



# Learning Brief

## JERU



## One Mission, Two INGOs

### Lessons from the Joint Emergency Response in Ukraine (2022-2024)

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**JERU demonstrates that two INGOs can operate as one unified country mission to scale faster, reduce duplication, and deliver principled, locally led assistance—offering a replicable (not plug and play) approach for future crises.**

#### Context and Purpose



This learning brief summarizes **the key findings of a joint reflection process** on the Joint Emergency Response in Ukraine (JERU) which can be found in detail in the [full report](#).

The purpose of this process is to distil **actionable learning** from JERU's unique setup as a joint country mission — an approach that brings together **multiple international NGOs under one operational structure**.

Guided by a set of **learning questions**, the review examines how collaboration at this depth affects **systems integration, decision-making, resource use, adaptability, impact, and partnership engagement**.

**The intended users of this brief include humanitarian organizations, donors, policy makers, and country teams** considering or planning similar joint initiatives.

The content is based on a **structured reflection methodology** (Pause Reflect & Adapt), which includes internal workshops, staff interviews and document review.

The aim is to provide **practical insights, highlight enablers and bottlenecks, and offer tools for replication** — ultimately supporting more coherent, effective, and locally relevant humanitarian responses.

**JERU was launched in 2022** as response to the largest humanitarian crisis in Europe since WWII.

Rather than forming a traditional consortium, Concern Worldwide (CWW), Welthungerhilfe (WHH), and initially CESVI chose to establish a **joint country mission** — a single operational setup with **shared governance, pooled resources, and unified systems**.

Under this model, **WHH served as the operational lead and CWW as the programmatic lead**, guided by Rules of Cooperation (RoC) and a Joint Management Oversight Group (JMOG).

## Overview of the Country Mission



## One mission in practice

### Structure and Governance System



JERU operates as a **single, unified country mission**, avoiding duplication and aligning key functions from the outset.

A clear governance structure anchors the collaboration - with **WHH** as **operational lead**, overseeing finance, procurement, HR in-country, and logistics and **CWW** as the **program lead**, sharing responsibility in program design and implementation.

Strategic oversight is provided by the **JMOG**, composed of HQ representatives from both agencies and the country director (CD).

The mission follows **one organogram**, with one leadership team and clearly designated roles that ensure coherence and accountability.

This structure is built not only on formal agreements but also on **shared values, trust, and open collaboration**. Teams work seamlessly across organizational lines, and despite operating under two HQs, JERU cultivates a **unified mission identity** with harmonized processes and communications.

JERU combines **centralized strategic oversight** with **empowered country-level** decision-making.

**JMOG** oversees **strategic alignment and provides guidance** on key decisions. Meanwhile, **day-to-day operational and programmatic decisions are made within the country office**, ensuring timely and context-driven action.

The in-country team benefits from a **consultative leadership style**, with **strong input from technical teams, senior management, and field locations**.

## Decision-making



## More programming per euro

### Resource Integration and Efficiency



JERU maximizes efficiency by operating under a **single mission footprint**. The joint setup draws on the combined resources of both WHH and CWW while eliminating duplication in structures.

The mission managed a combined portfolio exceeding **€85 million** from 2022–2024 and **supported 321.000 people**. In 2024, the mission engaged **89 staff members**, and partnered with **nine local and national organizations** — a scale achieved through unified operations.

The joint structure enables **rapid scale-up** by tapping into **complementary donor pipelines**. Dual access significantly broadens funding opportunities and accelerates response times.

Beyond financial efficiency, the structure fosters **mutual learning and cross-organizational support**. Teams share tools, experiences, and expertise, while HQ support units backstop each other in times of need. **Sectoral strengths are pooled** to expand reach and technical depth.

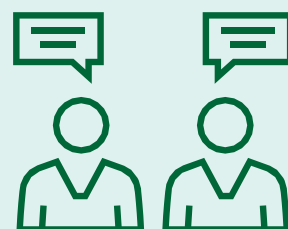
Communication within JERU reflects the strengths of a **unified country mission**, marked by **open dialogue, inclusive culture, and effective day-to-day collaboration** across organizational lines. Staff report **strong internal cohesion, particularly within field teams**, and operational communication flows function smoothly.

However, **challenges emerge in cross-HQ** coordination, where communication is sometimes misrouted or fragmented, and the country office faces **overlapping, uncoordinated requests from multiple HQ** communication departments.

Over time, the mission developed a shared **external identity**, with joint visibility tools contributing to **clearer representation among partners and donors**.

The experience underscores the **importance of clear internal communication structures, harmonized HQ engagement, and consistent induction** into both organizations' support systems.

### Communication



## Integration into IT, Finance, HR and Procurement Systems



Aligning finance, procurement, IT, and HR systems is one of JERU's **most complex but instructive** achievements. WHH systems provide the operational backbone, with CWW aligning its internal procedures accordingly.

While -particularly in **finance**, **systems pose challenges**, the mission overcomes these through **practical workarounds and collaborative problem-solving**.

**Dual reporting and IT-related** inefficiencies (e.g. multiple accounts, limited access to the other platforms) highlight the importance of **early systems planning**.

**HR alignment** functions smoothly, with WHH managing national staff and both organizations contributing to international recruitment. The **jointly developed job descriptions** are a clear success. Overall, JERU shows that system integration in joint missions is demanding but feasible - with the right collaboration and adaptability.

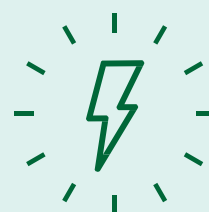
## “I thought—is that the new way of aid?”

JERU achieves impressive results, **reaching over 321,000 people across Ukraine** with high-quality, multi-sector humanitarian support.

The joint structure significantly **enhances reach, efficiency, and visibility** - making JERU one of the most recognized international actors in the Ukrainian response.

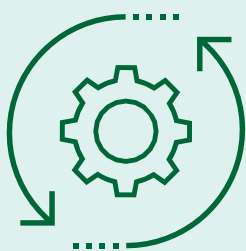
Pooled resources, combined technical expertise, and the absence of duplication enable **greater program quality and geographic coverage**. Stakeholders consistently describe the mission as impactful, well- coordinated, and worth replicating.

## Impact



## Agile in a dynamic context

### Adaptability



JERU demonstrates a high degree of adaptability, especially at **the country level where teams respond quickly to emerging needs**. The mission successfully shifts locations, launches new initiatives, and adjusts delivery models in real time — such as the rapid establishment of the Poltava field office.

**Flexible funding streams** from both organizations play a key role, enabling innovation within compliance frameworks, including creative agreements. The joint setup allows JERU **to pilot, scale, and refine programming** dynamically.

While some **HQ systems remain less flexible** — particularly in areas like partner contracting — the overall culture promotes **practical problem-solving and adaptive implementation**.

### Led with, not for

JERU builds **strong, trust-based partnerships** with local and national actors through **mutual respect, inclusive planning, and consistent dialogue**.

From the outset, the mission prioritizes **sustainability** by engaging civil society partners not just as implementers but as **co-creators** of the response — with an explicit **exit strategy** focused on handover and long-term ownership. Partners are supported through overheads and capacity strengthening, enabling them to lead effectively.

While some delays arise from **HQ's complex contracting and financial systems**, JERU made use of **innovative agreements and assessment tools** to improve flexibility. Feedback confirms that JERU's programming is both **coherent and highly relevant** to community needs.

### Alignment to Stakeholders' Contexts



### Scalability



JERU demonstrates that a joint country mission is not only feasible but replicable. Its **success is grounded in shared values, clear governance, and early structural alignment**.

The model **avoids duplication, enhances multiple donor access, and improves overall efficiency** - while maintaining institutional identity. Key enablers of replication include **jointly developed tools such as the Rules of Cooperation, flexible agreement templates, and joint job descriptions**, all of which are included in the [Good Practice Library](#).

The process requires **time and dedication**, especially to align systems and timelines, but it offers a **high-impact alternative to traditional consortia**.