktbare tilstrømmingen av ukrainske flyktninger, og understreket betydningen av NGO-er og offentlig-private organisasjoner for å ivareta flyktningenes rett til mat. Økt samarbeid, benchmarking og forutseende planlegging for lignende humanitære situasjoner anbefales for å styrke fremtidige responser. **Nøkkelord:** Mathjelp, retten til mat, matsikkerhet, ukrainske flyktninger, humanitær bistand.

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## List of Abbreviations

APP - Application

EU - European Union

FAC - Food Assistance Committee

FAO - Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations

HRBA - Human Rights-based Approach

IK-MAT - Internkontroll Mat

ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

NGO - Non-Governmental Organisation

NSD - Norwegian Centre for Research Data

OCHA - United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OECD - Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OHCHR - Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

SAR - Search and Rescue

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals

SDOH - Social Determinants of Health

UDI - The Directorate of Immigration

UN - United Nations

UNDP - United Nation Development Programme

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees



## 1.0 Introduction

Over the past decades, there has been a significant increase in the global population of forcibly displaced individuals, reaching a record high of approximately 70.8 million in 2008, up from 43.3 million (UNHCR, 2019). Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in a significant displacement crisis, displacing nearly six million Ukrainians.

As of March 2024, data compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) revealed a total of approximately 6,486,000 Ukrainian refugees worldwide, with 5,982,900 recorded within Europe (of which 70,085 were within Norway) and 503,100 recorded beyond the borders of Europe. This migration to Norway and other countries of refuge was a consequence of the extensive damage to civilian infrastructure and the significant number of casualties. A considerable portion of the Ukrainian population abandoned their residences and property in search of safety, protection, and aid (UNHCR, 2024).

Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that over 80% of refugees face food insecurity irrespective of the economic context of the host country (Nisbet et al., 2022). This issue could be attributed to the inadequate protection of refugee rights, which could be a result of competing priorities in security situations (UNHCR, 2001). One such right is the right to food, and this happens when state responsibilities and accountabilities are unclear, leaving the refugees in a vulnerable situation with unrealised rights (OHCHR, 2018).

According to the UNHCR, a refugee is someone unwilling or unable to return to their country of origin due to a legitimate fear of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, or affiliation with a specific social or political group (UNHCR, 2010).

Several situations jeopardize an individual's right to food, affecting both the ability of individuals to exercise their rights and the capacity of the state to ensure this right for their citizens (UNHCR, 2001). Humanitarian emergencies, commonly caused by wars, natural disasters, or political unrest, usually result in massive displacement, destruction and suffering of the affected people (UNHCR, 2001).

Due to this massive destruction of homes and a breakdown in the health system and supplies of food and water, human rights appear to be adversely affected. These times

of war will almost certainly impair the rights of vulnerable children, women, minority groups and refugees (EU Council, 2023).

Despite all of this, human rights still apply, and even in times of war, we should protect vulnerable populations (EU Council, 2023). Human rights aim to protect all individuals, being grounded in the principle of respect for life, well-being, and the individual's dignity (OHCHR, 2011).

To ensure adequate nutrition for every human, including refugees, the UN has resolved to have 'human rights to adequate food'. These rights ensure that people have access to adequate nutrient-rich food, which is essential for protecting individuals' safety, health, and well-being.

The 'right to adequate food' is realised when all individuals in a community alone or a group have physical and economic access to adequate food or means for its procurement at all times (Damman et al., 2008). Adequate food can be defined as the availability of sufficient quality food that satisfies an individual's dietary needs and is culturally acceptable (Damman et al., 2008). When the right to adequate food is not realised, this leaves individuals vulnerable to food insecurity and starvation (Damman et al., 2008).

Food insecurity is a complex issue involving policies in social and cultural contexts, which, if left unchecked, can lead to malnutrition, which is the leading cause of death and illness worldwide (The Independent Expert Group, 2021). Food security can be defined as the capacity of individuals, households, and communities to reliably access suitable and nutritious food through socially acceptable means (Henjum, Morseth, et al., 2019).

This definition stresses that food is a need that goes beyond being a bare nutritional necessity. It also personalises food according to individual preferences. Food security is realised with the universal right to food. The right to adequate food is one of the universal human rights, meant to be for the enjoyment of every human being (UN, Art 25, 1948).

In the bid to address the nutritional needs of vulnerable populations like refugees, who are unable to secure their own basic needs, humanitarian efforts are geared toward the provision of Food Aid which, constitutes a fundamental aspect of their work. Food

Aid consists of various interventions aimed at strengthening food security among the recipients (Koppenberg et al., 2023).

Food aid can be defined as a measure by which humanitarian organisations provide food in the form of tangible food items, food vouchers or cash transfers without expectation of repayment of any form. It may range from the direct distribution of food supplies to the provision of financial assistance including the associated costs of food provision like transport and storage (FAC, 2022).

In essence, food aid serves as a strategic intervention to alleviate food insecurity and mitigate the adverse effects of nutritional deficiencies among populations facing humanitarian emergencies. Food aid creates an opportunity for continuous access to food, which is an essential need to function and thrive. However, the absence or lack thereof has detrimental effects on physical and mental health outcomes, as well as the well-being of the affected (Black et al., 2013; Pourmotabbed et al., 2020; Victora et al., 2008).

Despite food aid being available to the refugees, refugees remain susceptible to food insecurity, inadequate food intake, and malnutrition post-migration, irrespective of the economic status of the host country (Khuri et al., 2022). The definition extends to the absence of concern or worries regarding the availability of sufficient food for oneself and one's family in the near future (Terragni et al., 2018).

With a growing number of humanitarian emergencies over the decades, the world has seen an increasing need for humanitarian services (OCHA, 2023). Humanitarian emergencies, commonly caused by wars, natural disasters, or political unrest, usually result in massive displacement and suffering of the affected people (UNHCR, 2007; UNHCR, 2001).

Humanitarian emergencies are neither short-lived nor isolated, necessitating closer collaboration among humanitarian actors to establish context-specific goals for reducing need and enhancing the prospects of the affected individuals in attaining Sustainable Development Goals. This entails collaborations with the government and other relevant actors to identify common objectives, clarify roles, strengthen social protection measures, and promote sustainable solutions for refugees. (OCHA, 2016).

It's commonly acknowledged that proper coordination between actors is a necessity for providing an efficient response. The humanitarian system involves numerous actors, and this multitude of actors shows that there's a widespread willingness to contribute to aid and should ensure a great capacity to meet the needs of vulnerable populations. However, with each actor having their agendas, principles and strategies, there is an ongoing risk of fragmentation within the humanitarian system (OECD, 2019).

Failing communication can cause either gaps or duplication of services. Unclear leadership and responsibilities compromise coordination and weaken accountability towards both beneficiaries and donors. All these factors ultimately lead to an insufficient response to emergencies (OCHA, 2005).

Some studies have suggested positive results for efforts to improve partnerships between NGOs and governmental fylkeskommuner in Norway (Haugstad, 2011). Despite this collaboration, there appears to be minimal evidence of direct collaboration between the Norwegian NGOs, with little public confrontation observed between them related to environmental work. However, disagreements could be discussed in more formal channels (Hermansen et al., 2017).

Lastly, a study on the impact of inter-organisation collaboration following a landslide in Gjerdim Norway, highlighted the importance of collaborative efforts and how a lack of it, attributed to diverse factors, leading to delayed and insufficient results. (Steen et al., 2024).

Recent asylum trends in Norway show that the number of asylum seekers hit a high point in 2015/2016 when the Syrian and Afghan refugees arrived (UDI, 2016), after which the number decreased gradually and again rose in 2021 when the Ukrainian refugees arrived in Norway (UDI, 2021).

The decrease was due to the restrictive asylum policies; for example, in times of extraordinarily high numbers, asylum seekers from the borders with other Nordic countries would be refused entry into Norway, especially those with no visa and a high possibility of their application being denied following individual consideration. In addition, the policies showed a reduction in the appeal period if an asylum application was rejected from three weeks to one week. Moreover, a family reunion application could be dismissed if the family can safely live in another country (Parveen, 2020).

The asylum system in Norway was established in 1987, with the first reception centre starting in Trondheim. One year later, UDI was set up to handle all matters concerning the asylum process, from processing and deciding on the different cases to running the housing where the asylum seekers reside (Terragni et al., 2018).

UDI run the reception centre through contracts awarded based on public tender. The contracts contained requirements that the UDI specified on the Circulars they issued, which apply to all the organisations applying for the contract (Heidi, 2014). The organisations UDI works with include, public and private actors, such as NGOs, municipalities and commercial actors who are the majority (Vevstad, 2007). This shows that there are both non-profit and profit actors involved in the running of the reception centres.

Reception centres are geographically located all over Norway and are of different types according to their function and the characteristics of the asylum seekers. These include transit reception centres, ordinary reception centres, and specialised reception centres (Heidi, 2014). The transit or initial reception centres are centres where the asylum seekers first reside for screening to identify special needs individuals like torture victims (Vevstad, 2007).

After being screened, the asylum seekers move on to the ordinary reception or special centres. Most move on to the ordinary centres (Heidi, 2014). There are two types of ordinary reception centres, which include the centralised reception centre and the decentralised reception centre (Terragni et al., 2018).

The centralised reception centre is usually a campus that houses a mix of families and single individuals, whereas the decentralised centres are either flats or houses that accommodate individuals (Vevstad, 2007). Finally, the special centres are centres for people with special needs. They may include unaccompanied minors, individuals with health conditions that need special attention, like mental health, and many other vulnerable individuals requiring special attention (Heidi, 2014).

In cases of rejected asylum applications and it was unsafe for individuals to return to their home countries, these asylum seekers were given a place to stay at a reception centre with low standards and allowed to come in and out of the centre freely. In addition, these individuals are no longer recognised by the government as asylum

seekers and so receive less favourable conditions, like fewer monthly allowances (Vevstad, 2007).

## 1.1 The Aim of the Study

This study aims to analyse the organisation of food provision for Ukrainian refugees living in Norway from a human rights perspective. This includes understanding the experience with food provision among the relevant actors and exploring their understanding of human rights and how human rights are incorporated into the organisations' work. The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is the guiding framework for addressing the questions.

### 1.1.1 Objectives

- To investigate the organisation of food provision to Ukrainian refugees.
- To explore the challenges and obstacles to food provision to Ukrainian refugees.
- To have an insight into the collaboration and coordination between the different actors
- To explore how food as a human right is considered and incorporated into the work of actors dealing with food provision to the Ukrainian refugees in Norway.

## 2.0 A summary of relevant literature on food security and collaboration between actors in Norway

Refugees worldwide tend to suffer from food insecurity, irrespective of the economic status of their host country (Khuri et al., 2022). Still, they retain the right to adequate food, of which food security is a prerequisite, despite their situation in a humanitarian crisis. Therefore, it is legally binding on host countries like Norway to ensure regular, permanent, and free access to a sufficient quality and quantity of food for refugees within their borders that is socially acceptable to the refugees (OHCHR, 2010). Moreover, this imperative persists even in situations of high influx of refugees, such as what happened when Russia invaded Ukraine.

### 2.1 Food Security among Refugees in Norway

A systematic review examining refugees' dietary intake and nutritional status worldwide found that food insecurity affected 39% to 100% of participant groups (Khuri et al., 2022). Notably, none of the studies were conducted in Norway, nor did they include Ukrainian refugees. Interestingly, Norway has formally committed to protecting the right to adequate food and health (Henjum, Caswell, et al., 2019), yet according to one study conducted at eight reception centres, 93% of asylum seekers and refugees suffered from food insecurity, just like elsewhere (Henjum, Morseth, et al., 2019).

This finding is so because the same problems impacting food security in those other countries can be found in Norway. For example, another study conducted at five Norwegian reception centres found that food provided to asylum seekers and refugees was often of low nutritional value and variety, there were inadequate kitchen facilities for them to prepare their food, and it was too difficult to buy food given their limited means and long distances to shops (Terragni et al., 2018).

According to Henjum, Morseth, et al. (2019), 30% of participants had previously had their asylum applications rejected, meaning that their monthly allowances from the government had been reduced by 60 euros (from 250 to 190 euros). Then, 71% reported inadequate funds to buy food, thus explaining why one of the factors associated with food insecurity was a reduction in the monthly budget by 100 euros.

Another factor associated with food insecurity was the male gender because men were less skilled at preparing and economising food than women and less likely to live with

children. Having children meant a higher monthly allowance and was also independently associated with lower odds of food insecurity. Higher education achievement was also a significant factor. However, the authors did not explain why. Surprisingly, it was not associated with better employment and higher income among the participants, as in previous studies. (Henjum, Morseth, et al., 2019)

Another Norwegian study, conducted among the same population as Henjum, Caswell, et al. (2019), focused on dietary diversity measured using the dietary diversity score. This qualitative tool uses the number of food groups consumed to indicate access to various foods and nutrient adequacy. Considering the preceding 24-hour period, they counted the number of food groups consumed out of ten. The consumption of at least five groups was considered adequate.

Sixty per cent of participants consumed an inadequate number of food groups (Henjum, Caswell, et al., 2019), likely corresponding to malnutrition among participants. Khuri et al. (2022) reported that inadequate and unvaried food intake was also typical for refugees in other countries. For instance, most refugees did not get adequate fibre and micronutrients except for sodium, which was too high. This poor dietary intake, in turn, leads to double-burden malnutrition, i.e., over and undernutrition. For instance, adult overweight and obesity prevalence ranged from 9.1 to 65%, and childhood underweight prevalence from 12 to 14%. This malnutrition was then associated with a higher risk of non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus and cancer. (Khuri et al., 2022)

## 2.2 Food Security for Ukrainian asylum seekers and refugees in Norway

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, nearly 80,000 Ukrainian forcibly displaced people have applied for asylum, temporary protection, or similar schemes in Norway (UNHCR, 2024). This number is a giant leap from only 1,656 applications by forcibly displaced people from all nations in the country in 2021, the year preceding the invasion (Statista, 2024).

Expectedly, Norway's resources would be strained to the point of disintegration of its response to the Ukrainian refugees. However, in a report on the initial response to Ukrainian refugees in Norway, practically all Ukrainian refugees were satisfied with their treatment in Norway (Hernes et al., 2022).



For instance, considering their welcome by the Norwegian public, Ukrainians awarded, on average, 4.5 out of 5 points on a scale ranging from least satisfied (1) to very satisfied (5). Then, when asked about their experiences at reception centres, where conditions are generally more precarious, they awarded an average of 3.8 points on the same scale. (Hernes et al., 2022)

As noted earlier, refugees within and outside Norway are faced with incredible challenges that compromise the attainment of their right to adequate food. Nevertheless, the above evaluations indicate a significant departure from the results of earlier studies. This departure could be explained by the better situation of the more recent Ukrainian refugees, which is based on factors that have been determined as key in determining food security. For example, most adult Ukrainian refugees were women (79%), and half of all adult refugees had children with them (Hernes et al., 2022).

As determined earlier, the female gender and having children are associated with food security (Henjum, Morseth, et al., 2019). Also, Ukrainian refugees had achieved higher levels of education, with 65% having completed higher education compared to 35% of preceding predominantly non-Ukrainian refugees (Henjum, Morseth, et al., 2019; Hernes et al., 2022). However, the Ukrainian refugees suffered similar challenges related to poor acculturation due to the language barrier, whereby only 11% were fluent English speakers, and an additional 30% reported basic English language proficiency (Hernes et al., 2022).

### 2.3 Collaboration and Coordination between actors providing aid in crises.

Food provision to Ukrainian refugees in Norway involves several actors from government and non-governmental organisations, making the endeavour rather complex (Hernes et al., 2022). Therefore, collaboration and coordination of these actors' activities are necessary for efficient aid delivery. Moreover, the importance of this collaboration was well illustrated by a case study of the Norwegian Search And Rescue (SAR) system's response to the landslide in Gjerdrum in 2020 (Steen et al., 2024).

Steen et al., (2024) triangulated data from official reports and semi-structured interviews to determine the system's viability. The analysis showed that collaboration

and communication were instrumental to the system's resilience by aiding adaptability and strategic decision-making throughout the response by complex systems involving the municipality, police, fire brigades, and healthcare. Similarly, communication and collaboration are expected to be crucial in responding to the unprecedented influx of Ukrainian refugees.

A report indicated that the Ukrainian refugees generally expressed satisfaction during the first phase. However, experiences varied across different reception centres. Some refugees reported not receiving financial assistance during the initial months until they registered, which led to difficulty purchasing enough food and other necessities. Nevertheless, certain refugees received food assistance, among other necessities, through the efforts of volunteers and NGOs (Hernes et al., 2022).

A report by FAFO en undersøkelse av det norske matutdelingstilbudet studied the cooperation characteristics between the actors providing food aid and the interaction between the public service organisations and the food banks in Norway. The study focused specifically on distributing food parcels (bags of groceries), excluding ready-made meals or cash vouchers and involved a range of actors from national non-profit organisations to local initiatives (Fløtten et al., 2023)

Some of the elements that stood out from the report from FAFO 2023 were that Non-profit and voluntary actors offer numerous services to the disadvantaged in Norwegian communities, highlighting the significance of cooperation between the public and voluntary sectors in preventing poverty and social exclusion. In addition, volunteering plays a pivotal role in the evolution of Norwegian welfare society by facilitating the early detection of social needs and the development of responsive interventions.

Moreover, while the government holds the overall financial responsibility for reception centres, daily operations are managed by NGOs, municipalities, and private commercial actors through contracts awarded via public tenders. Finally, within the Norwegian welfare state, a public obligation exists to contribute to the well-being of the population and ensure basic economic and social security for the citizens.

These findings underscored the importance of collaboration and information sharing among Stakeholders. Non-profit organisations serve as essential intermediaries for government agencies, aiding in identifying needs among vulnerable populations such as refugees and asylum seekers. By adopting and implementing best practices

observed in these organisations, it is possible to enhance the delivery of services tailored to the needs of vulnerable individuals (Fløtten et al., 2023).

Various initiatives have been established to support public and voluntary efforts in developing services for children and young people (Fløtten et al., 2023). However, despite these initiatives, a study revealed that 4% of asylum-seeking children experienced food insecurity and hunger, with 20% of the affected individuals belonging to families (Henjum, Morseth, et al., 2019).

Moreover, municipalities have developed volunteering policies to establish a good framework for cooperation between the municipality and the voluntary actors, aiming to facilitate the contribution of volunteers to the local community. This research emphasises the need for collaboration in coordinating food provision to refugees and asylum seekers, advocating for responsible agencies to develop policies that foster effective cooperation, thereby ensuring the fulfilment of the right to food for every refugee and asylum seeker.

## 3.0 Theoretical Perspective

### 3.1 Introduction

The theoretical foundation for this study draws from the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), which is rooted in the principles of universal human rights and the legal, social and ethical obligations that states hold to protect, respect, and fulfil the fundamental rights of individuals (Yeshanew, 2014). Specifically, this framework views food provision for refugees through the lens of the Right to Adequate Food for all individuals (as part of the broader human rights discourse). It also incorporates aspects of human dignity, state accountability, and collaborative governance, which are crucial for ensuring that food provision respects the rights of refugees.

The theoretical framework for this perspective builds on the HRBA with critical public health perspectives, including social determinants of health, social justice and equity, to offer a comprehensive lens for understanding and analysing the provision of food aid to the Ukrainian refugees in Norway. These perspectives draw attention to the importance of addressing systemic barriers in the provision of food, ensuring that food is not just a matter of humanitarian aid but also a right and a health determinant that has to be secure with equitable access.

### 3.2 Duty-bearers and Right-holders

The HRBA underscores the right to adequate food as a fundamental human right, obligating states and humanitarian organisations to uphold and protect food access for refugees. This approach highlights several principles central to food security, such as participation, state accountability, and collaborative governance (Yeshanew, 2014). Refugees are regarded as rights holders, while states and humanitarian actors are duty bearers responsible for ensuring culturally appropriate, nutritious, and sustainable food provision.

**Right to Adequate Food:** Defined by the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the right to adequate food mandates that food systems support access to culturally suitable, nutritious, and sufficient food. HRBA advocates for active refugee participation in decision-making related to food provision, empowering refugees to advocate for culturally relevant dietary options and respecting their health and nutritional needs (Sanni, 2024; Yeshanew, 2014).

**State Accountability and Legal Obligations:** Under the HRBA, state accountability is a core element. States are legally obliged to protect and fulfil the right to food, even during humanitarian crises. This includes ensuring that refugees can access adequate food and that restrictive asylum policies or inadequate support systems do not compromise their rights. In Norway, restrictive laws and policies have sometimes hindered this right, limiting refugees' access to services and exacerbating food insecurity. A rights-based approach calls for policy reforms that enhance access to essential services and address the vulnerabilities of refugee populations (Borgrevink & Sandvik, 2022; Rabe & Haddeland, 2023).

**Participation and Empowerment:** The HRBA emphasises the importance of refugees' active involvement in the planning and delivering of food aid, ensuring that they are not passive recipients but contributors to their food security solutions (Schöttker, 2023).

### 3.3 Food Security in Refugee Populations

FAO defines food security as consistent access to sufficient and nutritious food. For refugees, this is a complex issue influenced by displacement, lack of employment, and limited resources. Refugees often rely on humanitarian food aid, which must be designed to address both immediate and long-term needs (Schöttker, 2023).

**Challenges to Food Security:** Refugees face nutritional deficits due to insufficient or inappropriate food aid that fails to meet cultural and dietary needs. Studies on food security among refugees in Norway show that despite assistance, many still face food insecurity due to their marginalised status (Kamelkova et al., 2023).

### 3.4 Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) in Food Provision

The SDOH framework complements the HRBA by focusing on how social, economic, and environmental factors shape health outcomes, with particular implications for food security. According to WHO, health outcomes are largely determined by factors such as income, employment, education, housing, and social inclusion – all of which significantly impact food security (Marmot et al., 2008). Refugees' access to food is influenced by housing, economic stability, and access to social services, which intersect with their ability to maintain health and meet nutritional needs.

**Economic Stability and Housing:** Refugees often face barriers due to unemployment, inadequate housing, and restricted access to resources, which all influence food security. Poor living conditions in shelters or temporary accommodations often lack

adequate cooking facilities, preventing them from adequately storing or preparing food and creating additional nutritional challenges (Henjum, Caswell, et al., 2019; Lidén, 2021).

**Access to Social Services:** Access to healthcare, employment, and social integration resources is vital to improving food security for refugees. For Ukrainian refugees in Norway, a lack of social support exacerbates food insecurity, underlining the role of HRBA in advocating for comprehensive support systems to address the SDOH as they relate to health and well-being (Rosenow-Williams & Behmer, 2015). Restricted access to healthcare services, often due to legal and administrative barriers, compounds the vulnerability of refugees, especially those suffering from food-related health issues such as malnutrition or chronic diseases. Addressing food insecurity also requires ensuring access to comprehensive social services (Schöttker, 2023).

### 3.5 Social Justice and Equity in Food Provision

A social justice perspective ensures that refugees' unique vulnerabilities – such as trauma, displacement, and cultural differences – are taken into account when organising food provision (Lidén, 2021). Social justice and equity concepts extend the HRBA by emphasising fair access to food and resources. From a social justice perspective, all individuals are entitled to equitable resource distribution, especially those in vulnerable situations, such as refugees. Equity differs from equality by recognising and addressing refugee populations' unique needs and challenges, aiming to rectify power imbalances that limit their access to food and other essentials.

**Equitable and Culturally Appropriate Food:** Social justice in food provision ensures that aid respects refugees' dietary preferences and cultural backgrounds. Culturally inappropriate food can negatively impact nutrition and increase feelings of social isolation (Damman et al., 2008). Addressing these nuances aligns with the HRBA's commitment to dignity and respect in humanitarian assistance.

**Addressing Power Imbalances and Barriers to Participation:** A social justice lens recognises and seeks to mitigate the power disparities that prevent refugees from asserting their food rights, often due to legal, language, or economic limitations. By incorporating a rights-based and social justice-oriented approach, food provision programs can empower refugees to take an active role in decisions about their food

and health (Rabe & Haddeland, 2023). This approach empowers refugees and aligns with the HRBA principles of participation and empowerment.

Using an intersectional lens, the perspectives highlighted above recognise the diverse experiences of refugees based on gender, age, health status, and legal context. It ensures that food aid programs account for and address the varying degrees of disadvantage different refugee groups face. Furthermore, the HRBA and SDOH frameworks align with the SDGs, particularly Goal 2: Zero Hunger and Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities. Through equitable, rights-based food provision, humanitarian efforts can contribute to the long-term goals of reducing hunger and improving the quality of life for refugees in a sustainable, dignified manner (UN, 2015).

## 4.0 Methods

### 4.1 Study Design

This study utilised a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is inherently suited for exploring complex social phenomena, as it focuses on the lived experiences of individuals within natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Unlike quantitative methods that prioritise measurement and generalisation, qualitative research is guided by interpretive and theoretical frameworks that support an in-depth understanding of human experiences and the social contexts that shape them (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Given the study's objective to understand food provision within the unique context of refugee support, a qualitative approach was particularly relevant as it provided the flexibility needed to uncover insights in a context-sensitive way that might not emerge through quantitative measures alone (Patton, 2015). Peel (2020) emphasises that qualitative research, especially in applied settings, facilitates rigorous and systematic inquiry into practice, allowing researchers to understand the context and implications of organisational decisions (Peel, 2020).

This approach aligns with Austin and Sutton's (2014) assertion that qualitative research is essential for fields like healthcare, where understanding participant attitudes, beliefs, and social dynamics is crucial (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Moreover, qualitative research in this study allowed an examination of the systematic and emergent challenges that organisations face in fulfilling their mandate to align food aid with human rights standards (Jacobsen, 2015).

### 4.2 Study Population

The study focused on the different organisations that provided aid (in particular food aid) and also, on the organisations that made regulations and/or policies that affected the provision of aid to the Ukrainian refugees living in Norway. Participants included a variety of organisations involved in food provision, ranging from government agencies and hospitality service providers to public and private organisations and charitable institutions actively distributing food to refugees. Including diverse organisational perspectives aligns with Patton's (2015) emphasis on heterogeneity in qualitative sampling, which enhances the ability to explore a range of experiences and understand multifaceted issues (Patton, 2015).



## 4.3 Recruitment and Sampling

### 4.3.1 Recruitment and Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling strategy was used, targeting participants directly involved in food provision for Ukrainian refugees living in Norway. Purposive sampling is adequate in qualitative research for accessing information-rich cases that offer detailed insights into the study's phenomenon (Patton, 2015). This was supplemented with snowball sampling, whereby initial participants referred additional contacts, enhancing the sample's diversity and helping access specialised organisations and smaller NGOs that may be overlooked (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

To begin recruitment, the study utilised the UDI website to identify relevant reception centres and food provision organisations. Targeted online searches further identified relevant NGOs in food distribution to Ukrainian refugees. Snowball sampling helped to ensure that diverse types of organisations and roles within the food provision system were represented, aligning with Peel's (2020) focus on systematic sampling in applied educational research to build a comprehensive understanding of practices and challenges in complex systems (Peel, 2020).

### 4.3.2 Selection Criteria

Participants were selected based on direct involvement in food provision, with roles ranging from food procurement and policy development to logistics and distribution. Exclusion criteria included organisations whose primary focus was non-food provision and those involved in activities unrelated to food or nutrition for refugees (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). This selection strategy aligns with Peel's (2020) guidance on refining research scope to maintain clarity and depth in case-study-focused qualitative research (Peel, 2020).

### 4.3.3 Participant Engagement and Ethical Considerations.

Upon initial contact, each potential participant received a study information sheet outlining the research objectives, emphasising confidentiality, and detailing their rights, including the option to withdraw at any point. Written informed consent was obtained before conducting interviews. To accommodate participants, interviews were scheduled at their convenience, whether in person or via online platforms.

#### 4.3.4 Sample Composition

The final sample comprised eight participants, representing different types of organisations: Reception centre employees (n=2), NGO representatives specifically focused on food provision (n=2), Humanitarian organisation staff (n=3), Government officials responsible for food provision coordination (n=1) This diverse sample was chosen to facilitate a comprehensive exploration of the operational realities, challenges, and strategic objectives of organisations dealing with food provision in Norway, reflecting Peel's (2020) emphasis on multi-perspective sampling for holistic qualitative insights (Peel, 2020).

### 4.4 Data Collection

#### 4.4.1 Interview

Data collection involved conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with key participants and a total of eight interviews were conducted.

#### 4.4.2 Interview Guide

The interview guide was designed based on the human rights-based approach (HRBA), which provided a structured framework for developing questions that aligned with the study's focus on human rights in food provision (See Appendix D). The guide was refined following a pilot test and peer review by colleagues and the research supervisor, ensuring clarity and relevance to the research objectives. The HRBA framework ensured that interview questions addressed operational aspects and probed food provision practices' ethical and human rights implications (UNDP, 2006). Some aspects addressed include participation, non-discrimination, accountability, and empowerment.

The guide was improved after undergoing a pilot test and receiving feedback from colleagues and the research supervisor, which helped ensure its clarity and alignment with the research goals. According to Peel (2020), pilot testing is crucial in clarifying questions and addressing contextual nuances, strengthening the study's methodological integrity (Peel, 2020).

Specific questions exemplify how HRBA principles were embedded within the guide:

### ***Participation and Empowerment***

To explore how refugees participate in food aid programs, questions such as *“Is your target group in any way participating in the planning process of activities, and if so, in which ways?”* were included. This question aligns with the HRBA principle of participation, as it seeks to understand if and how refugees are involved in decision-making processes that directly impact them.

Another question—*“Could you describe if your organisation has any activities that aim to develop the capacities of the target group better to claim their right(s) to food?”*—reflects the HRBA's emphasis on empowerment as it investigates whether organisations support refugees in advocating for their rights.

### ***Non-Discrimination***

To assess inclusivity and equity in food provision, questions such as *“What steps are being taken to ensure that the provision of food-related aid is not discriminatory in its aim, design, conduct, and analysis?”* were asked. This query exemplifies the HRBA principle of non-discrimination by probing organisations' measures to prevent biased practices based on nationality, gender, or other factors.

### ***Accountability and Transparency***

Accountability was examined with questions like *“Which channels do your target group have for communicating their satisfaction and possible dissatisfaction? How are they informed about this?”* Such questions investigate the mechanisms for refugees to voice feedback and highlight the organisation's responsibility to ensure transparent communication and responsiveness.

#### **4.4.3 Data Recording and Ethical Management**

The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility, enabling the researcher to pursue emergent topics and clarify unexpected themes during interviews. Interviews were conducted with minimal interruptions, allowing participants to share insights freely, which aligns with Cohen and Crabtree's (2006) recommendation for participant-centred interview settings.

Each interview was conducted in a setting conducive to participant comfort, whether online or in person, with ethical guidelines strictly adhered to ensure confidentiality and participant autonomy. Interviews were recorded (with consent) using the Nettskjema-

Diktafon app, which facilitated high-quality transcription and allowed for thorough data management. Depending on the participant's availability and level of engagement, the interviews ranged in duration from 35 minutes to over an hour.

#### 4.5 Analysis

The study employed thematic analysis for data interpretation. This analytic approach is flexible and well-suited for a qualitative design where identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns in qualitative data, particularly in studies where understanding the underlying meanings in participant narratives and social actions, is important (Braun, 2016).

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe thematic analysis as a structured six-step process: familiarisation with data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach aligns with Peel's (2020) systematic inquiry framework, which emphasises stepwise processes in thematic analysis for clarity and coherence in qualitative research.

Peel (2020) also emphasises the value of thematic analysis in applied settings, as it enables researchers to derive meaning from complex qualitative data by identifying and synthesising patterns relevant to practical outcomes. The thematic analysis approach was selected for its flexibility and depth, allowing themes to emerge from the data while enabling a structured, transparent analysis. Reflexivity, a core aspect of thematic analysis, was maintained throughout, ensuring that the researcher's perspectives and potential biases were actively considered during theme development (Finlay, 2021).

NVIVO software was employed to facilitate systematic coding, organisation, and data management, helping to enhance the analysis's rigour and coherence. Adhering to established quality criteria in qualitative research, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, further strengthened the findings' trustworthiness. The final themes reflected both explicit and latent meanings in the data, offering a nuanced understanding of the food provision system for the Ukrainian refugees in Norway. This approach is consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2022) recommendations for maintaining methodological coherence and rigour in thematic analysis.

#### 4.5.1 Phases of Thematic Analysis

The thematic analysis began with an immersive familiarisation phase, during which each interview transcript was read multiple times to absorb the overall meaning of participants' narratives. This step made it possible to note the recurring patterns and initial ideas, laying a foundation for coding. During this stage, themes like logistical challenges and the cultural significance of food emerged as relevant to food provision's operational and ethical aspects.

With a firm grasp of the data, initial codes were generated, which involved labelling significant sections of text with descriptive tags, and through NVIVO, these codes were systematically categorised and organised. For example, segments that discussed food service types were labelled as "centralised and decentralised models," references to cultural preferences were labelled as "cultural relevance," and notes on community support as "local partnerships."

By the end of this phase, a comprehensive set of codes was developed, which provided a framework to explore the broader patterns in the data. Notably, there were entries related to the organisation of food assistance, challenges in food provision, collaboration among organisations, and human rights and food as a right.

The next phase involved grouping these codes into broader themes. NVIVO's visualisation tools, such as mind maps, helped to identify clusters of related codes. For example, codes related to food service models and funding responsibilities aligned under the theme organisation of food assistance. This grouping process helped solidify several preliminary themes, providing the structural basis for the thematic analysis.

The next step involved reviewing and refining the themes to ensure they accurately represented the participants' perspectives. During this step each theme was assessed to ensure it was clear and distinct. Cases with similar themes were merged, such as coordination and resource allocation, for coherence. In addition, parts of the data, particularly under human rights and food as a right, were recoded to capture additional segments related to culture.

Once the themes were fully developed, each was defined and named to capture its essence. NVIVO's memo function made it possible to write short descriptions for each theme, ensuring that the boundaries and focus of each theme were well-defined. Quotes that best illustrated each theme's main points were selected. For instance, the

organisation of food assistance encompassed the various models and responsibilities within food provision. At the same time, human rights and food as a right highlighted the importance of food as a source of dignity and cultural continuity.

Finally, the themes were compiled into a narrative report.

#### 4.5.2 Emergent themes

The thematic analysis resulted in several key themes, each reflecting different aspects of food provision for Ukrainian refugees living in Norway. Each theme reflected the different organisations' operational, cultural, and ethical considerations in this humanitarian effort. The themes that emerged are as follows:

The first theme, "Response to the Emergency," captures the initial mobilisation and setup efforts undertaken by organisations to handle the influx of Ukrainian refugees. Participants described the challenges and rapid adaptations necessary to scale operations effectively under time constraints. This theme highlights the complexity of the emergency response and the flexibility required to provide essential services on short notice.

The second theme, Organisation of Food Provision, examines the structures and methods used by various organizations to deliver food. This theme includes centralised approaches (where prepared meals are provided) and decentralised approaches (where refugees receive financial aid to prepare meals). The theme also highlights the roles of governmental bodies, alongside other organisations that form the food assistance network.

The theme Right to Food, emphasises the importance of food as more than just physical sustenance. Food was seen as a fundamental right for the organisations involved, tied to cultural identity and psychological well-being. This theme reflects how these organisations perceived their responsibilities, extending beyond mere nutrition to ensure the dignity and cultural needs of refugees were met.

The fourth theme, Challenges Faced by Organisations in Food Provision, looks into the supply chain issues, resource constraints, and operational difficulties organisations encountered, particularly in maintaining a steady food supply and adapting to the refugees' dietary needs. This theme underscores the limitations and obstacles faced

in managing resources, especially when adapting food provisions to meet the refugees' diverse cultural and nutritional needs.

Finally, the theme Comparative Treatment of Ukrainian Refugees and Other Refugee Groups explored the perceptions of equity and fairness in treating Ukrainian refugees compared to other groups. This theme brings forward ethical considerations and societal pressures that arise within the humanitarian response framework, revealing participants' reflections on differential treatment among refugee groups.

The final themes reflected both explicit and latent meanings in the data, offering a nuanced understanding of the food aid system for Ukrainian refugees in Norway. This approach is consistent with Braun and Clarke's (2022) recommendations for maintaining methodological coherence and rigour in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

#### 4.6 Research Ethics

Before data collection, ethical approval was obtained from Sikt, the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education and Research (See Appendix A). Participants received detailed information about the study's purpose, their rights, and data protection measures, aligning with ethical best practices for transparency and informed consent (World Medical Association, 2013). Peel (2020) underscores the importance of rigorous ethical protocols in applied research to protect participants' rights and privacy, ensuring that all data collected was anonymised and securely stored according to Sikt's guidelines.

# 5.0 Results Chapter

## 5.1 Introduction

This section presents the qualitative findings obtained. The findings are organised according to key themes and patterns that emerged during the analysis process. These themes reflect the participants' diverse perspectives and experiences regarding the food provision organisation. Additionally, relevant quotations from participant responses are provided to illustrate and support the identified themes, highlighting the logistical and ethical dimensions encountered in Norway's humanitarian response to Ukrainian refugees.

### 5.1.1 Characteristics of the Sample Interviewed

PARTICIPANT CODE	GENDER	Position	ORGANISATION TYPE
Interview 01	Female	Organisation Adviser	Non-profit Organisation
Interview 02	Female	Senior Adviser	Government Agency
Interview 03	Female	Senior Welfare Worker	Charitable Organisation
Interview 04	Female	Head Kitchen Staff	Reception Centre
Interview 05	Male	Kitchen Staff	Reception Centre
Interview 06	Female	Area Worker	Food provision Organisation
Interview 07	Female	Refugee Reception Centre Leader	Politically Independent Organisation
Interview 08	Male	Operations Manager	Private Organisation

**Table 1:** Individual Interviews: Participant Code, Gender, Position, and Organisation Type



Table 1 describes the characteristics of the study informants. Eight key informants, six females and two males, participated in the individual interviews. One informant was from a government agency, while the others represented a range of public and private organisations. Although these organisations varied in structure and role, they shared a unified objective: to provide essential services and assistance to the Ukrainian refugees who fled to Norway.

The government agency primarily handled administrative duties, including visa applications, work permits, and all kinds of applications for a permit in Norway. They also protected individuals and groups according to the law, the Geneva Convention on refugees and general protection.

Most organisations provided temporary housing for the refugees or asylum seekers within Norway through services contracted by the Norwegian government. Some operated under two main models: a centralised model where food and housing facilities were provided for the refugees and a decentralised model where housing facilities were equipped with kitchens and refugees were required to prepare their food.

A few of the organisations also provided services by providing food to different organisations and to other vulnerable individuals facing issues such as substance abusers. These organisations had different operating models in the way they rendered services. One had several branches across the country in different cities and regions of Norway, with each branch having autonomy in its operations.

Whereas the other organisation used a more central system and had several branches across the country in areas where it delivered food. These branches included canteens and reception centres.

## 5.2 The Response to the Emergency

### 5.2.1 The immediate response from the Norwegian government

During the interview, many of the informants explained that the surge of Ukrainian refugees surprised the Norwegian authorities and the refugee system. As they described, after Europe began implementing barriers in 2015 to restrict the flow of refugees, many refugee camps in Norway were demobilised. This, coupled with the

low number of asylum seekers before February 2022, meant that the Norwegian authorities were unprepared for the sudden influx of Ukrainian refugees.

The existing system lacked sufficient camps and procedures to manage the large number of arrivals. The first three months were marked by what participants described as a "challenging and chaotic" phase, requiring rapid adaptation across the organisations and coordination between various governmental bodies and municipalities to address the situation effectively.

*It was extremely hectic for the different government agencies because before and up to February 2022, we had received a very low number of asylum seekers. We were absolutely at the bottom. We had very few camps. We had little to do with the municipalities, and we did not have a system for receiving this amount of people that came directly from the war. (Interview 02)*

This swift mobilisation period also highlighted Norway's capacity for flexibility within its existing humanitarian infrastructure. However, the strain on available resources exposed apparent vulnerabilities, as organisations were forced to balance the rapid scale-up with limited preparation. The Norwegian authorities' reliance on existing networks of civil defence and NGOs underscored the benefits of leveraging pre-established connections but also revealed a gap in crisis-ready, scalable infrastructure.

In response to the Russian invasion, Norway deviated from the standard practice under the Geneva Convention of granting individual protection, opting to implement the EU's approach of granting collective protection to the Ukrainian refugees, which lasted one year. This decision was made based on political grounds and aimed to expedite the settlement process while providing financial and social support.

Ukrainian refugees received automatic protection upon registration with the police, bypassing individual asylum interviews and case processing. Norway's approach differed from that of other European countries because it quickly integrated Ukrainian refugees into municipalities and offered relatively high support for integration.

*The Norwegian government decided that we would copy the European solution. There are some small varieties of how Ukrainians are received in different European countries. For instance, in Norway, we say that they will be settled in*

*a municipality as soon as possible. Then they will get this integration support... (Interview 02)*

*It will be extended for them, but they are not given protection on an individual basis. They are given protection because of the war in Ukraine. So, when the war is over, they will have their permit withdrawn and will have to ask for individual protection, as all other asylum seekers do, according to the Refugee Convention. (Interview 02)*

The Norwegian government contacted multiple organisations for urgent capacity building to shelter the incoming refugees, as the existing infrastructure was inadequate. Initially, the Norwegian Civilian Defence (Civil Forsvaret), a government-run, military-style organisation, was mobilised to manage the situation alongside the government.

They are typically called upon in emergencies such as natural disasters or refugee crises. However, due to capacity issues, the government sent out requests to help manage the influx of refugees through a tender process to procure and collaborate with private, governmental, public and charitable organisations to manage the reception centres.

The short notice created significant challenges for many organisations. Many had either closed down or reduced operations due to decreased refugee numbers and the restricted flow of refugees within Europe. Despite these challenges, organisations leveraged their networks, re-engaged former employees, placed advertisements, and employed various recruitment strategies. Within days to weeks, most organisations swiftly and effectively mobilised a workforce and responded sufficiently to the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

*It's interesting, you ask, because what happened was that this was in March 2022, and the government sent out an invitation to all their possible service providers and asked them to come up with offers—anything they could. So, this request from the government came on a Friday afternoon, around 4 o'clock, and they wanted offers on their table by Monday at the latest. (Interview 08)*

In addition, some organisations worked closely with the hotels hosting the refugees, maintaining strong communication with the municipalities and the government,

creating an effective partnership that facilitated the smooth operation of the reception centre. Furthermore, the hotels that served as the reception centres had prior experience hosting refugees, which made them more suitable for accommodating people in crisis.

*We are not running the camps. We are using a tender agreement to get to the camps. So, the camps are not run by the government agency. We collaborate with Tenders. We are buying the camps by using tender procedures. Yes, public, private, and NGOs. Yes, Tenders are according to Norwegian law—the law of offer to house government. (Interview 02)*

*We get a sum of money per person. Yes. It is a fixed sum, but I cannot remember it now. But there is a sum per day. Per person. Which goes to food, rent, and electricity. The whole package. (Interview 04)*

### 5.2.2 Collaboration among the Agencies

Given the high, unexpected influx of refugees and the limited preparation time, one might have expected extensive collaboration among organisations. Surprisingly, however, the overall collaboration rate between different organisations was relatively low. Still, there were exceptions, such as the government agency, which actively partnered with other organisations to enhance the services provided to refugees.

For instance, they worked with banks to streamline the process of opening accounts, reducing the timeline from a lengthy 4–6 weeks to something more manageable. Additionally, they collaborated with local municipalities, which manage buildings and inhabitants, ensuring that reception camps were approved and ready more efficiently.

*Of course, we had discussions with the banking team because of the problems of giving them bank accounts and cards. We cooperated with the police when it came to registration procedures. We cooperated with the municipalities because the municipalities are as responsible for those living in the camps as they are for all other inhabitants in their municipality. (Interview 02)*

In addition, the government's collaboration with the local municipalities facilitated aid distribution, such as financial support to the Ukrainian refugees living outside of the formal reception camps. This collaboration ensured that all refugees received the necessary assistance regardless of their living arrangements.'

*... The Ukrainians who came in the first phase stayed in private homes, and they did not receive any money. We came up with a solution that they should be allowed to stay in private homes if the municipality accepted. The government agency then gives money to the municipality so they can give it further to the Ukrainian people. (Interview 02)*

Some organisations also leveraged pre-existing relationships to facilitate rapid response initiatives. One organisation, for instance, collaborated with a Chain store to address a shortage of baby food, exemplifying how critical relationships with private entities can enhance resource availability during crises. Although not widespread, this kind of cooperation illustrated the value of ongoing relationships in providing targeted aid.

*We have cooperated with this chain store before.... They called and said, "Is there anything we need?" And we said, "Well, because this was just like a day in or a second day or something, we are not still organised." So we were like, "Well, it would be nice to buy some activity supplies. It would be nice to provide stuff for the small babies and children." And they were like, OK, so they provided what we said we needed [like baby food]. (Interview 07)*

In addition to the inadequate collaborative efforts, there was little to no information-sharing among the different organisations. Some viewed each other as competitors, which may have contributed to the low level of cooperation. However, some organisations shared best practices and information within their own different reception centres to improve the quality and efficiency of their services. One informant noted that it would have been highly beneficial if more organisations had shared information with one another, as some reception centres were well-managed while others struggled.

*We are competitors in some way. There was a platform for service providers called the "driftoperatureen" forum. The service providers were sort of in contact with each other, not necessarily in competition but for information on different matters that concern all of the service providers for the government. (Interview 08)*

*We do not have a system in place for sharing good practices. But I think that those running the camps, if they are a company that has more than one camp, they will share good practices from one of their camps with another. They could*

*also be better at this because we see that some of the camps run very nicely, while others do not. So, we see room for improvement when it comes to sharing good practices and qualifications. (Interview 02)*

### 5.3 Organisation of Food Provision.

Food provision refers to the process of supplying food to target populations or individuals to meet their nutritional needs and ensure food security. It encompasses various activities involved in sourcing, preparing, distributing, and serving food to target populations.

The large influx of refugees overwhelmed the available reception centres, which were insufficient to accommodate the sudden increase in numbers. While some refugees chose to stay with family and friends already residing in Norway, and others opted for independent living arrangements, most lacked immediate accommodation options.

In response, the Norwegian government allocated substantial resources to address these urgent needs. Emergency reception centres were quickly established, including using repurposed hotels and existing camps.

Food provision at some of the emergency reception centres was initially managed by the Norwegian Armed Forces (Norske Forsvaret). However, through tender agreements, the government recruited NGOs, public and private organisations to run the reception centres, which took over managing food provision, replacing the Norwegian Armed Forces, and managing the repurposed hotels.

This shift to NGOs, private and public organisations allowed for the needs and preferences of the Ukrainian refugees to be better met. The organisations set the daily meal price per person in the Tender agreement. This price was relatively the same across the country, and meals were prepared according to it.

Given that most of the organisations used the repurposed hotels as reception centres, many of the food provision activities were already managed by the hotels themselves. Leveraging their existing infrastructure, the hotels had established networks for supply, preparation, distribution, and service points.

Organisations that managed these types of reception centres primarily communicated the specific food requirements, meal schedules, and quantities needed to the hotels

and allowed them to fulfil these requests accordingly. They provided meals to the refugees who stayed there, typically in a centrally organised “restaurant-like” manner.

The other newly recruited organisations had two distinct approaches to accommodate the refugees' diverse living arrangements and dietary needs. The two primary systems included a centralised model and a decentralised model. The centralised model, implemented in specific camps, provided refugees with four daily meals — breakfast, lunch, dinner, and an evening meal — at no cost, as mandated by the government.

In addition, the organisations that ran a centralised model and did not use repurposed hotel reception centres and so, had external suppliers who met their needs. They had agreements with distributors specialised in food provision services. The distributor would procure the meals and process them while following the safety guidelines that “The Norwegian Safety Authorities” set.

They then would deliver ready-to-eat meals or ingredients for meal preparation, with the former being the more prevalent option. In both cases, the distributor provided detailed instructions on proper storage, cooking/warming procedures and serving protocols.

*So, I ensure that all the raw materials are here, and then a lot of it is heated here at the canteen and sent out to the distribution. “...” Then it is the internal food safety control routines (IK-mat rutiner) on-site that have to take care of it. Then I am no longer responsible... (Interview 06)*

Furthermore, the different organisations that run the centralised model carefully managed the way food was distributed within the camps which was essential to ensure all refugees received adequate portions. For example, specific quantities of items, like cottage cheese or apples, were allocated per person to avoid shortages.

In addition, leftovers were reused for future meals, emphasising sustainability and minimising waste. Most of the organisations had special considerations for vulnerable groups, like the children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, who were always served first and arrangements were in place for those who needed to leave the centre early, ensuring they received food to take with them.

Finally, the different organisations running the centralised model had menus that they adapted to respect cultural preferences, such as eliminating pork to accommodate

Muslim dietary restrictions and modifying spicy dishes to better suit the refugees' tastes. For instance, traditional Ukrainian borscht was added to the menu to offer familiarity and comfort, and Norwegian dishes like "Mexican gryte," which were found to be too spicy, were removed.

*...So, it was like, what do you like to eat? Would you like something else? Yes. Then they came down with lots of suggestions. Yes. And so, it can be implemented. Here is my suggestion. What do you think about it? Or you? Yes. Yes, it is very old. So, we started a bit with dishes from the menu, and then we changed a bit along the way... (Interview 04)*

Meanwhile, the decentralised model, in contrast, allowed refugees to buy and prepare their meals, offering them greater autonomy and a sense of normalcy in their daily routines. With the decentralised Model, the housing situations varied, with some refugees living in accommodations like scattered apartments while others resided in centralised buildings with shared kitchen facilities.

*When they participate in the tender, those who want to run a camp tell us whether they will provide food or not. If they are to provide meals, they must provide four meals daily. (Interview 02)*

A few organisations played a critical role in supporting food provision during this time. They received surplus food from over 200 businesses; however, they did not provide food directly to the refugees but distributed it to organisations serving needy people. This meant that the Ukrainian refugees who felt or feared not having enough food could come to these organisations and get food at no cost.

They had signed agreements with major chains such as wholesalers (Grossist), distributors, and packing companies, and not with individual supermarkets or hotels. Notable examples included the biggest producers of food in Norway. Additionally, they recently partnered with a baking company supplying many Norwegian supermarkets with bread and other baked goods.

*We have over I think 200 businesses that deliver food to us, and then we get the food into the organisation, and then we have organisations coming to the various branches and picking up the food so that they can use it in their services to people that have a difficult time. That could either be that they hand out the*



*food in food bags, or that they use the food to cook and that they serve meals to people. (Interview 01)*

These different suppliers would provide the organisation with 'surplus/leftover' food that might be out of season, have labelling or packaging issues, be close to expiration, or have passed 'the best-before date'. While still safe for consumption, these items couldn't be sold in markets due to the various reasons mentioned above. Therefore, rather than discarding them, the food gets repurposed and is used to reach other vulnerable communities like the refugees.

*...We receive leftover food from the food industry that would otherwise be thrown away but that is still possible to eat but that, for several reasons, can't be sold. Then we get the food here, and then we have organisations come here and pick up the food so that they can use it in their services to people who have a difficult time... (Interview 01)*

The frequency of food deliveries varied depending on the agreements with suppliers, ranging from twice a week to twice a month. The quantity and type of surplus/leftover food received by each organisation also varied from region to region, leading to sporadic and somewhat unpredictable food acquisition patterns.

## 5.4 Right to Food

### 5.4.1 Guidelines for Food Provision

Whilst the authorities did not explicitly provide guidelines regarding how various organisations should provide food for the refugees, one requirement stipulated that these organisations had to provide a minimum of four meals per day to the refugees, including at least one hot meal, following the National nutrition guidelines. These meals typically comprised breakfast, lunch, dinner, and an evening meal (Kveldsmat).

*The authorities have regulations that the Ukrainians should be provided with four meals each day, one of which should be a warm meal. In most of the centres that we have, they have warm lunch and warm dinner, and they could make a Package of food if they wanted to have something for the evening meal. So, of course, in addition, there was always breakfast initially in some of the centres. (Interview 08)*

*Its four meals. Yeah. But they, of course, are: from seven in the morning to ten is breakfast, then from twelve to two is lunch, then from four to six is dinner, and then from seven to ten is the late-night snack. (Interview 03)*

In addition, the organisations were mandated to follow the rules and regulations on food handling and food safety provided by the food safety authorities known as the Norwegian Food Safety Authority (Mattilsynet). This regulatory body oversees food safety to safeguard the health of plants, fish, animals, and humans. It monitors the entire food supply chain, from farms and fishing boats to processing facilities, importing agencies, retailers, restaurants, and food service organisations, ensuring compliance with safety regulations from production to consumption.

*All these organisations that handle food must also follow all the rules and regulations about food safety. So that's something we try to make kind of sure and kind of follow up on. (Interview 01)*

Furthermore, the various organisations had their own set of internal rules and regulations governing the provision of food to the refugees. These guidelines were essential for ensuring compliance with health regulations, upholding hygiene standards, minimising food wastage, promoting fairness in food distribution fairness, and preserving the overall dining experience.

*No food is allowed outside the cafeteria, and there are some rules about which school children should eat first. They start at the quarter before 12, and then the rest, the adults, start at 12. So, there are some rules. However, some refugees want to participate and help. They are helping us by serving because we are serving all the way. They are not allowed to go and take it by themselves. (Interview 03)*

#### 5.4.2 Organisational Interpretations of the Right to Food

The different organisations considered the fundamental right to food for all refugees. However, each organisation exhibited varied understandings and interpretations of what the right to food meant to them, which shaped their approaches to food provision for refugees. Some organisations viewed the right to food primarily as ensuring access to basic nutritional needs, emphasising the provision of meals and food resources.

*The right to food is considered, let's just go by practice. If they stay in a camp where they have food, they will see that they will get food (four meals a day). And if they do not, they will be informed that you have to buy food for the money that you receive two times a month. (Interview 02)*

*Of course, we have the right to eat. It's one of our rights that should be respected. And they try their best. Why? They get breakfast, they get lunch at 11:45 or quarter to midday. They get dinner at 5, then evening snack around 8.30. So, meals are four times a day. So here, when they are here, they really enjoy life. Food, we are just talking about food. (Interview 05)*

Other organisations perceived the right to food as extending beyond a bare nutritional necessity, recognising its cultural and identity-related significance. This diverse understanding influenced the types of food provided, meal schedules, and engagement with the refugee community. This was also reflected in their approach to meeting the needs of the refugees.

*Food is very necessary for everybody and it's very basic. We all need, you know, we have a slogan that's soap, soup, and salvation. Yeah. It's this charitable organisation's slogan. So, food is very important for us. And food is very important for people in many ways. Of course, it's getting what we need inside, but it's also culture. It's remembering who you are, where you are from, what my mom made. You know? It's very important. (Interview 03)*

Finally, a few of the organisations fulfilled the refugees' right to food through food provision while simultaneously addressing food waste, thereby contributing to the fulfilment of the SDGs.

*It means that all people have the right to food and be able to feed themselves and their families. And that this is a basic need that everyone has the right to. The way we're thinking about it, too, is that we kind of “what we would say in Norway”, like, slå to fluer i en smekk (kill two birds with one stone). “...” Reduce food waste, save the food, and that food comes in handy to someone who needs the food.... (Interview 01)*

### 5.4.3 Human Rights Instrument

Although the various organisations could not explicitly identify the human rights instruments guiding their operations. It was evident that all the organisation's actions implicitly reflected the principles encompassed in these instruments. For instance, mechanisms were in place to prevent discrimination among refugees, ensuring equal access to food provision regardless of factors such as ethnicity, religion, or gender. Additionally, organisational policies demonstrated that the needs of the vulnerable populations were prioritised, acknowledging their unique circumstances, and providing tailored support to meet their requirements.

*Yes, the elderly come first. They do that at the same time. Because the school children come here and eat from quarter past to half past. "...” And then there are also those who are older, or in wheelchairs, crutches, whatever. They get into that too. So that they can be allowed to find their food before the queue that runs from the reception and here starts to arrive..... (Interview 04)*

*Yes, that's more or less the bottom of all that we do. It's that the refugees are provided safety and food, individual freedom and integrity. (Interview 02)*

### 5.4.4 Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback is pivotal in ensuring the effectiveness and responsiveness of services provided to the refugees. This section examines the various feedback channels that the different organisations used and their impact on food provision.

The refugees in the camps run by the various organisations had access to several feedback channels to express their opinions, concerns and suggestions. These included regular meetings organised by the organisations, informal conversations with camp staff, volunteers or organisational representatives, written feedback through suggestion boxes or emails, and finally, periodic surveys and assessments conducted by the organisations or camp management. These various channels for feedback allowed the refugees to provide feedback on their experiences and preferences. Communications about food and to the kitchen were immediately passed on to the kitchen staff.

*We had a bulletin board. They would write thank you notes and letters and hang them up. During information meetings, representatives would come up and express their gratitude. And they were very happy with the activities we provided, especially for the children. (Interview 07)*

*There is a reception there, and very many come to the reception and talk with them if they have something to say. But there are also meetings every week, and everybody can participate in them if they want. And there, we have a lot of information and also a conversation about if there are things they want to talk about. Yeah. And there are also weekly meetings where you communicate with the people there. (Interview 03)*

The feedback collected through these channels had a tangible impact on food provision and other services within the reception camp. Most organisations developed and adjusted menus through feedback, which was important because the refugees were able to communicate their food preferences, dietary requirements, and cultural considerations.

*For example, there was a lot of rice at this hotel and much pasta. And they said, when we asked them, is there anything we can do better or different? And they said, we like potatoes, Soups boiled for a long time with like meat and stuff. So that's the feedback that we gave to the hotel, and they were, oh, really? Okay, no problem. We'll make less rice, for example. Yeah. So those sorts of things were handled... (Interview 07)*

*We have discovered what they like, yes. And I think that to enjoy themselves, they must also have good food. Yes. It doesn't just help if we smile and say hello; they must look forward to the food we have; it's very important to them. (Interview 04)*

In addition, most organisations were able to improve their services through the complaints or concerns raised by the residents. Finally, the feedback on the demand for food and other resources guided the resource allocation decisions, ensuring that supplies adequately met the refugees' needs.

In addition to the feedback, most organisations conducted internal evaluations and underwent inspections from the Norwegian Food and Safety Authority. These

measures aimed to ensure quality control, food safety and hygiene, efficiency, effectiveness, and compliance with the set regulations.

*Mattilsynet Sometimes, they also come and visit and see. They have to check if everything is in order. The one in charge of the kitchen also does internal inspections. She does routine inspections to see that everything is under good control. And if there is anything not controlled, then, of course, she has to report it to the director. (Interview 05)*

Moreover, the internal evaluation measured customer satisfaction with the food and served as a valuable feedback mechanism to identify areas for improvement. This process contributed to the overall effectiveness and success of the food provided to the Ukrainian refugees.

*But we realised that a lot of the food was wasted. Something was not right here. "...” We need to create a group where they can join and say what food they like. We can't throw that much away. So then we made such a group. At most, there were perhaps twelve people. There were quite a few different dishes. Then we picked it, it, it and it. Within the limits, of course. And then, together with them, we managed to build a menu. (Interview 05)*

## 5.5 Challenges Faced by the Organisations in Food Provision to Ukrainian Refugees

The sudden influx of refugees, particularly during the start of the Ukrainian emergency, posed a significant challenge to organisations unprepared for the surge in demand. Among the pressing issues were a shortage of suitable facilities, limited staff and resources, and challenges in rapidly adapting to the needs of the growing Ukraine refugee population. Many organisations found themselves in a position where they had to recruit staff on short notice, rebuild networks, and secure funding to meet urgent demands. As one interviewee noted.

*It was extremely hectic for at least three months before we had enough camps, and the government had discussions with the municipalities on how to receive the Ukrainian refugees, where they should live, whether they should live privately, or whether they should only live in camps. (Interview 02)*

Initially, many Ukrainian refugees stayed with family, friends, or independently in private homes, which unfortunately excluded them from receiving government monetary assistance. This created a financial strain not only on the refugees but also on the supporting organisations, some of which temporarily provided loans to the refugees. However, given the limited funds available, this support was unsustainable in the long term.

The experience highlighted the need for better preparedness and coordination among government and private entities to bridge these support gaps. In addition, organisations encountered significant issues with food waste, partly due to cultural differences and unfamiliarity with Norwegian food options.

Early donations of cakes, sweets, and other items—while well-intentioned—set expectations that were challenging to meet and did not always align with the dietary preferences of Ukrainian refugees. Refugees, uncertain about future food availability, sometimes stockpiled food from charitable distributions, resulting in excess waste when items were left behind after refugees transitioned out of camps. As one organisation observed,

*We noticed that refugees would sometimes take more food than needed, possibly fearing shortages. However, much of it was left uneaten when they left, which contributed to waste. (Interview 07)*

The refugees' diverse cultural backgrounds also presented challenges in meal planning. Many reception centres hosted Ukrainian refugees and refugees from other countries, each with unique dietary restrictions and preferences. Accommodating these differences required significant cultural sensitivity and flexibility as organisations worked to balance nutritional adequacy with the need to respect individual preferences.

*... From the start till now, there have been many wishes here. And there aren't only Ukrainians. We also have to think about others from other countries. For example, there are people with a Muslim background who want halal food. So, it's common to think it's easy. But it's a challenge... (Interview 06)*

A few of the organisations reported challenges in having limited resources, both financial and material, which hindered their ability to adequately meet the diverse needs of the refugees. Balancing competing priorities, such as accommodating

individual preferences versus prioritising nutrition, presented ongoing resource allocation and decision-making challenges. In addition, they reported that they could not plan or implement long-term strategies because they relied on project-based funds and annual budget allocations.

*...Our big focus now is that we don't have stable funding. So, the money that we get from the state, we need to apply every year. "...” But it's not stable. So, we can't plan, it's difficult to plan. It's difficult to invest and take risks when we don't know the funding... (Interview 01)*

Communication barriers presented additional challenges, particularly as the refugee population diversified over time. While many of the initial Ukrainian arrivals spoke English, allowing them to communicate with staff, later arrivals predominantly spoke Ukrainian or Russian, which complicated daily interactions, feedback collection, and efforts to accommodate individual needs effectively.

Finally, few of the organisations had challenges coordinating food distribution, managing inventory, and adapting to changing demands when providing food assistance. Sourcing, transporting, and storing food supplies required careful planning and coordination to ensure timely and equitable distribution.

#### 5.5.1 Strategies Used to Enhance Food Provision to Ukrainian Refugees.

In response to these challenges, organisations implemented several strategies to address the needs of the Ukrainian refugees better. Through communication and feedback, most of the organisations were able to adapt their menus to align more closely with the refugees' tastes and nutritional needs, which, in turn, reduced food waste and increased resident satisfaction.

For example, when initial menus featured creamy soups popular in Norway, they were replaced with clearer soups after feedback from the residents. Organisations were able to create a menu that resonated better with the refugees. As noted by one participated

*There was a lot of rice at this hotel and much pasta. ... And they said, we like potatoes, soups boiled for a long time with like meat and stuff. So that's the feedback that we gave to the hotel. (Interview 07)*

Some Organisations even involved refugees directly in menu planning, gathering traditional recipes to reflect cultural expectations and foster a sense of belonging.



Adjustments also included providing popular foods like homemade pizza for smaller groups during weekends.

*We invited some of the residents to share recipes or suggest dishes they liked from home. This helped us make meals that felt more familiar to them and showed them that we valued their input. (Interview 04)*

Open communication about food preferences helped build trust and significantly improved food provision, ensuring that it met the varied needs of all the refugees residing in the camp.

In addition, by using a more inclusive approach, the organisations recognised the importance of cultural sensitivity when dealing with food provision to the refugees. This is because the decision-making processes were a collaborative effort involving residents, volunteers and the organisations, which fostered a sense of ownership and inclusion within the reception centres.

To improve service efficiency, organisations streamlined food provision processes by establishing standardised protocols, clear communication channels, and collaborative frameworks. These adjustments enabled organisations to adapt more quickly to fluctuating demands, ensuring that food provision was both effective and efficient.

In addition, many organisations took measures to minimise food waste through portion control and by adapting menus based on consumption patterns. By aligning supply with demand and optimising distribution channels, these waste reduction strategies contributed to a more sustainable food provision approach.

*We realised that a lot of the food was wasted. ... We need to create a group where they can join and say what food they like. We can't throw that much away. So then we made such a group. (Interview 05)*

Community support and organisational efforts addressed initial challenges in providing baby food and supplies for infants and small children. Despite the hotel's limitations, arrangements were made to ensure the availability of formula, baby food, diapers, and hygiene products. This highlighted the importance of responsive and adaptable systems in meeting the diverse needs of the refugees, particularly vulnerable groups such as infants and children.

*The thing that was missed was baby food. We didn't have formula. The hotel doesn't provide that ordinarily. Also, those meshed-up foods for small children, diapers and stuff like that, creams, hygienic products. So, in the first weeks, we've got that sponsored from Chain store, the local branch of the chain store.*

*(Interview 07)*

## 5.6 Comparative Treatment of Ukrainian refugees versus other refugee groups

Equity and differentiated treatment emerged as significant themes in this study, particularly in support and services provided to Ukrainian refugees compared to other refugee groups. Participants' observations highlighted perceived disparities in treatment, which underscored challenges in ensuring fairness and impartiality in humanitarian aid efforts. These perceptions of unequal treatment, especially in food provision and access to services, prompted discussions on the importance of unbiased, equitable policies across refugee populations.

### 5.6.1 Recognition of Bias and differential treatment among refugee Groups

While efforts were made to provide comprehensive support to Ukrainian refugees, concerns arose regarding bias and differential treatment based on nationality. Disparities in access to services, such as public transportation, highlighted the need for equitable treatment and consistent policies across refugee populations. Addressing systemic biases and promoting fairness in service provision remain critical areas for improvement.

While organisations made concerted efforts to provide comprehensive support to Ukrainian refugees, some participants noted biases in treatment that appeared to favour this group. Examples of preferential policies, such as free public transportation for Ukrainian refugees, stood out as perceived disparities when compared to the experiences of refugees from countries like Syria or Afghanistan. This recognition of differential treatment raised concerns about systemic inequities and highlighted the need for consistent policies across all refugee groups to foster inclusivity and fairness.

*... 2015, when a Syrian refugee boarded a bus without a ticket, they got a ticket for 900 kroner, and they would explain their situation. The ruter would not say anything; they would say you must pay for it. The interest rate will go up for*

*every month they do not pay; the interest rate will go up. While the refugees who came from Ukraine, everybody got a free bus. You would just have to show a Ukrainian identification. So, I mean, they were treated beautifully, and they saw and felt that. (Interview 07)*

Participants noted that while Ukrainians received an immediate and collective protection status, other groups faced more extensive and often prolonged procedures. The bureaucratic complexities for refugees from countries like Syria or Afghanistan included extended asylum processes and restrictive living conditions, which contrasted sharply with the relative swiftness and comfort afforded to Ukrainians. These differences were observed in tangible resources, like transportation, and more abstract systemic attitudes that seemed to reinforce biases.

*The Ukrainian refugees had collective protection. Right? While the Syrian refugees were placed in totally different living conditions. I know the Ukrainians come to the ordinary system, but there was a difference. There was a difference. And then these people, of course, felt that. They also remembered that Ukraine is a lot closer. The travel to Norway was not as traumatic. And that also plays a huge difference. It is what you carry with you, right? From your process of migration. (Interview 07)*

These disparities emphasise the importance of implementing unbiased humanitarian practices that reflect a commitment to equal treatment, regardless of nationality or background. For organisations striving to support refugee populations comprehensively, addressing such systemic biases is crucial to promoting trust and solidarity across diverse refugee groups.

### 5.6.2 Settlement patterns and integration

Variations in settlement patterns and integration processes highlighted differential treatment across refugee groups. Ukrainian refugees were often able to transition to municipal housing more quickly than other groups, which participants attributed to both geographical proximity and less traumatic migration journeys. This expedited integration, while beneficial for Ukrainian refugees, created noticeable gaps between their experiences and those of other groups, fuelling perceptions of preferential treatment.

*Traveling from Syria to Norway going through all of these borders and trying to reach Norway was a less traumatic experience for the Ukrainians. And that also plays a huge difference. It's what you carry with you, right? From your process of migration. Interview 07*

Systemic challenges, including disparities in living conditions and access to resources, created friction among refugee groups within some reception centres. Instances of tension and aggression reportedly arose, mainly when differences in treatment were visible. For example, while Ukrainian refugees benefitted from rapid integration efforts and more comprehensive support, other groups experienced delays and more restricted resources, leading to resentment and a sense of inequity.

To mitigate these challenges, collaborative efforts focused on promoting understanding and fostering social cohesion across refugee populations. Some organisations implemented community-building activities to reduce friction and support mutual respect among residents. These initiatives were vital for creating an inclusive environment that recognises and respects all refugees' unique circumstances and challenges.

*"People saw not just that, but their status. They had collective protection. ... While the Syrian refugees were totally, they were placed in totally different living conditions. Interview 07*

Addressing these disparities in settlement patterns and ensuring equitable access to services and resources across refugee groups are essential for organisations providing holistic support. Recognising these biases and actively promoting fairness can help alleviate tensions and build a more inclusive environment that upholds the dignity and rights of all refugees, regardless of nationality.

## 6.0 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to analyse the organisation of food provision to Ukrainian refugees living in Norway, focusing on how the right to food—a fundamental human right—was respected within the Norwegian humanitarian response. Findings indicated that the organisation of food assistance involved two primary models: a centralised model, where refugees received prepared meals at no cost, and a decentralised model, which provided financial allowances for self-prepared meals.

Main challenges included logistical constraints, cultural adaptation issues, and limited financial and material resources, which impacted food availability and satisfaction. Collaboration was characterised by partial, ad hoc partnerships among organisations, with limited information-sharing and coordination, though some successful collaborations were noted with local municipalities and businesses.

In particular, regarding the right to food, the study indicates that while organisations sought to uphold this right, interpretations varied, with some emphasising basic nutritional access and others recognising food's cultural and psychological significance in maintaining dignity and identity.

This discussion centres around the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), Social Determinants of Health (SDOH), and social justice and equity principles to deepen the analysis of these findings. It offers insights into the strengths and limitations of Norway's approach to fulfilling refugees' right to food within a complex humanitarian context.

### 6.1 The Impact of Influx and Unpreparedness on the Right to Food

The sudden arrival of Ukrainian refugees put Norway's support systems to the test, highlighting the strain on infrastructure and resources. This unanticipated influx revealed some significant gaps in Norway's ability to secure the right to food—a core human right—during a crisis. As Mabiso et al. (2014) discuss, when refugee numbers surge unexpectedly, host communities often struggle to adjust their food systems and resources quickly enough. In Norway's case, despite strong efforts, the reactive approach made clear the need for better planning to handle spikes in demand.

This experience isn't unique to Norway. Hossain (2024), in a study on global displacement trends, emphasises how sudden influxes create logistical challenges in

countries without pre-emptive strategies to ensure food access. The strain on Norway's systems shows how essential it is to have flexible, scalable resources in place to avoid putting food security at risk. When food access hinges on an ability to mobilise swiftly, a lack of readiness can lead to inconsistencies, as Norway experienced in the early response period.

Pichon (2019) makes a compelling case for “anticipatory humanitarian action”—a model that emphasises planning ahead for crises with pre-set systems that allow for rapid action when needed. In situations like the Ukrainian refugee influx, having frameworks that are ready to go would have helped Norway avoid the challenges it faced in scaling up resources so quickly. This example underlines how valuable pre-emptive measures can be to maintain stability in food access during such emergencies.

Norway's experience also resonates with findings from Henjum, Morseth, et al. (2019), who studied food security issues faced by asylum seekers in Norway. Their research found that the right to food can be compromised without prepared systems, leaving people in vulnerable situations with inconsistent access. This study echoes reports from Norwegian aid providers who described the early response phase as “chaotic” and challenging to manage. The lesson here is clear: pre-planning and preparedness make a real difference in upholding food security.

Adding to this perspective, Thalheimer et al. (2022) highlight the value of pre-emptive measures for communities that expect or experience crises. They argue that by setting up anticipatory actions, host countries can reduce the strain on resources during sudden displacements. Similarly, Gewalt et al. (2019) explain how social conditions shape food security in refugee settings, underscoring the need for proactive policies to support food access. Together, these studies suggest that without pre-established systems, even well-prepared countries may struggle to maintain the right to food when faced with a crisis.

Together, these highlight how critical it is for host countries like Norway to adopt pre-emptive measures that ensure food security remains a priority during sudden humanitarian needs. Norway's response to the Ukrainian refugee situation highlights the vulnerabilities that arise without these anticipatory strategies, showing that even well-resourced nations benefit from pre-crisis planning to protect food rights effectively.

## 6.2 Centralised vs. Decentralised Food Provision Models and Equity

In Norway, food provision for Ukrainian refugees followed two distinct models: a centralised model, where meals were provided at no cost, and a decentralised model, which offered refugees financial allowances to purchase and prepare their own food. Both models had unique strengths and challenges, particularly concerning equity, autonomy, and satisfaction.

The centralised model, while ensuring consistent, nutritionally regulated meals, often struggled to meet refugees' individual and cultural preferences. Nisbet et al. (2022) point out that centralised food provision can be nutritionally reliable but may lack flexibility, a limitation evident in Norway. Terragni et al. (2014) emphasise the importance of food as an integral part of identity and cultural connection for migrants, underscoring how standardised meal provision can lead to dissatisfaction if it doesn't accommodate familiar or culturally appropriate options. Henjum, Morseth, et al. (2019) further note that Norway's structured, bulk-prepared meals led to increased food waste when refugees found the food unfamiliar or unappealing.

In contrast, the decentralised model promoted autonomy, allowing refugees to choose and prepare foods aligned with their preferences, fostering a sense of normalcy. Terragni et al. (2020) highlights that maintaining familiar food practices supports mental well-being and provides a sense of continuity for migrants in unfamiliar settings. Similarly, Orjuela-grimm et al. (2022) and Blukacz et al. (2024) underscore the psychological benefits of controlling food choices, linking food autonomy to reduced anxiety and improved mental health. This model aligns well with these findings, encouraging dietary satisfaction and respecting cultural food habits.

However, financial constraints within the decentralised model posed significant limitations. As Fabry (2020) discusses, the economic burden of purchasing varied, nutritionally balanced foods on limited allowances can impact refugees' health and well-being. Blukacz et al. (2024) also explore the association between financial insecurity and food-related stress, a challenge encountered in Norway when refugees struggled to afford a nutritious and culturally appropriate diet. Greer et al. (2020) further analyse centralised versus decentralised public health strategies, noting that decentralised approaches, while beneficial for autonomy, often require stronger financial and logistical support to ensure equitable access to services.

These challenges resonate with the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) framework, as described by Marmot and Wilkinson (2005), which emphasises the role of social structures in influencing health outcomes. In centralised models, food security may be achieved at the expense of dietary satisfaction and personal agency. In contrast, decentralised models foster autonomy but require enhanced financial and infrastructural support to maintain equity.

Balancing these models demands a flexible approach that respects both the logistical efficiency of centralised provision and the psychological and cultural benefits of decentralised autonomy. Terragni et al. (2014) insights into dietary acculturation among migrants emphasise that food provision systems must be culturally adaptable to meet diverse refugee needs effectively. Norway's experience illustrates that equitable food systems should uphold dignity, support identity, and allow for autonomy while addressing practical challenges such as funding and supply chain coordination.

### 6.3 Cultural Sensitivity in Food Provision as a Reflection of Human Rights

In this study, cultural sensitivity in food provision emerged as an essential aspect of upholding the right to food for Ukrainian refugees in Norway. Recognizing that food is not just a nutritional necessity but also a symbol of cultural identity and dignity, the humanitarian response in Norway included adjustments like offering culturally relevant meals and engaging refugees in menu planning. These efforts align closely with the Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA), which advocates for participatory decision-making to respect the dignity and identity of those receiving aid (UNDP, 2006).

Research emphasises that culturally tailored food provision can impact well-being and community integration. Terragni et al. (2014), for example, found that respecting food preferences in aid settings helps refugees maintain a sense of normalcy and identity during times of upheaval. This insight supports the inclusion of familiar dishes, such as Ukrainian borscht, and the exclusion of culturally unsuitable options, like pork, in Norway's response—measures that offered more than physical nourishment by promoting emotional and cultural comfort. Abdalla and Goulao (2024); Terragni et al. (2014) expands on this, noting that a human rights lens in food aid highlights the importance of cultural relevance as a key factor in preserving dignity, trust, and a sense of belonging.



Adding to this, Renzaho (2002) highlights that culturally inappropriate food provisions can lead to psychological distress and dietary dissatisfaction, particularly when refugees have little control over their diets. Renzaho's study supports the decentralised approach adopted in some Norwegian centres, where refugees were empowered to prepare their own meals, affirming their autonomy and sense of agency in unfamiliar surroundings. Marmot and Wilkinson (2005) further deepen this understanding by applying the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) framework to emphasise how social and cultural dimensions intersect with food security. Their work highlights that food is inherently tied to cultural and social structures, which need to be recognized and respected to truly support well-being in refugee settings.

Moreover, studies indicate that culturally adapted food systems do more than satisfy dietary needs—they play a role in mental health and trust-building. Orjuela-grimm et al. (2022) illustrate that when refugees feel their cultural needs are respected, it alleviates stress and fosters trust between them and service providers, which is crucial in building supportive communities. Blukacz et al. (2024) echo this, noting that culturally relevant food can counteract some of the negative mental health impacts of food insecurity, particularly among migrants facing unstable or restrictive food options.

The psychological importance of cultural sensitivity in food provision is echoed by Terragni et al. (2018), who found that offering culturally mismatched foods led to dissatisfaction and food waste in Norway's asylum centres. This research affirms the need for culturally conscious approaches, as well as for flexibility in food offerings. Likewise, Fabry (2020) cautions that cultural accommodations must be paired with adequate resources to truly meet refugees' needs; otherwise, financial constraints may limit food variety, affecting the sustainability of culturally relevant food options in practice.

Involving refugees directly in food-related decision-making also fosters a stronger sense of control and respect, as seen in Terragni et al. (2018), where the participatory approach in menu planning empowered refugees to express their food preferences. This engagement aligns well with Kovács et al. (2022), who found that culturally sensitive practices in refugee aid often lead to stronger relationships between refugees and providers, promoting satisfaction and adaptation within host communities.

Norway's response to Ukrainian refugees, which incorporated culturally appropriate menus and some degree of autonomy, illustrates a commendable commitment to respecting the right to food. By recognizing that food serves both physical and cultural needs, Norway's approach aligns with HRBA principles, reinforcing that culturally relevant food systems are not merely logistical considerations—they are essential to preserving refugees' dignity and mental well-being.

#### 6.4 Collaboration and Accountability as Cornerstones of the Right to Food

The study reveals that collaboration and accountability are critical to ensuring adequate food provision within Norway's humanitarian response. In times of crisis, cohesive partnerships and clear accountability pathways support the fundamental right to food by helping bridge resource gaps and enhancing service reliability (UNDP, 2006). While commendable for its adaptability, Norway's response to the Ukrainian refugee influx highlighted limitations in pre-existing collaborative frameworks, particularly regarding systematic information-sharing and coordination. Heaslip et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of strategic partnerships and logistical planning in conflict zones, underscoring the necessity of building durable collaborative systems before crises arise. This perspective aligns with Norway's experience, illustrating the benefits of structured inter-organizational efforts in humanitarian settings.

In a Norwegian context, Hernes et al. (2023) provides recent insights into the collaboration between municipal stakeholders and organisations in supporting Ukrainian refugees. This study found that municipalities often played an intermediary role, facilitating cooperation between state and local actors. However, Hernes observed that gaps in formalised collaboration mechanisms sometimes led to service inconsistencies, which aligns with this study's observations on the challenges organisations face in Norway. These insights reinforce the need for streamlined communication and coordination frameworks across all levels of government and humanitarian actors.

Heidi (2014) discusses the organisation of reception facilities for asylum seekers in Norway, highlighting how fragmented collaboration can result in uneven service delivery and resource distribution. Heidi's work suggests that while Norway has robust policies for refugee reception, the actual implementation often varies due to differing organisational priorities and limited inter-agency collaboration. The findings in this

study echo Heidi's conclusions, emphasising the importance of cohesive, well-structured partnerships to maintain consistent food provision for refugees.

Accountability is another essential pillar in upholding the right to food. The Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) framework underscores that all humanitarian actions must incorporate accountability mechanisms to ensure that aid is delivered equitably and transparently (UNDP, 2006). Renzaho and Burns (2006) discusses accountability in humanitarian aid delivery, arguing that when accountability structures are unclear or underdeveloped, disparities in service provision may emerge, particularly affecting marginalised groups. Norway's response, while generally effective, could benefit from more formalised accountability systems to oversee and adjust food provision practices based on refugee needs and feedback.

In addition to Norwegian insights, Heaslip et al. (2024) provide an international perspective on collaborative accountability, underscoring that successful humanitarian logistics require continuous evaluation and adaptation to evolving challenges. In line with this, Norway's collaborative efforts would benefit from embedding regular evaluations and adaptive mechanisms that ensure refugee needs are met consistently across regions. Incorporating these practices would strengthen accountability and support Norway's commitment to the right to food for all refugees.

Refugee involvement in decision-making processes is another key element of accountability. Myhrvold (2015) suggests that empowering refugees to participate in service evaluations and provide feedback improves the alignment of humanitarian responses with their actual needs. While Norway has implemented basic feedback channels, this study's findings indicate that more structured involvement of refugees in decision-making could enhance the responsiveness and transparency of food provision. Allowing refugees to contribute feedback directly into service planning fosters a more dignified and person-centred approach, aligning with HRBA principles.

Incorporating structured feedback channels and enhanced partnerships among various actors would further strengthen Norway's food provision system, creating a more responsive and equitable framework. Norway's experiences illuminate the value of strategic, transparent collaboration and consistent accountability in humanitarian responses, ultimately fostering a fairer system for all refugees.

## 6.5 Discussion of Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design, using thematic analysis as the primary method for examining the organisation of food provision for Ukrainian refugees in Norway. This methodological choice allowed for an in-depth exploration of how the right to food—a fundamental human right—was integrated and interpreted within Norway’s humanitarian response. The thematic analysis provided the flexibility necessary to capture diverse perspectives from participants across multiple organisations while maintaining a structured approach to identifying and categorising core themes in the data.

In qualitative research, the quality of findings is typically assessed through criteria such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lincoln et al., 1985). These criteria serve as benchmarks to ensure rigour and transparency in qualitative research, where methods for achieving validity and reliability differ from quantitative approaches.

### 6.5.1 Credibility

Credibility focuses on the authenticity of findings and is akin to internal validity in quantitative research. Semi-structured interviews provided a platform for participants to freely express their experiences, facilitating rich, detailed accounts that contributed to the identification of recurrent themes across different organisational roles. Furthermore, thematic analysis supports credibility by facilitating the discovery of patterns within the data, allowing insights to emerge organically while grounding findings in participant testimony (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The iterative coding process in NVIVO also contributed to credibility, as it enabled the researcher to consistently revisit and refine codes, ensuring reliability in theme application and adherence to participants’ views” (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Peel, 2020). Codes were discussed with the supervisor and with other students during qualitative research seminars.

### 6.5.2 Reflexivity and Positionality

Reflexivity is the practice of recognising and addressing how researchers’ biases and backgrounds may affect data interpretation. This process is critical in maintaining objectivity and transparency, as qualitative researchers often interact closely with participants and may bring personal views to the analysis (Florczak, 2021). Given the researcher’s background in humanitarian studies, particular care was taken to avoid

overemphasizing human rights-aligned interpretations, a potential bias that was mitigated through continuous self-questioning and feedback from colleagues. (Cena et al., 2024; Peel, 2020).

Positionality, which reflects the researcher's standpoint and potential influence on the study, was also critically examined. Being immersed in humanitarian studies, the researcher was predisposed to a rights-based perspective, especially concerning the right to food. Awareness of this positionality enabled a more balanced interpretation of themes like "Organisational Challenges" and "Right to Food," aligning the analysis with participant perspectives rather than preconceived notions (Peel, 2020; Cena et al., 2024).

### 6.5.3 Transferability

Transferability, akin to external validity in quantitative research, addresses the applicability of findings to other contexts. It was supported in this study by the diversity of organisations sampled. Purposive sampling from government agencies, NGOs, and private-public organisations provided a broad view of food provision models, enhancing the relevance of findings for other high-income countries managing sudden refugee influxes. By detailing participant roles and organisational structures, the study provides sufficient context for others to assess the transferability of findings to comparable humanitarian settings (Levitt et al., 2017).

### 6.5.4 Dependability

Dependability relates to the consistency and reliability of findings over time and is often reinforced through a systematic approach to data collection and analysis. In this study, thematic analysis was performed following Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase thematic analysis approach. This method provided consistency in identifying and categorising themes across interviews, forming a solid foundation for the study's conclusions. Additionally, NVIVO software was used to manage and organise data, creating an audit trail that documents each stage of coding and theme refinement, supporting the study's dependability. This allowed the researcher to adapt and refine coding as new insights emerged, maintaining alignment with participants' perspectives while ensuring methodological rigour (Braun & Clarke, 2022). Reflexivity supported this dependability by prompting the researcher to re-evaluate interpretations as they progressed, a practice essential in qualitative research (Levitt et al., 2017).

### 6.5.5 Confirmability

Confirmability, or neutrality of findings, reflects the objectivity of the research process. This was maintained through transparent data management practices, such as using NVIVO software. The NVIVO software provided an audit trail from initial coding to final theme refinement, ensuring transparency in data handling and analysis. Additionally, reflexivity played a crucial role in confirmability by helping the researcher remain aware of potential biases, enhancing the objectivity of the thematic analysis. Further, the integration of HRBA principles—such as participation, accountability, and empowerment—into the analytical framework reinforced a participant-centred approach, ensuring interpretations remained grounded in participants' priorities rather than the researcher's assumptions (Cena et al., 2024; Levitt et al., 2017).

### 6.5.6 Critical Reflection on Limitations

Despite its methodological rigour, this study has limitations. Firstly, it relies on self-reported data from organisational representatives, which may present idealised accounts of food provision practices. The findings, therefore, reflect participant narratives rather than observational data, potentially skewing interpretations of the right to food within Norway's response.

Although the interviews were conducted in English with participants fluent in the language, certain nuances may not have been clearly expressed, as English was not their first language. Likewise, when interviews were conducted in Norwegian and then translated, some details may have been misinterpreted.

Additionally, the relatively small sample size, while providing in-depth insights, may limit the generalisability of findings across different refugee support contexts. Though effective in revealing patterns, thematic analysis relies heavily on the researchers' interpretation, meaning that findings are inherently subjective despite reflexive measures taken to minimise bias. Expanding future research to include observational methods and larger samples would improve the representativeness and robustness of insights into refugee food provision.

Finally, the lack of triangulation—using multiple data sources or methods to cross-check findings—limits the study's scope in corroborating themes. Future studies could integrate multiple qualitative methods, such as focus groups or participant observation,

to enrich the data and provide a more nuanced understanding of food provision challenges and successes in humanitarian contexts.

#### 6.5.7 Strengths and Concluding Remarks

The study's multi-organisational approach is a notable strength, capturing a diverse array of perspectives that offer a comprehensive view of food provision in crisis contexts. By integrating HRBA principles into the thematic analysis, this study centres participants' perspectives, allowing for a nuanced understanding of how organisations interpret and implement the right to food in Norway. However, these findings only represent a partial view of the complexities inherent in refugee food provision. Future research can enhance the scope by incorporating additional perspectives, broader samples, and varied methodologies.

## 7.0 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the organisation of food provision for Ukrainian refugees in Norway through a human rights lens, focusing on how various organisations understood and operationalised the right to food. Findings revealed that, despite the sudden and challenging influx of refugees, the Norwegian government, NGOs, and private-public organizations generally responded well, highlighting the critical role of collaborative partnerships in safeguarding refugees' rights to adequate and culturally sensitive food. While gaps and challenges were apparent, particularly during the initial response phase, these were largely mitigated as systems adapted over time.

The study underscores the need for an anticipatory, crisis-ready food provision framework that can be promptly activated. Such a system would not only improve efficiency and coordination but also protect the human right to food by minimizing disruptions and ensuring that humanitarian responses align with rights-based principles from the onset. Benchmarking Norway's effective practices—such as involving refugees in food-related decision-making and adapting food provision to cultural needs—can enhance food provision services for future crises and for refugees from diverse backgrounds.

### 7.1 Recommendations for Future Research

This study highlights several avenues for further exploration to deepen understanding and improve future responses:

**Measuring Food Security among Refugees:** Building on the qualitative findings of this study, future research could employ quantitative measures such as the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS) or the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) to assess food security levels among Ukrainian refugees. Quantifying food security would provide a more objective picture of current conditions and reveal any gaps that need addressing.

**Comparative Analysis Across Host Countries:** Given the international nature of refugee support, conducting comparative studies on food provision across different host countries would be invaluable. This approach could identify both best practices and



areas for improvement, offering a broader understanding of effective strategies for culturally sensitive, rights-based food provision in varied contexts.

Longitudinal Studies on Food Provision Impact: Examining the long-term effects of food provision practices on the well-being, integration, and resilience of Ukrainian refugees would add depth to the current understanding of food's role in humanitarian support. Longitudinal studies could explore how sustained access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food influences refugees' physical and mental health, dietary habits, and social integration over time, informing policies that support holistic, enduring refugee well-being.

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# Appendix

## Appendix A: Research Approval from NSD

06.11.2024, 15:25

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger - Ref. 245271



### Assessment of processing of personal data

**Reference number**  
245271

**Assessment type**  
Standard

**Date**  
11.09.2023

**Title**

Food in emergencies - Experiences with food related aid during the Ukraine emergency

**Institution responsible for the project**

OsloMet – storbyuniversitetet / Fakultet for helsevitenskap / Institutt for sykepleie og helsefremmende arbeid

**Project leader**

Laura Terragni

**Student**

Raphael Adukule

**Project period**

01.08.2023 - 30.06.2024

**Categories of personal data**

General

**Legal basis**

Consent (General Data Protection Regulation art. 6 nr. 1 a)

The processing of personal data is lawful, so long as it is carried out as stated in the notification form. The legal basis is valid until 30.06.2024.

[Notification Form](#)

**Comment**

**ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT**

Data Protection Services has an agreement with the institution where you are a student or a researcher. As part of this agreement, we provide guidance so that the processing of personal data in your project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation. We have now assessed that you have legal basis to process the personal data.

**DATA PROCESSOR**

We presuppose that the processing meets the requirements of data processors under the General Data Protection Regulation, cf. Art. 28 and Art. 29.

**FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES**

You must store, send and secure the collected data in accordance with your institution's guidelines. This means that you must use data processors (and the like) that your institution has an agreement with (i.e. cloud storage, online survey, and video conferencing providers).

Our assessment presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

**NOTIFY CHANGES**

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project, it may be necessary to notify us. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes: <https://sikt.no/en/notify-changes-notification-form>

**FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT**

We will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Appendix B: Consent Form

**Informed Consent Form.**

**Title of the Research**

Experiences of the provision of food-related aid during the Ukraine emergency with a human rights perspective.

**Name of Researcher**

Raphael Adukule

Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

**Consent form**

I have received and understood information about the project “Experiences of the provision of food-related aid during the Ukraine emergency with a human rights perspective” and I have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I hereby participate in this study under the following conditions.

I understand that the individual interview will be audio recorded, I will give information regarding food-related aid and that my data will be processed until the end of the project approximately 31 Dec 2024.

Do you want to participate in this study? Yes..... No.....

Participant code.....

Participant signature.....

Date .....

## Appendix C: Information Letter

Dear [name of potential interviewee]

My name is Raphael Adukule, and I'm a Public Health Nutrition Master's student at Oslo Metropolitan University. I'm embarking on my final year as I work on my master's thesis. My research focuses on "The organisation of food provision to Ukrainian refugees living in Norway, with a primary emphasis on food as a human right."

I am writing to extend a formal invitation to you to participate as a key informant in my study. Your organisation's insights, perspectives, and experiences are of great significance to my research and promise to enrich the depth and understanding of the subject matter.

The primary aim of this study is to gather comprehensive information about the organisational framework for providing food to Ukrainian refugees. Additionally, we are keen to explore how the concept of food as a fundamental human right is perceived and integrated into the work of key stakeholders engaged in delivering food-related aid in Norway. This inquiry will also delve into the challenges and barriers that may be encountered during these processes.

The interview format is semi-structured and is expected to last approximately 45 minutes. To accommodate your schedule and convenience, we are open to conducting the interview either in person or via video call, as per your preference.

I would like to inform you that my master's project is an integral part of a broader study titled "Food in Emergency", coordinated by my supervisor Professor Laura Terragni.

The project has received formal approval from SIKT and the SIKT number is 245271. I would like to emphasise that participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and you retain the right to withdraw your participation at any stage.

Please be rest assured that your valuable contribution will be duly acknowledged in the final thesis report, however, both your identity and the identity of your organisation will remain strictly anonymous. The knowledge gained from these interviews will help enhance our understanding of food provision for refugees living in Norway and hopefully develop effective solutions to address the challenges these vulnerable groups face within Norway and other regions worldwide.

Should you have any questions or require any additional information about the research or seek clarification regarding the interview process, please do not hesitate to contact me or my superior by responding to this email. Your expertise and time will be deeply appreciated, and your involvement will be instrumental in advancing our knowledge in this area.

Thank you for considering this invitation. I look forward to the opportunity to learn from your expertise and wealth of experience.

Sincerely

*Raphael Adukule*

*Master's Student in Public Health Nutrition*

*Oslo Metropolitan University*

*Laura Terragni*

*Professor in Public Health Nutrition*

*Oslo Metropolitan University*



Appendix D: Interview Guide

**Interview guide for professionals in "Experiences of the provision of food related aid during the Ukraine emergency"?**

Theoretical aspects	Research questions	Questions
<p>Food security, dietary acculturation, empowerment, the right to food, the human rights based approach</p>		<p><b>Introduction:</b> We want to start off learning about the work of your organisation. Here are some general questions about how you work.</p> <p>General activities related to refugees asylum seekers</p> <p>Role of the organisation in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis</p> <p><i>Could you tell us about which food/nutrition in general / related services your organisation has Do you provide physical food, cash vouchers or other methods? More specific on Ukraine provided in the Ukrainian emergency?</i></p>
	<p>The organisation of food provision to Ukrainian refugees.</p>	<p><i>TAILORED QUESTIONS</i></p> <p><i>In which ways is (GUIDELINES) the food acquired, distributed, stored and provided to the refugees? How do you acquire the food?</i></p> <p><i>Do you have any organisations/institutions you cooperate with for providing for XXXXXX? Could you describe this partnership?</i></p> <p><i>What basis do you use to come up with an amount for the cash vouchers for a given period?</i></p> <p><i>Are there structural barriers, like laws or policies, that could constrain the success of the proposed work? Please explain?</i></p> <p><i>How do you finance your work?</i></p>
	<p>How food as a human right is considered and incorporated into the</p>	<p>In this section we want to understand your organisation's perspectives on human rights, and in which ways human rights are embedded into your work.</p>

	work of actors delivering food-related aid in Norway.	<p><i>Does your organisation follow any human rights instruments, such as the The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and if so, how does this influence your work?</i></p> <p><i>Yes- how</i></p> <p><i>No. even if no do you see any activities that are related</i></p> <p><i>What does the right to food mean to your organisation?</i></p> <p><i>How the right to food taken into consideration in practice?</i></p>
	Challenges and obstacles to the realization of human rights in food-related aid.	<p><i>Do you experience any challenges to the fulfillment of the right to food in your work?</i></p> <p><i>Are there any barriers to the right of food on a policy level? Please explain.</i></p>
	Human rights based approach - participation	<p><i>Is your target group in any way participating in any of your activities, and if so, how?</i></p> <p><i>Is the target group in any way participating in the planning process of activities, and if so, in which ways?</i></p> <p><i>Is the target group in any way participating in the evaluation of your work, and if so, in which ways?</i></p> <p><i>Follow up: How are their concerns taken into consideration in the delivery and evaluation of your services?</i></p> <p><i>Are there mechanisms in place to ensure affected communities can be involved in the drafting of policies concerning them?</i></p>
	Human rights based approach - Empowerment/capacity building	<p><i>Could you describe if your organisation has any activities which aim to develop the capacities of the target group to better claim their right(s) to food)?</i></p> <p><i>Could you describe if your organisation has any activities which aim to develop the capacities of the state in realising human rights?</i></p> <p><i>If the question is not clear: Which channels do you have for informing the state or communicating your concerns regarding the state's obligations?</i></p>
	Human rights based approach - Non-discrimination	<p><i>What steps are being taken to ensure that the provision of food related aid is not discriminatory in its aim, design, conduct and analysis? <u>If not clear:</u></i></p>

		<p><i>Could you describe how your organisation works to avoid discriminatory practices?</i></p> <p><i>Have you observed any discrimination in the delivery of food related aid in your work?</i></p> <p><i>Have you experienced any differences in how people from different nationalities are treated or included in pursuing their right to food?</i></p> <p><i>Have you experienced any differences in how men and women are being treated or included in pursuing their right to food?</i></p> <p><i>Could you describe any situations in your field in which discrimination or unequal treatment could occur?</i></p> <p><i>How is participation of marginalised groups being ensured?</i></p> <p><i>How is religion and culture taken into consideration?</i></p>
	<p>Human rights based approach - Accountability</p>	<p><i>Which channels do your target group have for communicating their satisfaction and possible dissatisfaction? How are they informed about this?</i></p> <p><i>Is your target group made aware of their rights, and if so, in which ways?</i></p> <p><i>How does your organisation address any complaints that might come up?</i></p> <p><i>How do you ensure accountability and transparency?</i></p>
	<p>Analysis (when relevant)</p>	<p><i>How do you analyse the situation?</i></p> <p><i>How do you analyse your work?</i></p> <p><i>What is being done to ensure that the situation analysis is carried out by competent and trustworthy entities?</i></p> <p><i>How are the results of the analysis beneficial to your services?</i></p> <p><i>Transparency: How and by whom will the results of the analysis be disseminated?</i></p>

		<p><i>How is it being ensured that the situation assessment and analysis in general contributes to the promotion of human rights?</i></p>
	<p>Legal and policy - when relevant</p>	<p><i>Which human rights treaties have been ratified for refugees? Is there anyone regarding food and nutrition?</i></p> <p><i>Is there a functioning judicial process to handle any claims of violations of laws or policies?</i></p> <p><i>Have the structures, processes, training and needed resources been made available to translate laws and policies into practice?</i></p>
		<p><b>End phase:</b>  <i>We want to thank you for participating in this interview and our project. Are there any additional topics you want to discuss?</i></p> <p><i>Do you have any questions for us?</i></p> <p><i>We want to remind you that anything you have said is confidential, and that any private information you have provided, will be secured or anonymised. You may contact us at any point if you have any questions, additional information or wish to cancel your participation. Again, thank you so much!</i></p>

## Appendix E: Interview Guide to Governmental Organisations

### Interview Guide 1

The organisation of food provision to the Ukrainian refugees living in Norway during the Ukraine emergency

Introduction:

Could you tell us about which food/nutrition/related services your organisation has provided in the Ukrainian emergency?

Which guidelines are in place to ensure food is provided to the refugees?

Do you have any organisations/institutions you cooperated with for providing the above food-related aid? Could you describe this partnership?

What basis did you use to come up with the current food policy in place for the given period?

Are there structural barriers, that could constrain the success of the policy to be implemented? Please explain.

How do you finance your work?

What does the right to food mean to your organisation?

Does your organisation follow any human rights instruments, such as “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, and if so, how does this influence your work? If not, do you see any activities that are related?

How is the right to food taken into consideration in practice?

Do you experience any challenges to the fulfilment of the right to food in your work?

Are there any barriers to the right of food on a policy level? Please explain.

Is your target group in any way participating in any of your activities, and if so, how?

Is the target group in any way participating in the planning process of activities, and if so, in which ways?

Is the target group in any way participating in the evaluation of your work, and if so, in which ways?

Follow up: How are their concerns taken into consideration in the delivery and evaluation of your services?

Are there mechanisms in place to ensure affected communities can be involved in drafting policies concerning them?

Could you describe if your organisation has any activities which aim to develop the capacities of the target group to better claim their right(s) to food)?

Could you describe if your organisation has any activities which aim to develop the capacities of the state in realizing human rights?

If the question is not clear: Which channels do you have for informing the state or communicating your concerns regarding the state's obligations?

What steps are being taken to ensure that the provision of food-related aid is not discriminatory in its aim, design, conduct and analysis? If not clear: Could you describe how your organisation works to avoid discriminatory practices?

Are there any guidelines to prevent discrimination?

Have you observed any discrimination in the delivery of food-related aid in your work?

Have you experienced any differences in how gender and age are being treated or included in pursuing their right to food?

Have you experienced any differences in how men and women are being treated or included in pursuing their right to food?

Could you describe any situations in your field in which discrimination or unequal treatment could occur?

How is participation of marginalised groups being ensured?

How is religion and culture taken into consideration?

Which channels do your target group have for communicating their satisfaction and possible dissatisfaction? How are they informed about this?

Is your target group made aware of their rights, and if so, in which ways?

How does your organisation address any complaints that might come up?

How do you ensure accountability and transparency?

How do you analyse the situation?

How do you analyse your work?

What is being done to ensure that competent and trustworthy entities carry out the situation analysis?

How are the results of the analysis beneficial to your services?

How and by whom will the results of the analysis be disseminated?

How is it ensured that situation assessment and analysis, in general, contribute to the promotion of human rights?

Which human rights treaties have been ratified for refugees? Is there anyone regarding food and nutrition?

Is there a functioning judicial process to handle any claims of violations of laws or policies?

Have the structures, processes, training, and resources needed to translate laws and policies into practice been made available?

End phase:

*We want to thank you for participating in this interview and our project. Are there any additional topics you want to discuss?*

*Do you have any questions for us?*

*We want to remind you that anything you have said is confidential and that any private information you have provided, will be secured or anonymised. You may contact us at any point if you have any questions or additional information or wish to cancel your participation. Again, thank you so much!*



## Appendix F: Interview Guide to NGO, Private, Public and Other Organisations

### Interview Guide 2

The organisation of food provision to the refugees living in Norway with a particular focus on what happened during the Ukraine emergency in the spring 2022

Introduction:

Although we are familiar with your organisation, we would like to start by you providing us with a description of what it does in case of emergencies like the one that occurred after the Occupation of Ukraine. How did your organisation activate itself?

Which network was activated/who are the main actors your organisation cooperates with in these cases?

What were the main challenges in organising the reception of such a large group of people?

As you know, we are particularly interested in food  
Can you tell us about how the feeding of the Ukrainian refugees was organised?  
(here, we will elaborate a little, based on your answers

Which guidelines are in place related to food provision to the refugees? (in an emergency like the one mentioned above/in "normal" situations)

Do you have any organisations/institutions you cooperated with for providing the above food-related aid? Could you describe this partnership? How does it go?

What basis did you use to develop the current food provision guidelines? (any consultation/exchange of information with similar institutions in Nordic countries?)

Are there structural barriers that could constrain the success of the policy to be implemented?

Do you have any form of control over the quality of the food that is provided in reception centres?

What kind of control over the quality and quantity of food that residents in asylum centres eat (when they have to provide food themselves)?

In our study, we are also concerned with the concept of the right to food

Does your organization follow any human rights instruments, such as “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights”, and if so, how does this influence your work? If not, do you see any activities that are related?

How is the right to food taken into consideration in practice?

Do you experience any challenges to the fulfilment of the right to food in your work?

Are there any barriers to the right of food on a policy level?

Are refugees/asylum seekers in any way participating in the planning process of food provision, and if so, in which ways?

Is the target group participating in evaluating your work in any way, and if so, in which ways?

Follow up: How are their concerns taken into consideration in the delivery and evaluation of your services?

Could you describe if your organisation has any activities which aim to develop the capacities of the target group better to claim their right(s) to food)?

Could you describe whether your organisation has any activities that aim to develop the state's capacities for realizing human rights?

Here, we intend also the organisation/institutions your organisation cooperate with (i.e. actors running reception centres

Have you observed (known of) any discrimination in the delivery of food-related aid in your work?

What steps are being taken to ensure that the provision of food-related aid is not discriminatory in its aim, design, conduct and analysis? If not clear: Could you describe how your organization works to avoid discriminatory practices?

Are there any guidelines to prevent discrimination?

Have you experienced any differences in how gender, age and ethnicity are treated or included in pursuing their right to food?

Have you experienced any differences in how men and women are treated or included in pursuing their right to food?

Could you describe any situations in your field where discrimination or unequal treatment could occur?

How is the participation of marginalized groups being ensured?

How are religion and culture taken into consideration?

Which channels does your target group use to communicate their satisfaction and possible dissatisfaction? How are they informed about this?

Is your target group made aware of their rights, and if so, in which ways?

How does your organisation address any complaints that might come up?

How do you ensure accountability and transparency?

\*\*\*\*\*

Is any form of monitoring the food provision for refugees living in reception centres?  
How do you analyse your work?

How are the results of the analysis beneficial to your services?

How and by whom will the results of the analysis be disseminated?

How is it being ensured that the situation assessment and analysis in general contribute to the promotion of human rights?

End phase:

*We want to thank you for participating in this interview and our project. Are there any additional topics you want to discuss?*

*Do you have any questions for us?*

*We want to remind you that anything you have said is confidential and that any private information you have provided, will be secured or anonymized. You may contact us at any point if you have any questions or additional information or wish to cancel your participation. Again, thank you so much!*