

Vulnerable families in Ukraine as the main social service users: comparison of the pre-pandemic and pandemic period

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Introduction

In the 21st century, humanity faced a pandemic - COVID-19 which caused a collapse in all spheres of society and economy and led to humanitarian, socio-economic, and medical crises in the world (Thompson & Rasmussen, 2020). People had to learn how to live in new conditions and fight with insidious disease. Many countries closed their boundaries, declared lockdowns and other strict response measures (Nay, 2020) to keep their citizens safe. All these heightened risk factors are influencing already vulnerable populations, including families, making their already rather difficult situations worse. Moreover, the system of social protection of families and vulnerable families particularly also faced new challenges. Social service providers had to adapt programs and meet the evolving needs of all families during the pandemic. Ukraine is not the exception. But there is one big difference between the world and Ukraine in social work practice: the beginning of the pandemic in the world coincided with the development of a new system of providing social services at the level of territorial communities in Ukraine. So, this paper will 1) summarize the existing approaches to “family” understanding and studies regarding the problem of vulnerability of families and role of different factors causing family vulnerability before the pandemic and at the beginning of it; 2) provide brief analysis of Ukrainian system of social work with families, vulnerable families started to be provided; 3) present data regarding vulnerability among families in Ukraine in 2019 and in 2020, factors that caused vulnerability; 4) inform about social service providers activity in turn to help vulnerable families to cope with problems before and in the time of pandemic; and 4) provide recommendations for government and local social agencies working with vulnerable families how to make their work better.

1 Literature Review

1.1 Determination of families and vulnerable families

Family is regarded as a major social institution where individuals do their social activity. It is “a unit of two or more people united by marriage, blood, adoption, or consensual union, in general consulting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other” (Desai, 1994). In the UNESCO report (1992), family is characterized as “all people living in one household”. Moreover, even if its members do not share a household because they are temporarily away, family as a unit may exist as a social reality.

Despite the different approaches towards defining the family in reviewed literature, it is important to mention that we characterize family as micro-society created by one or more

person trying to construct an intimate environment, based on shared goals, trust and accountability. In families people meet various needs (physiological, emotional, etc.), provide support and sustenance, continuity between past and future generations. Families force various functions such as: differentiates regulation of sexual behavior, reproduction, economic cooperation, education, affection, protection and emotional support and social status (Anastasiu, 2012). But they changed drastically in recent years (Eneh, Nnama-Okechukwu, ..., & Okoye, 2017) mainly because of industrialization and specialization of society.

The nature and structure of the family has changed over the years too. For example, Park (2013) differentiates three types of families: nuclear, joint and three-generation ones. However, Oelze (2000) points out nuclear, single, extended, childless, stepfamily and grandparent types of families. The last classification of family types is closer to Ukraine. In the works of Ukrainian researchers Kobylanska (2017) and Kozachenko (2010) we can find provness of that. Moreover, Kobylanska (2017) add so-called “distant families” that exists in Ukraine – families where one of its members or more are far away for a long period because of work, detention, or treatment.

Regardless of type, all families can lead their own life, do routine tasks, cope with stress, strength and conflicts, share and involve resources, care about each other or children etc. However, sometimes families get into difficult, stressful situations, which are beyond their control, and as a result, they cannot cope with them and become inadequate or exhausted. Certain social situations or life stages when individual or family need support with social, health and economic (Vironkannas et al., 2020) or material, social and emotional (Radcliff et al., 2012) problems are defined as vulnerable. Situations when families’ needs cannot be met within their own resources or their kith and kinship networks have impact on families’ life are determined as vulnerability (Arney & Scott, 2011).

“Vulnerable families” have a particular need for socially responsible, professionally provided support, protection of children growing up within the family (Bauer, & Wieszorek, 2016). In Ukraine it should be provided at the territorial communities by creating and delivering of social services vulnerable families need (Slozanska, Horishna, & Romanovska, 2020).

1.2 Factors that contribute to family vulnerability

Vulnerable families tend to suffer from high levels of stress and isolation resulting from lack of support networks, financial or health problems, job-related difficulties, or other negative factors that lead to emotional distress, conflict, relational difficulty for family members, poor parenting and ineffective communication (Task Force on the Family, 2003, p. 1542). To factors that have negative influence on the families Slee (2006) refers life changes, social inclusion, living environments, housing and residential mobility, neighborhoods and social cohesion, mental and emotional health, well-being, support for parenting, childcare, service planning and provision, intersectional action (integrated service delivery). “Chronic and multiple disadvantage, stressful life events and children with ongoing physical, developmental, emotional/behavior problems” can also cause problems in families with which they cannot cope alone without external help and support (Slee, 2006).

All risk-factors families can face Gitterman (2014) structured into two groups: 1) life conditions and 2) life circumstances and events. While, Timshel, Montgomery and Dalgaard (2017) differentiate individual, family, societal and cultural levels of them.

Based on the existing literature, that demonstrate different approaches to identification and characterization of risk factors influencing family, we grouped them into two blocks:

internal - mental or other disability, age, illness, inability to take care or protect of oneself (Fawcett, 2009; Koenek, Witt, & Oehme, 2015); absence of communication, interaction and emotional support (Chereni, 2017; Şoitu, 2015); death, divorce, imprisonment, participation in hostilities, depression (Prasad, Devi, Khasgiwala, & Vaswani, 2009; Van Hook, 2019); violence (Ribeiro et al., 2021) etc.;

external – natural disasters, radical social economic and cultural changes, socially expected tasks and functions (Gomes, & Martinho, 2021), family disorganization, breaking relationship, gender, stage of life, level of resources (Alston, Hazeleger, & Hargreaves, 2019; Berzin, 2010); interactions between individuals and social environments (Hollomotz, 2009); family size, poverty incidence (Orbeta Jr, 2005); risks, shocks, stress and isolation (Lloyd, King, & Chenoweth, 2002; Terrion, 2006) etc.

All factors mentioned above can have short and long-term negative outcomes for families. Long term perspective of being under the influence of risk factors leads to stigmatization of vulnerable families (Vironkannas, Liuski, & Kuronen, 2020). In time and even early support of families and early intervention, access to social services can have protective effect and prevent falling into the category of vulnerable (Slozanska, 2018; Slozanska, Horishna, 2016; Fawcett, 2009). Focus on the factor generating vulnerability among families is in prerogative for social workers working with vulnerable families or preventing vulnerability among families. The ranges of factors, which individually or in combination can contribute to short or long-term vulnerability, have to be identified and classified by social worker before providing services in a local community where families live (Slozanska, 2018). It is especially important in time of the pandemic, when the cases of domestic abuse and family violence increased dramatically (Usher, et al., 2020). Families also suffer from economic stress, disaster-related instability, enhanced exposure to exploitative relationships, and reduced options for support (Peterman et al., 2020). Social isolation (van Gelder et al., 2020) starts to be the factor causes the vulnerability among families.

At the beginning of COVID-2019 Ukraine has just finished implementing of the first stage of social welfare reform. Due to it social services have to be provided at the territorial communities for people in need, including vulnerable families by qualified social workers. Social service providers have to be created in territorial communities for that. So, the aim of the study is to examine factors causing vulnerability among families in Ukraine before and in time of the pandemic and what impact social services providers have on the families in territorial communities to prevent or cope with vulnerability. Recommendations are proposed to make social work with vulnerable families better.

2 Methods

Qualitative secondary data analysis (QSDA) (Ruggiano, & Perry, 2019) was used to conduct the research.

This study used two sets of data: 1) a subset of findings from the larger annual study of the Ministry of Social Politics of Ukraine; 2) a subset of findings from the local annual studies of Regional Centers of Social Services. The first and the second sets of data were collected in 2019 (before the pandemic starts) and 2020 (in time of the pandemic). The researchers

conducting the QSDA were not involved in the parent studies. The official requests were emailed to the Ministry and all Regional Centers by the authors of this paper.

The data received from the Ministry contained the information about the numbers of social services providers in rural and urban territories in 2019, 2020; the total numbers of social agencies' clients during 2019-2020; and the list of social services provided at the territorial communities in 2019, 2020.

The data received from 20 Regional Centers of Social Services (Kherson, Donetsk, Sumy, Poltava, Vinnytsia, Volyn, Dnipro, Dnipro, Zhytomyr, Zakarpattia, Kyiv, Kirovohrad, Lviv, Mykolaiv, Rivne, Luhansk, Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, and Ternopil) of the 24 existing ones contained information about types of clients (families) and factors that caused vulnerability. This data were gathered by Regional Centers using standard reporting form № 12-soc, approved by Ministry of Social Politics of Ukraine in 2017.

Research-question approach in GSDA was used in writing secondary studies. The primary research questions we wanted to answers on while analyzing received data were:

1. What are the dynamics of vulnerable families in 2019 and 2020 and do all of them receive social services, what types of services?
2. What are the factors that caused vulnerability in families in Ukraine in 2019 and 2020 and what are their main problems?
3. Are there any dynamics in creating of social services providers working with families in 2019 and 2020 in Ukraine?

These primary research questions reflect the situation with social services providing for vulnerable families and show the dynamics of increasing or decreasing numbers of vulnerable families and factors which caused their vulnerability before the pandemic time and in time of Covid-19 in Ukrainian context. It also shows the dynamics of creating of social service providers ready to prevent negative factors influencing the family and support vulnerable families who are already suffer from some negative factors.

To find answers on the research questions two sets of data were analyzed. The researchers structure all data received from Regional Centers in 20 excel files into one table. The data received from Ministry was used in its primary form. The variables were generated before the data analysis.

All data from parent study have been already coded before sending to researchers for secondary analysis. IRB approval was obtained for the parent study.

Limitations in the QSDA: 1) as no one from research team members were not included in the parent study and had no influence on the primary analysis there is no strict idea whether the data were collected correctly and in full; 2) authors conduct the research with strict purpose using data that were collected for another purpose – it limits a thematic finding that could be identified; 3) qualitative secondary study conducting with data that were firstly collected and analyzed before can give changes in context and/or time comparing with the data collected in present days.

3 Findings and Discussion

3.1 Family institutions in Ukraine

Ukraine is in the stage of actively applying a new approach to social welfare and social work with families (Slozanska, 2020). A few laws approved in 2016-2020 by the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (On Social Services, 2019; Methodical recommendations ..., 2016; Methodical recommendations., 2017) forced the Amalgamated Territorial Communities (ATCs), created due to the reform of decentralization (Decentralization, 2021), to start their own local social agencies (Centers of social services providing (CSSP)) and finance them from local budgets. In January 10, 2020, 1029 ATCs were in Ukraine (Ministry of Communities Territories Development of Ukraine, 2020). Analysis of the Reports received from regions shows that in 2020 compared to 2019 the number of CSSP increased from 129 up to 205 (On approval of the reporting form № 12-soc, 2017). It means that only 19,9% of ATCs full fill the recommendation of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and started CSSP. Definitely, in rural areas there is better progress than in urban ones: the number of these institutions increased in rural areas from 97 (in 2019) to 167 (in 2020) (see Table 1).

Qualified direct practitioners hired in CSSP have to provide at least minimum packet of based social services for families after assessing their needs (Slozanska, 2020) immediately (emergency), constantly, temporarily or one time as fast as possible (On Social Services, 2019). Services can be provided at the clients' residence, in the premises of a social service provider (stationary or semi-stationary) or at the place of stay (at home). Also governmental (state and communal) and non-governmental (institutions, enterprises, associations, charities, religious organizations, natural persons and individuals) agencies can be involved in social service delivering integrated, interdisciplinary, family-oriented approaches (Slozanska, 2017, p. 77-101). Case management has been recognized as a major way for social services providing for families in need (On Social Services, 2019).

Starting from 2020, the ATCs took responsibility for social services providing to all citizens due to their needs and interests on the "one-stop-shop" (Slozanska, 2020). But to do that is very hard because the small number of social workers, employed in CSSP in Ukraine - only 3,100 at the beginning of 2021 (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, 2021). At the same time, it is very important to monitor and evaluate the quality of social services provided by social agencies. This is the responsibility of the Regional divisions of the National Social Service of Ukraine (2020) will be created in each region.

3.2 Vulnerable families in Ukraine

In Ukraine, the term "families in difficult life circumstances" (On Social Services, 2019) is used to nominate vulnerable families. There we refer families who have the highest risk of getting into difficult situations due to the influence of external and/or internal factors that negatively affect their life, health, development and functioning and which they cannot cope with on their own (On Social Services, 2019). According to the data obtained in 2019, there were 122,337 vulnerable families in the study areas. However, in in 2020, the first year of COVID-19, the number of vulnerable families decreased and became 108,139. The same negative dynamic we observed in social services providing to vulnerable families. In 2019 386,846 vulnerable families were covered by services in Ukraine, while in 2020 – 330,334 (On approval of the reporting form № 12-soc, 2017).

We have to mention that in 2020 comparing with 2019 the number of CSSP in the territorial communities in Ukraine increased almost twice. But it had no positive effect on quantitative growth of provision of social services for vulnerable families in the places of their residence. It is explained by the fact that at the beginning of the 2020 the CSSP did not work in Ukraine as it was unable to comply with quarantine conditions. After being vaccinated (at the 2-3 quarter of the year) employed social workers started to work with families and provide services. Social agencies created in ATCs made a richer menu of services to vulnerable families in the pandemic time too and proposed new way to provide them.

In Ukraine there is a little confuse with classification of vulnerable families. This happened mainly because of 1) reforms that are still going on in social welfare and social work and 2) fact that social work as professional sphere, education and research is on the stage of developing in Ukraine. Therefore, there are different approaches to differentiation of types of vulnerable families. In the new law On Social Services approved in 2019 vulnerable families are structured due to factors that cause vulnerability: aging; inability to take care of oneself; illness; mental and behavioral disorders; disability; homelessness; unemployment; poverty; behavioral disorders in children; carelessness; i) loss of social ties (including because of prisoning); child abuse; gender-based violence; domestic violence; human trafficking; damage caused by fire, natural disaster, catastrophe, hostilities, terrorist act, armed conflict, temporary occupation (On Social Services, 2019). While, the Procedure for identifying families (people) in difficult life circumstances (2020) is another document that provides totally different classification of vulnerable families.

Such a variety of approaches to classification of vulnerable families is also among scientists. Thus, Galaguzova (2000) differentiates four types of families in difficult life circumstances (with children, with people with disabilities, with alcohol or drugs problems, with internal conflict). Rudyak (2020) proposes classification of families in need very closed to that mentioned in the Procedure for identifying families (people) in difficult life circumstances (2020).

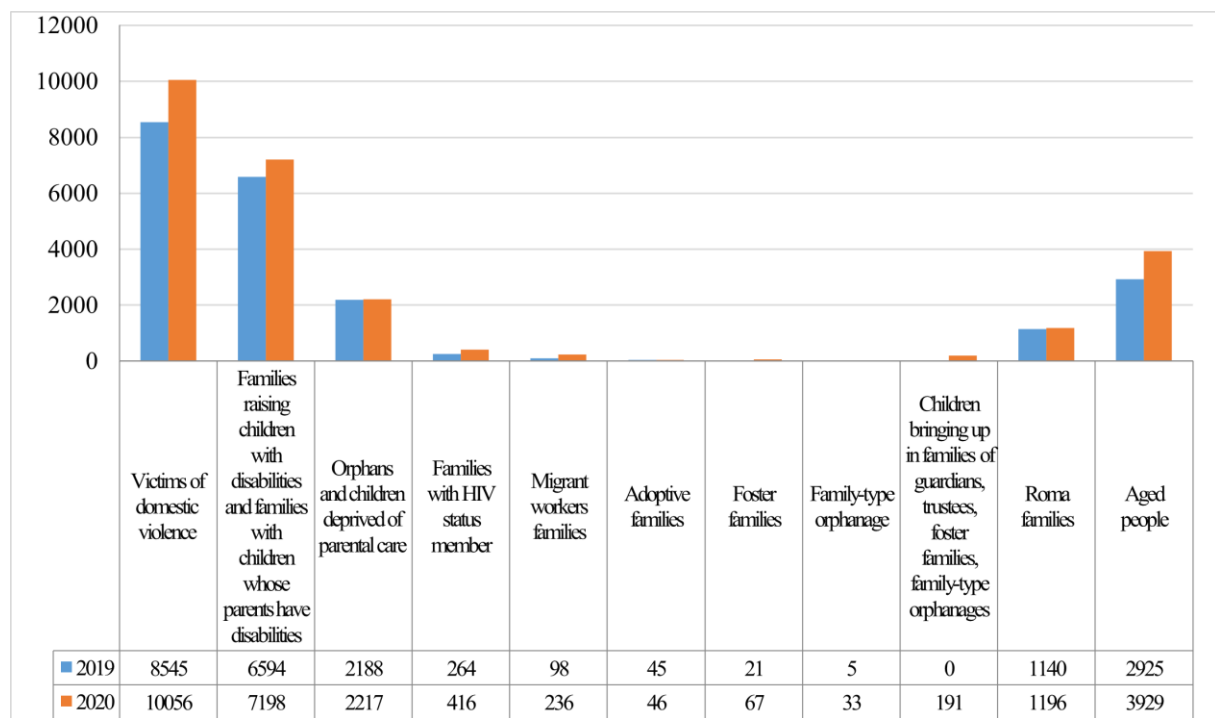
At the same time all CSSP still use documents approved before 2019. For example, all data about number of vulnerable families, their types and factors that cause vulnerability is collected through the annual filling of a form dated 2012 (On approval of the reporting form № 12-soc, 2012). It provides the third type of classification of families in difficult life circumstances, different from those given in the law On Social Services (2019) and in the Procedure (2020).

The analysis with data received in the reports on 2019 and 2020 from 20 regions of Ukraine (On approval of the reporting form № 12-soc, 2012) allowed us to define the most typical types of families in difficult life circumstances. Among families the number of which increased in 2020 comparing with 2019 (see Fig. 1) are: victims of domestic violence (on 0,8 % in 2020), families raising children with disabilities and families with HIV status member (on 0,5 % in 2020 each), aged people and migrant workers families (on 0,4 % in 2020 each). These types of vulnerable families became clients of social workers not only in Ukraine. The same tendencies were observed in the world too (Bordichuk, 2021; Khan et al., 2020; Usher et al., 2020). They were suffering of social isolation (old ones) (Bordichuk, 2021), impossibility to receive educational services (children with educational disabilities) (Daftary et al., 2021) and due to the loss of external connections (victims of domestic violence) (Usta, Murr, & El-Jarrah, 2021). Increasing in number of migrants in 2020 is related to “open boundaries” for

vaccinated Ukrainians. Person living with HIV started to receive intensive, in-person and family-centered HIV primary care (Armbruster et al., 2020).

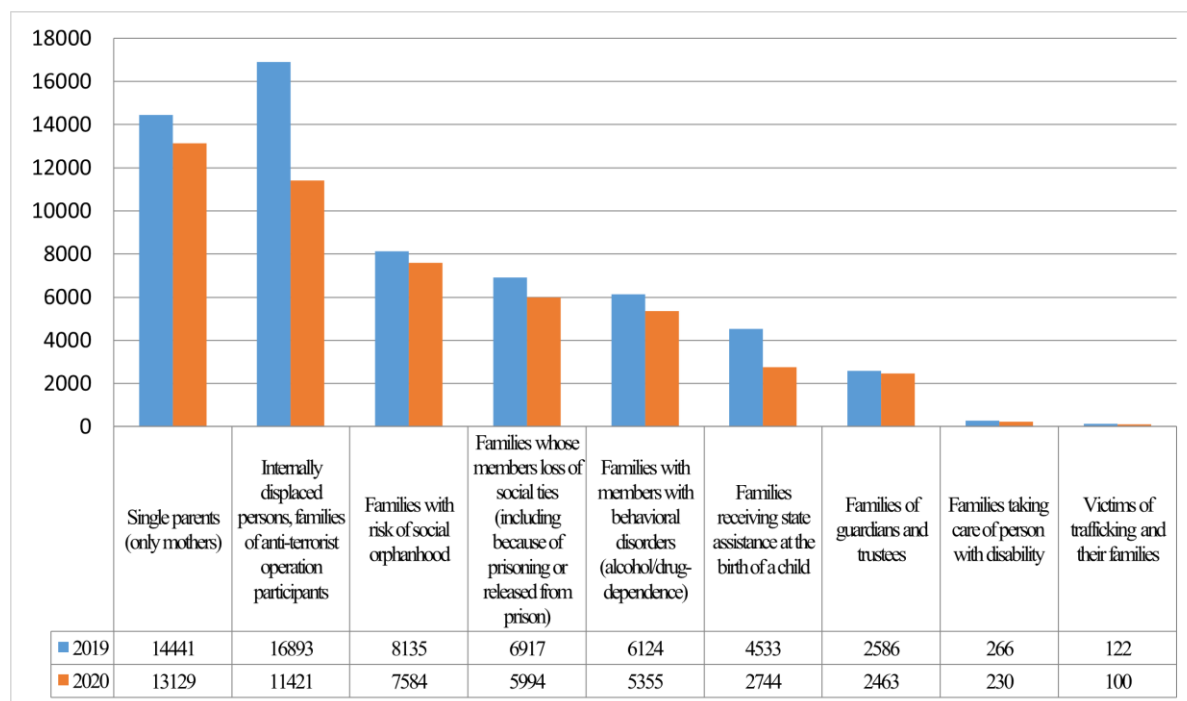
Almost the same in both years were the number of families taking care of orphans, children deprived parental care and Roma families. While in 2020, the number of foster families tripled and the number of family type orphaned increased to six. 191 children got services being in families of guardians, trustees, foster families and family type orphaned in 2020. In 2019 there was no such child. This happened thanks to the reform of deinstitutionalization, which was in an active phase of implementation in 2020 (Slozanska, Horishna, 2021).

Figure 1. Types of families in difficult life circumstances, the number of which has increased in 2020, according to 2019



At the same time analyzing the received data we observe the decreasing in numbers of some types of families in 2020 comparing with 2019 (see Fig. 2). In Ukraine in 2020 became less the number of single parents (only mothers) families, internally displaced families and families with anti-terrorist operation participants, families with risk of social orphanhood, families whose members lost social ties (including because of prisoning or released from prison), families with members with behavioral disorders (alcohol/drug-dependence), families receiving state assistance at the birth of a child, families of guardians and trustees, families taking care with disability and families whose members were victims of trafficking. But at the same time transforming the got numbers into presents we saw that the number of mentioned types of vulnerable families left almost the same in both years. The exception is the percentage of internally displaced families and families with anti-terrorist operation participants which number became less on 0,92 %. It can be explained by the impossibility to move inside the country in the pandemic time.

Figure 2. Types of families in difficult life circumstances, the number of which has decreased in 2020, according to 2019



However, the sent reports didn't include information about other types of families in difficult life circumstances mentioned in the law On Social Services (2019) and the Procedure (2020). But the amount of each type of families is too small and it is difficult to analyze. But, there is no data about number of families with partial or complete loss of physical activity, memory, unemployed, low-income or divorced families, homelessness. This information is also interesting for analyses as many people lost job in COVID-19 time, had huge troubles with health after being ill with COVID, overlive emotional and psychological crisis, stayed alone.

It is worse to mention that all these types of vulnerable families mentioned above are characterized by low social status in any of the spheres of life, impossibility to cope with the functions assigned to them and their adaptive abilities are significantly reduced (Galaguzova, 2000, p. 76). However, each of it has its own unique dynamic, its strengths and weaknesses.

Due to the law On Social Services (2019) and to the Procedure for identifying families (people) in difficult life circumstances (2020), if a family faced at least one of the above-mentioned factors and cannot cope with, it can be assumed that the family is in difficult life circumstances. Social services in territorial communities should be provided to support them.

The analysis of the data given in the Reports from Ministry shows that in 2020, compared to 2019, the number of families served during the year in the CSSP increased from 52,157 to 64,407 (123.5% more than in the 2019) (see Table 1) (On approval of the reporting form № 12-soc, 2012). At the same time, the number of people served by the structural unit for the provision of social services decreased slightly. These processes have been significantly influenced by the decentralization reform that began in 2014 and aimed at forming effective local self-government by optimizing local communities. As you can see in the table 1.

Table 1. Number of social services providers in ATCs.

Categories	Served by a social service provider			
	Centers of social services providing		Structural branch of the social services provider	
	2019	2020	2019	2020
Number of CSSP and their branches during the reporting period	129	205	99	90
Number of CSSP and their branches in urban areas	32	38	19	25
Number of CSSP and their branches in rural areas	97	167	80	75
Number of families (in person), served during the reporting period	52157	116564	11142	8514
Number of families (in person), served during the reporting period in urban areas	13365	33695	3021	2018
Number of families (in person), served during the reporting period in rural areas	38792	82869	8121	6496

As it is seen from the table 1, the number of CSSP providing social services in ATCs for vulnerable families increased in 22,7 % in 2020 comparing with 2019. As the number of rural ATCs created in 2020 prevailed over rural ones, that logically, that the number of CSSP in rural areas has increased significantly (on 35,1 % in 2020). Number of vulnerable families, served during the reporting period in CSSP also increased twice. And also CSSP placed in rural areas served more clients too.

3.3 Problems encountered by the vulnerable families in Ukraine

There was no information about problems vulnerable families face in Ukraine in data received from Ministry and Regional Centers. Based on Oelze's (2020) classification of family types, which is close to our country, we analyzed papers on few Ukrainian researchers (Heorhadze, 2019; Homenko, 2018; Kuzmenko, 2019; Rybak, 2020; Sergienko, 2019; Sitnik, 2019; Slozanska, 2017; Tatarchuk, 2019; Yelagina, 2020) and structured typical challenges of Ukrainian vulnerable families depending on family type:

- *nuclear or elementary families* – consist of two parents and their children who are biological or adopted – face many challenges and weaknesses, among which common are: exclusiveness, which leads to isolation and stress, constant struggling with conflict resolution, low income, neglecting of important things, etc.;
- *single parent families* (increasing in numbers during recent years in Ukraine (Voznyuk, 2021) – consist of one parent who either never has been married or has been widowed/or divorced with one or more kids – to the cons of this family type can be referred: low income, absence of possibility to work full-time, low quality of childcare, inconsistency, especially if kids go back and forth between parents, etc.;

- *extended family* (“traditional” family type in Ukraine) – consists of two or more adults (usually grandparents) who are related through blood or marriage, usually along with children – to the weaknesses of such families referred: financial problems, lack of privacy, conflicts, etc.;
- *childless family* – units who can't have, don't want to have or postpone having kids - to the weaknesses of which are referred isolation, exclusiveness etc.;
- *stepfamily* – unit where two separate divorced parents or one of them, with or without kids merge into one - in stepfamilies children have the possibility to have two parents, but it also can create some problems concerning growing up the children, solving problems, view on discipline;
- *grandparent family* – unit when one or more grandparent is raising their grandchild or grandchildren because biological parents are not able properly to take care of their children as they are abroad, in jail, on drugs, too young etc. – often have problems with income, impossibility of grandparents to work full-time, have the health and energy to rise children due to their needs.

Among main problems of Ukrainian families in 2019 Georgadze (2019, pp. 125-129) pointed out changing of family values, reluctance to have (give birth) children, permanent stresses and divorcing; Lazarenko and Kurova (2019, p. 35), Skrypnyk and Pakushyna (2019, pp. 389-391) - family conflicts, alcohol dependence of one or both family members, financial difficulties, betrayal and jealousy; Mamrotska and Petrova (2018) - lack of own housing. In COVID-19 times among main factors causing vulnerability Kalenyk and Lysak (2020) point out poverty, Golina (2019) Katkova and Varina (2020), Levadnya (2020), Palamarchuk and Pedorych (2020), Prokopenko (2020) - domestic violence. Moreover, the number of victims have risen in COVID-times (Babkina, Tkachev, & Danilchenko 2020; Chebanova & Khlyvnyuk 2021; Timko 2020; Voznyuk 2021).

3.4 Services for vulnerable families proposed in Ukraine

The law On Social Services (2019) guarantees the basic social services providing to vulnerable families due to their needs. Every year the Ministry of Social Policy (MSP) and regional centers collect social and economic data on social services delivery to families and individuals from all regions of Ukraine (see Table 2). The MSP and regional centers selected information about risk factors that are believed to adversely affect families' development or well-being. The received data is used to plan and do state and regional programs of social services providing.

Table 2. The title and number of social services provided to the vulnerable families in 2019-2020.

No	Basic social service due to the law On Social Services (2019)	2019	2020
1	Social support	30243	27360
2	Consultancy	315319	255803
3	Social prevention	122500	106467
4	Social integration and reintegration	16271	12609
5	Social adaptation	41186	40650
6	Arrangement to family forms of care	378	1032
7	Crisis and emergency intervention	4088	4118
8	Representation of interests	48476	42752
9	Mediation	12195	9762

The number of services provided by type increased in 2020 compared to 2019, except for family placement / care and crises and emergency intervention services (Table 2). The most provided for the reporting period were counseling and social prevention services.

3.5 Recommendations

So, the number of vulnerable families in Ukraine before the COVID-19 and during the pandemic time is high. In time of COVID-2019 the number of victims of domestic violence, families raising children with disabilities, families with HIV status member, aged people and migrant workers families increased significantly. Factors that caused vulnerability in 2019 are different that those in 2020. Poverty and domestic violence were dominant. Social services providers do all the best to provide in time support and social services to all vulnerable families. But, unfortunately, their work in COVID-19 times were not regular.

At the same time, we noted some problematic moments. Due to the analyzed data and current literature alignment, the research team developed the following recommendations which are related not specifically to the COVID-19 time, but have some broader context. Their realization will make the work with vulnerable families to productive/

Suggestions for government (The Ministry of Social Politics of Ukraine)

The Ministry of Social Politics has a vital role and responsibility in the development of high quality social services for vulnerable families at local level. To make this process more understandable during this time, the following ideas will support the developing of social services for vulnerable families and help them to fight with the factors that caused the risk.

- *Align regulatory framework.* The analysis of regulatory acts in social service providing shows the difference in differentiating of types of the families in difficult life circumstances given particularly in the Laws (On Social Services, 2019; the

Procedure ...2020) and in Report (On approval of the reporting form № 12-soc, 2017). Moreover, the large annual study of The Ministry of Social Politics of Ukraine and local annual studies of Regional Centers of Social Services which are prepared every year on the demand of the Ministry of Social Policy contain data due to the Law On Social Services of 2003 which has expired when new Law (2019) has come into force in 2020. But, not confusing, it is useful to bring in compliance with all documentation and reporting requirements in accordance with applicable laws.

- *Develop a Strategic Action Plan to Support Families in Difficult Life Circumstances.* Nowadays it is important to build and support a strict social services providing system for families in difficult life circumstances at ATCs. Local Governments should think about a Strategic Action Plan that should be developed based on a qualitative assessment of community members' needs and with the input of stakeholders from multiple sectors. As part of the Strategic Action Plan ensure the social workers are main service providers for families and children in ATCs who need the support and finance at the very beginning; clarify their actions and timelines, measures of social services quality assessment. To make the Plan fully implemented it is good to organize cooperation and coordination between government, social agencies and citizens at ATCs to provide a full spectrum of social services for families in difficult life circumstances. The assessment, monitoring of social services provided at ATCs and connection to them of community citizens is important too.
- *Develop the Early Intervention Service at ATCs.* The families need to be identified for additional support at the earliest sign of crises. It is important to organize the network which members can mobilize and collaborate to support and help the family in need. This will help to prevent a child from institutionalization.

Suggestions for Social Services Providers

In Ukraine governmental and non-governmental (NGOs) organizations play a vital role in supporting vulnerable families due to the law On Social Services (2019). The new Law aims to introduce a new model of social services providing which is based on creating a market for such services. This model demands the improvement of the social services system's management in the context of decentralization and developing the unique approaches in its organization at the local level (Semigina, 2020). Local self-government in Ukraine has already started some new social agencies to solve the existing locally social problems. However, the analysis of their work shows that not all of them can provide demanding high quality social services at the local level because of lack of: government's strict position in social support and welfare of vulnerable families in Ukraine; understanding of the necessity of creating of social agencies locally; knowledge and skills of already employed social workers to full fill their roles in new conditions (Slozanska, 2017). In such a situation, social agencies providing social services at the local level have to correspond to existing demands, be nimble and proactive.

- *Revise Strategy.* To provide social services to vulnerable families social agencies need to revise their strategies, developing them based on the good assessment of citizens' demands, own and involved resources, constraints, possibilities of cooperation and activities. Considering this as an opportunity for innovation can help social agencies to identify effective solutions.

- *Adapt Approaches.* Adapting social services providing approaches to developed State Standards of Social Services Delivering (we have 17 of them for each basic social service mentioned in the Law On Social Service (2019)) is another important step to maintain effectiveness, making them systematic. Being cyclical, continued and flexible in providing social services of high quality for families in need at ATCs, adaptive to changing conditions working with each individual and family using remote methods to monitor and support them are also important challenges social agencies have to cope with.
- *Empower ATCs and People.* Communities can care for families long-term, especially in situations when social agencies are limited in resources and services they provide. Building strong networks can help to create a framework to support families in need within the ATCs and out of it. Active citizens can be good volunteers and good partners in helping families at an early stage of getting into difficult life situations. Citizens can serve as a liaison between local-government entities, social agencies and vulnerable families.

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