KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

REGARDING IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL COHESION ACTIVITIES IN UKRAINE

Based on results of the research "Relationship practices, conflicts, and trigger themes among Ukrainian IDPs and host communities, as well as returnees and home communities" and general overview of peacebuilding activities in Ukraine

CONTENT

CURRENT CHALLENGES IN HROMADAS

Summarizing, we can draw attention to a key problem that becomes visible thanks to the research. The basic problem is inefficient (irrational, non-targeted) use of available resources, as well as lack of trust for high-quality and coordinated distribution of resources. In most cases, there is a lack of coordination between volunteer organizations (and among themselves), donors and local or central authorities. There is no comprehensive and detailed presentation of existing needs and forecasting of needs taking into account the military and socio-political situation (for example, after the first strikes on critical energy infrastructure, forecasting a sharp increase in needs for power banks, portable power plants, generators, etc.).

There is no coordination between the communities in the host regions and the exit regions where hostilities are taking place (for example, there is a need for food in communities in the hostilities zone and nearby regions, while potatoes have grown in the western regions, but due to disruption of logistics As a result, the local population is forced to throw away or feed the crop to livestock, instead of buying and delivering potatoes from the western regions to communities in need at a price favorable to both parties).

On behalf of the State, there are no comprehensive studies of the humanitarian component and analysis of potential risks for human resources. Analytical capabilities are focused on security and foreign policy issues and partly on infrastructure issues (housing).

The field of mental health needs significant attention, in particular the re-profiling (upgrading of the qualifications) of psychologists/psychiatrists on the issue of working with traumatic experiences. There is also a great demand from communities for trainings to unite community members and IDPs, and trainings to overcome burnout (especially for volunteers).

KEY CONCLUSIONS OF THE QUANTITATIVE STAGE OF THE RESEARCH

During the discussion in the qualitative phase of the research, respondents often indicated that there were no conflicts between different groups. This is due to the fact that it was difficult for respondents to talk about conflicts. In particular, the difficulty is that conflict and misunderstanding are somewhat taboo topics for discussion.

There is an attitude in society that one should avoid open conflicts and disputes: this trend was manifested in focus group discussions and confirmed at the quantitative stage. Therefore, problems are often not discussed, not reflected on and may not be realized by the respondents.

However, the first impression of the absence of conflicts in society is false: according to the results of all FGDs, a picture emerges that there are quite a lot of conflicts and misunderstandings in all areas — on everyday and emotional grounds, due to language and differences in customs and mentality, in the process of distributing humanitarian aid.

During the quantitative stage, it was found that the level of potential tension regarding the occurrence of conflict situations, among other factors, also depends on the emotional state of the respondent: the higher the level of distress, the more often people tend to notice potentially conflict situations and, accordingly, react to them.

The respondents of the quantitative survey were asked to evaluate a number of statements that describe potentially conflict situations that can arise for the following reasons:

- Because of household issues
- Due to emotional state
- Due to cultural differences, values
- Because of providing or receiving assistance.

Most often conflict situations are noticeable in the field of cultural and worldview features and due to emotional state (unreflected reasons). Conflict situations when giving or receiving help happen less often, and at the household level — even less often (with the exception of individual, most triggering situations, which are different for different target audiences).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Regarding conflict resolution, representatives of all TAs say that most often they try to understand the person expressing criticism, negative judgments and claims, put themselves in their place, understand their experiences, thoughts, emotions and needs. Respondents of all TAs can also avoid conflicts, or agree formally without changing their opinion. The choice of just such answers may partly not be a conscious way of action of the respondents, but a consequence of the deep-rooted taboo of the topic of conflicts.

However, even if the respondents' choice of such answers is an attempt to imitate socially acceptable stereotypes, appropriate communication regarding the practices of implementing this way of interaction will lie on a grateful and prepared ground.

The audience for such interventions should be the members of the territorial communities, because the respondents of all TAs are unanimous that when conflicts arise, they should be resolved by people among themselves (82% to 89% of respondents agree with this, depending on the TA). Among the actions that people can take to resolve and prevent conflicts, the first place in the sample as a whole is "to be tolerant and tolerant to differences between people", so interventions that will help to foster tolerance, as well as demonstrate them accordingly, can contribute to conflict resolution and prevention.

However, the demonstration of tolerance is possible under the conditions of a stable psychological state, and as we have seen, conflicts on an emotional basis are the most common. Therefore, prevention in this case is systematic work with a psychologist, both group and individual.

Demonstration of culture and dialogue skills, which would contribute to the establishment of understanding, can help Ukrainians to raise problematic issues and discuss them. In particular, this applies to transparent rules of co-living to avoid domestic conflicts.

The baring of a number of negative clichés and mutual rejection between the people of the East and the West can become a more complex topic of such interventions (this conflict has a long history, it was formed during the times of the USSR under the influence of propaganda). In particular, the image of a "Bandera resident" can still evoke a negative attitude among residents of the East. On behalf of the residents of the West, there may be a negative attitude towards the residents of the East, as "non-Ukrainians" who have forgotten their language, traditions, faith, etc.

Respondents suggest involving the community or local government in resolving conflicts much less frequently (from 24 to 33%), and even smaller share of respondents prefer the remaining options (volunteers, NGOs, other organizations). According to the respondents, the community and local government can primarily contribute to the resolution and prevention of conflicts precisely through the creation of additional jobs, as well as the improvement of basic living conditions.

WHAT CAN UNITE US AFTER THE WAR

Among the characteristics and aspirations of Ukrainians from different regions, which will become unifying after the war, three characteristics are leaders among all groups of respondents: patriotism, mutual trust and hard work.

We note that trust in each other is one of the most unifying characteristics, while a large number of respondents feel a loss of trust. Obviously, this is the gap, the filling of which can have the most positive effect on both the cohesion and the emotional state of Ukrainians.

KEY CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP: INSIGHTS FROM PARTICIPANTS

In all TAs, respondents gave recommendations that would help resolve and prevent conflicts in communities, as well as promote understanding and cohesion between different TAs. Often, the recommendations provided for a number of activities and efforts on the part of the local authorities — the organization of communication and information, educational work, events, dialogues, assistance services, etc.

Also, according to the respondents, specialists and mediators should be involved in the work on conflict resolution and prevention, which would contribute to the establishment of a dialogue, search for the formats (mediations). There is a need in wartime for more active work of psychologists and education on the topic of trauma and chronic stress, PTSD, etc.

Let's list **the recommendations given by the respondents,** we will group the recommendations according to directions:

Informational direction:

- create and disseminate rules of interaction and behavior that are understandable for locals and IDPs, especially in places of collective living, that will prevent conflicts;
- to provide clear and understandable information about the rights to receive humanitarian aid for various TAs;
- carry out effective information work, provide access to information about various types of assistance for local residents and IDPs;
- create and distribute digital tools that would help IDPs find the necessary information, assistance and services;
- avoid media materials that contribute to conflicts and exacerbate misunderstandings.

Distribution of resources in the territorial community, delivery of humanitarian aid, provision of needs:

- provide basic living conditions for IDPs and local residents, including social housing, financial and humanitarian assistance to families in need;
- maintain social justice — equal access of all groups to community services and resources;
- study the needs of different groups and provide assistance as needed;
- there were opinions that help can be provided for a small donation, then there will be fewer people who like free help, people will probably not take too much.

Public sector (in cooperation with local authorities):

- to develop the public sector, strengthen the capacity of organizations;
- to ensure the efficient organization of the work of humanitarian centers — accounting of aid and the database of those in need, recipients, to create an effective system of issuing and delivering aid to the TA;
- to improve the coordination and cooperation of State structures among themselves and State structures with charitable organizations;
- conduct public hearings on various issues;
- attract grants and implement useful social and business projects in the community;
- to create working mechanisms of public control over representatives of local authorities in order to prevent abuses in the distribution of humanitarian aid;
- involve IDPs in volunteer projects and paid public works after the initial period of adaptation;
- to organize public paid workplaces in the community.

Activities that will promote social cohesion (dialogues, mediation, etc):

- conduct dialogues for understanding between different groups of local residents and IDPs, the authorities and the territorial community (regarding language, religious issues and other hot topics), as an example, in a format similar to focus group discussions (respondents did not mention the term mediation);
- to hold cultural events and sports, as well as public events in the community, which would promote informal communication between community residents, IDPs and "returnees";
- involve young people in community activities, young people are better able to resolve conflicts, find understanding, because they have fewer stereotypes and more tolerant.

Education and educational programs:

- to spread educational information about non-violent communication, non-discrimination — to increase the culture of communication;
- to create educational hubs that could engage in educational and educational work, as well as help in writing, receiving and implementing grants for IDPs and other TAs;
- to involve mass media in educational work in matters of understanding in communities;
- work with children and youth on the topic of understanding in kindergartens, schools and universities.

Psychological direction:

- to increase the level of psychological knowledge of local residents, IDPs and "returnees", understanding of stressful and traumatic conditions for all TAs, psychological first aid and self-help skills;
- creation of a system of accessible and free psychological assistance for all TAs and groups in territorial communities.

Law direction, normative regulation:

- to create a valid and real road map for the adaptation of IDPs in the host communities, based on the experience of European countries, where all rights are spelled out, assistance is provided, but after a certain time IDPs must start living independently in the community, without assistance;
- to acquaint IDPs and representatives of other TAs with their rights and mechanisms for their protection;
- provision of free legal assistance and consultation to IDPs and local residents.

Economic and investment direction:

- attract grants for the development of entrepreneurship, there are now a lot of such grants for IDPs;
- create jobs and attract investments in the community, including grant funds;
- according to the respondents, there is an unnoticed and unengaged TA — these are men who returned to Ukraine from abroad (lived abroad for a long time, have families there, although the citizenship is Ukrainian) to join the Armed Forces or as volunteers, but for certain reasons they did not get there in these structures, at the same time, they cannot return abroad and must remain in Ukraine, probably for a long time. According to the volunteers, such people should be given grants for business development, because many of them have or had their own businesses — they will work for communities, create jobs, etc.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS — FOCUS POINTS FOR NATIONAL ACTORS

- Development of trust and system of coordination between volunteer, public, professional initiatives and organizations. If it is difficult to imagine at the all-Ukrainian level, then coordination at the level of the region, community or narrow target needs is real and necessary.
  *A successful case is **a program for coordinating humanitarian aid** in Chernivtsi. There is a need to create an information and organizational hub that would collect information on urgent needs in the regions and transfer this information to volunteer organizations and donors.*

- Focus on the development of the local attractiveness of the regions already now, namely the provision of energy infrastructure, medical care and education systems as priorities. The most important direction that will help the effective use of resources is a more flexible labor market and support for small and medium-sized businesses, not only through the inflexible system of employment centers.

- Responding to requests for efficient and prompt work for mediators to deal with local conflicts. In order to avoid the general strategy of solving problems as avoiding them, such specialists, who should be paid and work full time, will help to reduce the level of tension.
  *A successful case is **mobile brigades** that have been operating for six months in the territorial communities of the western regions of the country (examples above in the mapping).*

- Strengthen the understanding of inclusion in local societies as the involvement of newly arrived residents in all spheres of life, and not the creation of ghettos with living conditions. Such practices only increase tensions and conflicts, not help integration. Even if it is a temporary flow of IDPs, the community should be ready to provide temporary jobs according to the level of specialists, as well as health care and educational services, which will actually strengthen social cohesion on the ground.

- Creation and development of a transparent system of communication and exchange of information, which ideally should take place between representatives of local authorities, businesses and civil society actors — because talking about key decisions, mechanisms, transparency of the "rules of the game" adds confidence and reduces the level of aggression and non-acceptance.

- Solving the problem of shelters, which can be achieved not through efforts to adapt old and often dangerous basements in cities, but through the development of a system of **mobile shelters**,[1] which Kharkiv was the first to test.

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[1] Example of mobile sheletrs in Kharkiv: https://www.mediaport.ua/z-wi-fi-ta-ekranom-u-harkovi-pochali-vstanovlyuvati-zupinki-ukrittya

● Development of a grassroots culture of dialogue in order to talk about problematic moments, challenges and fears, as well as existing conflicts. This will help to change the basic tendency to avoid conflicts, as well as to develop a restorative mechanism for responding to challenges, based on accepting responsibility and realizing the real problem.

● For the local and central authorities — to focus on potential risks in the humanitarian sphere — the leakage of human resources, internal conflicts due to cultural differences (including the inter-Orthodox conflict, which also has a regional dimension).

● For representatives of the all-level authorities, and especially border regions, to pay special attention to the logistical component of the delivery of humanitarian aid across the Ukrainian border — most complaints about problems in the delivery of humanitarian goods concern the work of the Border Service of Ukraine, because this directly affects the level of public trust.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS — FOCUS POINTS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

- Development of a systematic and joint strategy for assistance and further restoration of Ukrainian society, which should be coordinated both between major international players and representatives of the authorities together with the country's civil society. Without the appearance of a systemic vision in the field of peacebuilding, new projects are waiting that will not give the desired results and the potential theft of resources (including humanitarian aid) and the strengthening of the corruption component at various levels.

- In order to develop a systemic vision and strategy for peacebuilding interventions, international actors should rely on the experience of local specialists in the field of peacebuilding, who have not only relevant analytics, but also experience of successful and not so successful implementation of initiatives, and also understand the existing local context, challenges and opportunities. This will significantly save time and resources that will go in the right direction.

- It is desirable to create a coordinating council of international organizations among themselves, on the example of the two-year initiative of the OSCE representation in Ukraine in 2018–2019, when the minimum task of such calls and meetings was to inform each other about existing projects, executors and key goals of organizations.

- Attention and emphasis on smaller and not very long-term initiatives with the possibility of adjustment and continuation. Creating such a response system requires a national-level team and transparent communication between representatives of the international organization's headquarters and national staff, as well as with the implementers on the ground.

- Focus attention on feedback from volunteer organizations and communities in need, trying to make the assistance as targeted as possible and taking into account the actual needs of the affected categories of the population. Recommended areas of support, in addition to humanitarian aid, are for the creation of a coordination hub, for psychological assistance (training and retraining of psychologists to work with traumatic experiences), and for training programs for community cohesion and IDPs and burnout prevention for volunteers and members of communities, IDPs.

- The experience of the last eight years of extensive peacebuilding activities in Ukraine demonstrates that Ukrainian society has a developed network of professionals and is ready both to perform work at a very high level and to train its own specialists. Given these circumstances, it would be effective for international representatives to consider and use this experience, adapt existing or develop new programs together with them, and not impose artificial goals that do not correspond to the real needs and context of Ukraine.