Best practices of community-based socioeconomic development in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine

Findings from the Forum: “The role of local governance and civil society institutions in decentralization process” (November 15–17, 2017; Svyatogirsk, Ukraine)
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Findings from the Forum: “The role of local governance and civil society institutions in decentralization process”
(November 15–17, 2017; Svyatogirsk, Ukraine)
Foreword

Victor Munteanu

Local government is an element of the rule of law, and serves to guarantee the human right to participate in public administration. At every stage of the development of civil society, in every democratic country, the role of local government cannot be overestimated. Local government reform, as a manifestation of democracy, occupies an important place in the overall process of democratic reform in today’s Ukraine.

Decentralization and public sector transformation are intended to improve the quality of life of individuals in the communities where they live. Decentralization means transferring powers, and control of budget revenues, from central to local government. But at the same time, conditions need be created for communities to develop, and for services to be brought closer to the public. This can be achieved through more prosperous communities, transferring most powers to a more basic level of management, and clearly delimitating the functions of the different levels of government. In Ukraine UNDP is seeking to support the complete restoration of the functions of government in conflict-affected areas controlled by Ukraine, with the broad involvement of civil society.

UNDP’s Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme in Ukraine is fulfilling its mandate to assist the process of decentralization reform. UNDP is working systematically to support the development of Ukraine’s civil society, including by supporting public councils and setting up a network of Citizens Advice Bureaux. Our Programme’s main partners are civil society organizations, local governments and executive bodies at all levels. The Programme is supporting newly amalgamated territorial communities and facilitating the restoration of local government functions, at the same time improving their quality. Strengthening the institutional capacity of our partners and involving the public in the decision-making process should, on the one hand, make it easier to provide effective services to the population and, on the other, ensure that the Government’s actions are transparent and accountable.

The key achievements of the Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme in 2017 include the following:

- The development of public initiatives (31 public councils were formed in government bodies and 16 training sessions were conducted for their members; 33 advisers were deployed to local authorities; and five citizens advice bureaux were set up, providing more than 14,000 individual consultations to residents of Eastern Ukraine);
- Administrative decentralization (two administrative service centres were opened after restoration, providing consultations to more than 15,000 people, and 30 training sessions were conducted for the administrators of the centres);
- Fiscal decentralization (a voucher system was introduced for counselling, which is planned to cover more than 1,000 people; training sessions were held on budget transparency; additional resources were mobilized; and the budgetary process was supported in communities);
- Anticorruption activity (four training sessions were held for activists and NGO partners; consultations were provided for local government officials; a special approach, based on Sector Integrity Vulnerability Assessment indicators, was used to assess the level of transparency of government procedures; and the work of two Regional Development Agencies was supported);
- Strategic planning (more than 600 people in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts received training on developing plans and strategies; assistance was provided for the preparation of projects (44 project applications were prepared); a decentralization study was carried out; and socio-economic profiles were drawn up for 20 territorial communities); and
- Territorial amalgamation of communities (25 consulting events were held for initiative groups, topographical surveys were launched of the territories of two partner amalgamated Hromadas; and four more communities were amalgamated in 2017).

The UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme in Ukraine also includes activities to enhance the institutional capacity of regional and local authorities. More than 180 representatives of partner communities and partner organizations were familiarized with best practices in decentralization in Ukraine and in European Union countries. This book presents the findings of the Forum held in 2017 to bring together our target groups and activists; including the best practices – small success stories of the Programme partners – which we kindly present for your attention.

Best regards,
Victor Munteanu
Portfolio Manager
UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme
Forum Resolution

We, the participants at the Role of Local Government and Civil Society Institutions in the Decentralization Process Forum, having discussed the prospects for including civil society in the process of decentralization of the government system in Ukraine, make the following recommendations for involving the public in implementing reforms at regional and local levels:

The reform should be conducted by joint efforts of all stakeholders involved.

To ensure measures are taken in accordance with legislative requirements, we propose to:

- Create a sector-by-sector legislative framework for the implementation of decentralization reform and ensure that there is consistency between regulatory and legal acts; and
- Streamline and improve this regulatory framework, ensuring that there is public participation in decision making at regional and local levels.

An enabling environment must be created for successful decentralization at the regional and local levels, in accordance with the following targeting criteria:

- The authorities must be effective, professional, and inclined to reform;
- The public must be responsible, motivated, informed, and able to take the initiative; and
- The media must be independent, objective, accessible, and included in the process.

Note that the authorities and the public should be oriented towards dialogue and interaction.

We believe that the following key objectives can be achieved through the reforms:

- Improving the quality of life of community residents, along with the principles of sustainable development;
- Taking into account the concerns of community residents when shaping local policies; and
- Establishing horizontal connections in the community, and dialogue between civil society institutions in the community and the authorities.

We recommend using the following methods to engage the public at the start of the reforms:

- Implement effective community development practices;
- Systematically study the needs of the community;
- Implement principles of good governance regarding the activities of local government;
- Delegate certain local authority powers to civil society institutions;
- Implement e-governance;
- Implement an effective professional development system for representatives of local authorities and civil society institutions;
- Create a platform for dialogue and interaction between communities; and
- Provide resources to create a supportive environment for the development of civil society institutions.

We are convinced that implementing the above proposals will promote the development of civic initiatives, creating a partnership between civil society and government, and that these measures will be crucial for developing civil society institutions during the decentralization of power in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine.

17 November 2017; Svyatogirsk, Ukraine
Eastern Educational Forum in Pokrovsk

Author: Svitlana Kashenets

Background
In February 2017, the two-day Eastern Scientific and Educational Forum was held in Pokrovsk, Donetsk Oblast. This was the first such large-scale event in the region. The Internal Policy Sector of Pokrovsk City Council submitted the project, and civic organizations in the city, Donetsk National Technical University, the Industrial Institute, and a teacher training college were invited to help organize the Forum. The cost of the Forum, which was supported by USAID, was about UAH 100,000.

Work done
A total of 350 people attended the Forum, of whom 180 represented 25 other Ukrainian cities. As a result, the organizers were able to engage a wide range of interested parties in the discussions: parliamentarians, the Ministry of Education and Science, Ukrainian organizations that provide informal education, NGOs that have implemented successful educational projects for schoolchildren and teachers, the Donetsk Regional State Administration Department of Education, displaced persons, mediators and even the Consulate of the Federal Republic of Germany.

The themes of the Forum were education reform, national and patriotic education, innovative forms of development in Donbas, scientific and technical potential and youth centres.

The first day of the Forum was held in the TEDx format, while on the second day discussions were held on each of the themes.

Results
The Forum was positively received by the participants, who offered to host similar events in their own cities and regions. USAID presented a proposal for further cooperation with the city and Donetsk National Technical University, and as a result teachers and students at the youth hub are already preparing for an innovation forum.

“It is important for participants to arrange meetings and discussions with colleagues to exchange experience, communicate with successful public initiatives, and communicate on an informal level with representatives of the Verkhovna Rada and the Cabinet of Ministers,” says Svitlana Kashenets, Head of the Internal Policy Sector at Pokrovsk City Council.

In February 2017 the two-day Eastern Scientific and Educational Forum was held in Pokrovsk, Donetsk Oblast. This was the first such large-scale event in the Oblast. The project was organized by the Internal Policy Sector of Pokrovsk City Council, together with civic organizations in the city, Donetsk National Technical University, the Industrial Institute, and a teacher training college.

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Closure of the second day of the Forum
The Key Issue of Decentralization Is Openness to People

Author: Tetyana Matsko

Key changes

We consider the opening of the Centre for the Provision of Administrative Services (CPAS) to be the most significant recent event in the city of Druzhkivka. A total of UAH 12,700,000 was allocated by Druzhkivka City Council to implement the project. Bringing the idea of creating a social office in the city to fruition was made possible thanks to financial support from the United Nations and the European Union, whose representatives came to the opening.

A building that previously served as the boarding school’s dining hall was repaired for the new CPAS. A large area was created for visitors and employees, and furniture and equipment were purchased. A machine was installed to issue tickets for appointments with specialists.

“I tried the result out for myself,” said Tetyana Matsko. “This helped me to save time and reduced the stress of de-registering my child’s residence when the child left to study. All I needed to do was visit the Centre to get a ticket: it took one minute to do that, not including the time to get there. When we came to the reception at the appointed day and time, it took another 15 minutes, including the time taken to fill out the form.”

Challenges of the new system

When the system was initially installed there were difficulties with the electronic tickets: the system did not work properly and sometimes people had to queue up at 4 a.m. A member of a local trade union talked about her negative experience when trying to access a service, when one day she had to reserve a place in a queue early in the morning and waited for several hours just to get a ticket. Another day, when local residents came to the reception, things did not run smoothly either, as the electronic display showed the number of visitors who were not there, and all the visitors and workers were just sitting and waiting, until one of the visitors finally gave up and went to be served. Only then did the staff realize that it was necessary to check the electronic system and invite the next visitor.

Improvement in the work of the Centre

By the time I needed to visit the Centre, the workers were no longer at a loss when somebody did not show up, and we were invited to the office even earlier than indicated in the ticket.

The opening of the Centre for the Provision of Administrative Services was the most significant recent development event in Druzhkivka. UAH 12,700,000 were allocated to implement this project. Bringing the idea to create a social office in the city to fruition was made possible with support from the United Nations and funding from the European Union, whose representatives came to the opening.
**Background**

Because of the situation in the eastern regions of Ukraine, the local authorities are lacking support from the central authorities to create Centres for the Provision of Administrative Services (CPASs).

Under the Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme, a project has been implemented to equip CPASs with everything they need to fully function. The local government provided a fully renovated building for the CPAS.

UNDP’s contribution included purchasing furniture and equipment for 28 workplaces, waiting areas, a children’s corner, an archive room, a server room, a back office and a kitchen.

A design solution was developed to furnish the workplaces and places intended for CPAS visitors.

Specific provision was made for persons with disabilities: tactile paving and Braille signs were assembled for the visually impaired; toilets were equipped with handrails for persons with disabilities and information boards were installed.

In addition, under the UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme, training programmes and study tours were conducted throughout Ukraine to further enhance the skills of the CPAS staff and improve the quality of administrative services.

**Conclusions**

When new services are launched they must be tested and brought into working condition: this particularly applies to electronic systems.

Partners in local development projects should not only commission such systems, but also oversee a proper “test drive” of their capabilities and address any technical malfunctions before services are provided to the public.

A building that previously served as a dining hall for the boarding school was repaired for the new CPAS. A large area was created for visitors and employees, and furniture and equipment were purchased. A machine was installed to issue tickets for specialist visits.

Also, as part of the UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme, training events and study tours were conducted throughout Ukraine to further enhance the skills of the CPAS staff and to improve the quality of administrative services.
Kinderland – a Child’s Dream

Author: Larysa Lyalyueva

Background

In early 2017, the town of Selydove adopted a budget for public organizations to submit proposals for funding. A young mother came to our Public Council and put forward a proposal to install a children’s playground on the town square. But she had no experience in drawing up proposals. The Public Council asked the Town Council to help draw up the proposal.

Work done

The purpose of the project, called “Kinderland”, is to attract children to sports, and small children to a fun pastime under the supervision of their parent. During project implementation we learned to listen to each other, cooperate with the authorities, and find solutions to communication issues at various levels. “In total, 15 proposals were submitted for budgetary funding,” says Larysa Lyalyueva, Head of the Public Council, “and our project was the winner.”

Results

As a result of this project, residents of the city, especially young mothers, have opportunities to relax and at the same time watch their children playing happily in the playground. “Children are our future, and if we are to expect them to show kindness in our old age we should not neglect them in their youth,” is what the people of Selydove are now saying.

Conclusions

Public activities in partner cities may result in more significant achievements in case the city residents, and first of all Public Council members, learn how to develop winning project proposals. The provision of online support for projects under the budget participation programme is very innovative.

FACTS

- 327,300 Project budget (UAH)
- 20,000 Residents used the services of the project
- 1,194 Number of votes collected online for this project

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Rehabilitation Centre in the Place of Ruins

Author: Valina Khudiyarovska

Background

Thanks to cooperation with UNDP and with financial support from the Government of Japan, major renovation work was carried out at the District Centre for the Social Rehabilitation of Children with Disabilities in Kreminna Raion. The project was implemented between September 2015 and February 2016.

Work done

The premises of the former military enlistment office, which is now the property of the Centre, was in ruins when the renovation work began. Thanks to project funding, the building was completely reconstructed, the heating system and roof repaired, insulating glass units replaced, and a heated floor installed. In addition, four computers, a multimedia screen, a board and toys were purchased.

In addition, a pyrolysis boiler and air conditioners were installed, and children’s rehabilitation equipment was purchased.

Results

As a result of the work, modern conditions were created for the full rehabilitation of about fifty children with disabilities in Kreminna Raion. There were considerable technical difficulties to the process, but they were solved in cooperation between the District Administration, the District Council, and inspection services.

“Thanks to the assistance from international donors, we have created a modern rehabilitation facility that helps us to engage children with disabilities before their problems hinder the children’s development,” said Valina Khudiyarovska, Director of the Centre and Project Manager.

FACTS

4,200,000
Cost of the Project in UAH

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The premises of the former military enlistment office (currently the property of the Kreminna District Centre for Social Rehabilitation of Children with Disabilities) were in ruins when the renovation work began. The building was completely reconstructed, the heating system and roof repaired, insulating glass units replaced, and a heated floor installed. In addition, computers, a multimedia screen, a board and toys were purchased to make the lives of children with disabilities in Kreminna more colorful.

The premises of the former military enlistment office were in very bad condition before the renovation work took place.
By Deed, Not by Word...

Author: Iryna Mamtseva

Background

The Public Council under the Executive Committee of Druzhkivka City Council was formed in December 2015 and included representatives from 21 civil society organizations. All the representatives had their own ambitions, preferences and work priorities, and engaged in constructive dialogue. In two years of coordinated work, they participated in the UNDP’s “Restoration of Governance and Reconciliation in Crisis-Affected Communities of Ukraine” project, and completed courses run by the Executive Committee and City Council.

In addition, members of the Public Council joined important commissions, which have been responsibility, for example, for ensuring the legalization of wage payments to displaced persons, the work of the Competition Committee of Road Carriers, and the selection of land plots.

What was done

During the formation of the Public Council, important meetings were held: with the UNDP Senior Anti-Corruption Advisor, Swedish donors, the First Secretary of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and other visitors.

Civic monitoring was carried out in the city’s educational and health facilities, housing and public utilities, and supermarkets to restore the level of service and the quality of food products. For this purpose, contact was established with the People’s deputies, there was correspondence with state authorities. The issue of environmental safety was brought up, related to providing a round-the-clock water supply in Druzhkivka.

Results

Because of coordinated co-operation between local authorities and the public, a set of documents was drawn up: Procedures on the provision of consultations, the “Illuminated city as the key to community safety” micro-project was conducted, eight general education schools received water purification systems and storage reservoirs for drinking water, and a micro-project saw the installation of visual advertising in the city.
EXPERIENCE

Challenges
At the initial stages, communication between the public and the authorities on common topics was difficult, because often the former did not take into account the legislative framework and did not understand the competencies of authorities at the local level. The “Restoration of Governance and Reconciliation in Crisis-Affected Communities of Ukraine” project (UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme) has helped to overcome these difficulties.

Iryna Mamtseva, Head of Department of Information and Internal Policy Issues states: “The work of the public and the authorities can only be properly organized through transparent and careful decision-making, because then potential for constructive solutions can be unlocked.”

Background
The Public Council of the Executive Committee of the Druzhkivka City Council is a temporary consultative and advisory body established to promote public participation in the formation and implementation of state policy.

In its activities, the Public Council is guided by the Constitution and laws of Ukraine; decrees of the President of Ukraine and resolutions of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, adopted in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Ukraine; by acts of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, and Regulations on the Public Council.

The main goals of the Public Council include promotion of the public’s constitutional right to participate in the management of state affairs; implementation of civic oversight over the activities of the body; and promoting the consideration of public opinion by the body when creating and implementing state policy.

Comment
After the organizational structures of the Public Council developed, the most important areas for its work became apparent: social issues, health care, education, housing and public utilities, labor legislation, law enforcement, and inter-municipal cooperation.

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The Public Council under the Executive Committee of the Druzhkivka City Council was created in December 2015 and included representatives from 21 civil society organizations. All the representatives had their own ambitions, preferences and work priorities, and engaged in constructive dialogue. In two years of coordinated work, they participated in the UNDP “Restoration of Governance and Reconciliation in Crisis-Affected Communities of Ukraine” project, and completed courses run by the Executive Committee and City Council. The members of the Public Council joined several important commissions and ensured the legalization of wage payments to displaced persons, and the work of the Competition Committee of Road Carriers, watchdog functions in the Land Commission, etc. As a result of coordinated co-operation between local authorities and the public as a whole, some documents have been drawn up: policies on the provision of public consultations, implementation of the “Illuminated city as the key to community safety” micro-project, installation of water purification systems and storage reservoirs for drinking water in eight general education schools, a micro-project to install light boxes in the city, and so on.
Sports communities

Author: Olena Tsykunova

Background

Mykolaivska City Amalgamated Territorial Community (MCATC) was established on 18 December 2016 through the consolidation of Mykolaivka city, Rai-Oleksandrivka village council, and Malynivka village council (seven villages) in Sloviansk Raion (Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine).

One of the initial visions for socioeconomic development was the complete reconstruction of sports infrastructure.

The beginning of construction of a brick sports complex with a swimming pool within the city by a the company known as Sloviansk Combined Heat and Power Station (CHP) of Donbasenergo public joint stock company was the starting point. As a result of the conflict that began in 2014, the city was badly damaged: residential buildings, schools, kindergartens, production buildings and equipment from Sloviansk CHP were destroyed.

So the focus of the city and the community was not only reconstruction but also development at the same time.

What was done

A joint action community development programme was adopted between MCATC and Sloviansk CHP of PJSC Donbasenegro, that was intended to create modern design and engineering documentation (DED) to develop social infrastructure, a master plan, and detailed territory plans. One of the areas of focus was the creation and installation of modern mini-football pitches and training grounds, and the development of DEDs to reconstruct the city stadium with a modern football field, basketball and volleyball pitches, and tennis courts.

In this context, an appeal to the community from the Department for Sports of the Donetsk Oblast State Administration (OSA) was an additional impetus for the selection of sports as a main development pillar.

3
New stadiums have been built/renovated in Mykolayivka in 2017

85
New football pitches are to be constructed in Donetsk Oblast within the Government’s programme

16,000
People will be covered by sports and renovation activities in the Mykolaivska amalgamated community

In Mykolayivka City Amalgamated Municipal Territorial Community (Donetsk Oblast), a joint action programme was adopted by this amalgamated community and Slavyanske territorial department of Donbasenegro for community development. This programme focused on drafting modern design and development documentation to develop social infrastructure and detailed territory plans. The areas of focus included installing modern mini-football pitches and training grounds, and drafting plans to reconstruct the city stadium with a modern football field, basketball and volleyball pitches, and tennis courts.
The process

When it became known that the newly formed amalgamated community would take part in the programme of the Donetsk Oblast State Administration’s programme to create modern mini-football pitches for the celebration of the 85th anniversary of Donetsk Oblast, this community joined the programme, in which (through co-financing a 42 by 42 metre mini-football pitch with a modern surface, and two areas with vandal-proof training equipment) were to be built.

Two secondary schools in Mykolaivka, and one rural secondary school were selected for the project.

The Slovianska territorial branch of Donbasenergo also supported the building of a modern sports ground and donated a mini-football pitch to the community, which was built at Mykolaivska Secondary School.

3. All the pitches were successfully opened in the community.

“Now we are waiting for the opening of the Donbasenergo sports complex. We also joined the Government’s programme for the creation of football fields with the assistance of the Football Federation of Ukraine. And in 2018, two more fields will be constructed in our amalgamated community at Rai-Oleksandrivska Secondary School 2,” said Community Head Olena Tsykunova.

Olena is confident that the community will reconstruct the sports facilities.

Conclusions

Sport often serves as a consolidating factor in community development during social transformation. Restoration of sports infrastructure is recognized to be an effective mechanism for improving the image of cities and engaging young people in social activities.

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When it became known that the newly formed community would take part in Donetsk Oblast State Administration’s programme to create 85 modern mini-football pitches for the celebration of the 85th anniversary of Donetsk Oblast, the Mykolaivka community joined the programme, in which a mini-football pitch with a modern surface, and two areas with anti-vandal training equipment were to be built. In order to locate the pitches in communities, two secondary school schools in Mykolaivka, and one rural secondary school were selected.
Children from Popasniansky Raion are Planning to Become Diplomats

Author: Stanislav Bohdanov

Background

Komroz NGO was established and operates in Komishuvaha urban-type settlement in Popasniansky Raion, Luhansk Oblast. Its primary goal is to develop and energize the local population.

What was done

In pursuit of this goal, NGO members took part in the Vostok-SOS Charitable Foundation project ‘The First Model United Nations of Luhansk Oblast’ was intended to support the development of high school students in the region's educational institutions. With assistance from Stanislav Bohdanov, the NGO head, and Sergey Stepanov, the deputy head, the project was initiated and a team of children from the school was prepared for participation.

In a competitive selection process, pupils from Komishuvansky Educational Complex (school and pre-school) were selected as finalists from 26 educational institutions across the oblast.

Results and impact

After participating in the final, we witnessed a big change and the unlocking of the children's potential. Their self-esteem and desire to continue their development have significantly increased. This prompted members of the organization to implement this project at the level of Popasniansky Raion. To that end, Stanislav Bohdanov received specialized training and became a Model United Nations certified trainer. At the same time, and at their own expense, Komroz members prepared a platform for project implementation at the Komishuvansky Educational Complex.

Following a major campaign awareness raising campaign, the members of the organization drew the attention of other educational institutions and local governments to the importance of the event. As a result, The first Model United Nations in Popasniansky District was held with the participation of 15 educational institutions, including 54 children and 14 teachers.

Komroz NGO, Popasnyansky Raion, Luhansk Oblast

FACTS

15 Educational institutions participated in the first UN Model in the Popasniansky district
Background

Model United Nations is an educational role-play in which a meeting of various United Nations bodies is simulated. Its members act as diplomats, reproducing the work of the organization and observing its actual procedural rules. They represent different countries and participate in the discussion of current issues on the United Nations’ agenda. By simulating the work of the United Nations, as exemplified by the work of various bodies of the organization, the participants learn about problems in different parts of the world and how they can be solved by the United Nations. Every year there are hundreds of Model United Nations conferences around the world, and in 2009 the Global Model United Nations was held for the first time.


What’s next?

All the participants and local authorities were so pleased with the event that they agreed to hold a Model United Nations event in Popasniansky Raion every year. The children of the Popasniansky district offer their welcome!

EXPERIENCE

Pupils during the UN Model session

Delegates in national UN representative costumes at the final meeting

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Members of Komroz NGO from Popasna (Luhansk Oblast) participated in the Vostok-SOS Charitable Foundation’s “First Model United Nations of Luhansk Oblast” project which was intended to support the development of high school students in the oblast’s educational institutions. The proposal was developed and a team of schoolchildren was formed to participate. Following the above-mentioned competitive selection process, pupils from Komishuvansky schools were selected among the eight finalists from 26 educational institutions across the oblast.
Shchastya: a small step forward

Author: Halina Kalinina

Background

This story began in 2014 when the armed conflict broke out in Eastern Ukraine. To show the inhabitants of Shchastya, Luhansk Oblast, that there were people in the city who wanted to live in Ukraine and that Luhansk Oblast is part of Ukraine, in 2014 public activists held a peaceful march with Ukrainian symbols to mark Ukrainian Independence Day. “We were told that we would be persecuted for this,” said activist Halina Kalinina.

Work done

There was no local authority in the city (everyone had left), and in the course of time the Mayor wrote a letter of resignation and did not return. The active phase of the conflict was underway, but despite all the difficulties, there were people who wanted to do something and support the Ukrainian military. Initially volunteers prepared rations for the front. After that, civic activists in the city initiated a patriotic event. It all started with a simple celebration of our patriotic holidays. Literally 20 activists came to the city square, and other members of the community came to watch, but some residents did not want to talk to the activists.

“But we did not lose heart. We slowly moved on from overtly patriotic events to the study of historical information (the Holodomor, the Executed Renaissance, and so on); and met up to learn Christmas carols which afterwards we sang for residents on the square, and for the military and the authorities;” said Halina Kalinina.

**FACTS**

- **80,000**
  - Was the project budget (UAH)

- **350**
  - People benefitted from the project
EXPERIENCE

The process of positive changes

In Shchastya city there were never any special cultural events, and its residents visited Luhansk for concerts, museums, cinemas, swimming pools and cafes. But the armed conflict changed everything: for the time being Luhansk is cut off from Shchastya, and it takes 1.5 hours to get to the nearest city, Severodonetsk, through six roadblocks.

“My friend Maryna Danyliuk and I decided to hold events ourselves. At first, they were just debating clubs, volunteers came to us with concerts and we asked them to visit us,” Halina shared.

The Vostok-SOS Charitable Foundation learned about the activists, came here and became acquainted with us, and we began to communicate. The Foundation constantly organized courses, visited with training programmes, and taught the residents about local activism.

Results

After completing a course, the Shchastya activists decided to apply for a grant from the International Renaissance Foundation.

Entitled “Organizing a live cultural and educational discussion platform - Shchastya”, the project received a grant and was implemented in five months.

“The project revealed the public’s interest in communication and unifying around an interesting project, thereby changing their lives. Using our equipment and now also our room, we will continue holding discussion meetings. With the project completed, we have achieved some small results. Now some young people have joined us and we have begun to cooperate with the authorities,” said the civic activists.

“We are being listened to, and people come to us for advice.”

Conclusions

We can note the exceptional importance of the support for public initiatives in the territories that are close to the line of contact, where socio-economic processes are of a different nature than in territories not affected by the conflict. In addition to meeting the village’s humanitarian needs, assistance is required to form strong local initiative groups.

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After a series of courses organized by a partner charitable foundation in their city, the Shchastya activists decided to develop a project to apply for a grant programme from the International Renaissance Foundation. Entitled “The organization of a cultural and educational discussion live platform – Shchastya”, the project received a grant and was implemented in 5 months.

“With the project completed, we have achieved some small results. Now some young people have joined us and we have begun to cooperate with the authorities”, said the city activists.

“We are being listened to, and people come to us for advice.” This is a small step forward.”
Do not stop if reached

Author: Svitlana Karpinska

Background

The Yednist-Rubizhne Apartment Building Co-owners Association (ABCA) was established in 2008 by the co-owners of the building located on 15 Kirov Avenue, Rubizhne, Luhanska Oblast. Since then, it has been operating in line with a Development Plan elaborated by the ABCA Board for a two-year period and is subject to approval at general meetings. The Chair of the Board is responsible for accounting, the timely submission of accounts, and statistical and other reports.

At the very beginning of its operations, the ABCA won the Municipal Governance and Sustainable Development Programme / UNDP competition for ongoing repairs in the apartment building funded by the ABCA and UNDP. Windows in public areas were replaced with energy-saving windows made with metal frames.

Maryna Yangolenko, Chair of the Board of Yednist-Rubizhne ABCA says that the public yard needs to be equipped with a children’s playground and sports area, and a site for storage and removal of rubbish.

In 2015, ABCA Yednist-Rubizhne won an EU/UNDP project grant for the second time and received co-financing for the micro-project “Major repairs of the residential building at 15 Kirov Avenue, Rubizhne. Insulation of the building facade.” Participating in this project was an opportunity to gain experience of co-operating with the city community and local authorities and approaching sponsors, and insulating the building facade has increased energy efficiency, thereby reducing energy consumption.

What was done

This building was built in the 1930s. Initially, it was maintained by the Housing Office. It was a total mess. If nobody cleans your building, the basement is flooded with water, the roof needs repairing, and the surrounding area is covered by water and mud, it is time to change something. In 2008, the idea emerged to create the ABCA. The residents did not believe that changes could be made for the better. They held their first meeting, and then created and registered Yednist-Rubizhne ABCA and put it on the books. They took control of the building. This ABCA was the first in the city. They began to spend their funds on building maintenance. The residents themselves create their own budget for maintaining the building and procuring services. They independently determine the priorities regarding ongoing repairs.

FACTS

| Cost of the heating project (UAH) | 573,800 |
| Residents of Rubizhne were project beneficiaries | 28 |
| Months renovation project in Rubizhne | 12 |
Since the ABCA was established, lighting control devices have been installed. The stairwell and yard lighting systems were replaced. The stairwells were equipped with motion sensors. The work was funded by the local budget, and the ABCA purchased materials and equipment.

Later on, when the co-owners made savings in the repair fund for ABCA development, they repaired and insulated the attic floor. This involved insulation with a steam-insulating layer; a thermal insulation layer with mineral cotton, 10 cm; and a waterproof layer. The cost came to UAH 21,000.

The cost of the micro-project to insulate the building facade amounted to UAH 573,832. The residents are happy because they had the opportunity to independently select the contractors on a competitive basis and had control over them. In addition, they learned how to work together, and were able to discuss the project terms with all the co-owners of the residential building, each giving their opinion.

“They selected a contractor to perform repair and construction work and a technical supervision engineer on a competitive basis. The work was carried out to a high quality and in good time. Rubizhne City Council paid for 45 per cent of the cost of the micro-project. “We have teamed up to work on improving our lives. We forgot about the dirty stairwells a long time ago. In the entrances there are vases with flowers. In front of the building there is a lawn and tidy flowerbeds. The surrounding area has been turned into a garden. Difficulties do arise, but we take care of the building we live in,” the co-owners of the building compare notes.

**Results**

During project implementation, the co-owners of the building familiarized themselves with the legislation regulating the work of the ABCA, the rules for and practices of managing and maintaining apartment buildings, organizing and carrying out major repairs, construction bidding, and so on.

The United Nations Development Programme has financially assisted the ABCA to carry out partial renovation of the building, providing international technical assistance on non-repayable terms of up to 50 per cent of the cost of the work that the co-owners have recognised as necessary. Forty-five per cent of the cost of the micro-project is being funded by the city council and 5 per cent is the community’s contribution, which the co-owners of the buildings collected, at their own expense, to co-finance the project.

According to Maryna Yangolenko, Chair of the Board of the Yednist-Rubizhne ABCA, the nearby yard still needs to be equipped with a children’s playground and sports area, and a site to store and remove rubbish.
Colorful Yarova

Author: Anna Hladka

Background

There are eight bus stops in the village of Yarova. The last time they were renovated was as far back as Soviet times. Before the project, these stops simply marked the places where the bus would stop, but did not fully perform their function: roofs were leaking, there was no place to sit (and most residents are senior citizens), and the walls were in poor condition.

What was done

But local residents and authorities were involved in village infrastructure, and therefore the idea for this project emerged. In total, four stops were repaired and painted with murals depicting the history of the village and its symbols (two were repaired last year, and it is planned to repair and paint two others next spring), and the local authorities also helped to install benches. Olena Nahorna, a talented artist who has settled in the village, painted the murals. The drafters of the Colourful Yarova project were Olena Hladka and Anna Hladka (from the Strong Community civic organization).

Results

The project was implemented jointly by the local community and the village authorities, and with the assistance of donors who funded the materials to carry out the repair, restoration and decoration of the stops (the British Council Active Citizens Programme and the UNICEF Small Grants Programme).

“The stops not only please the village residents, but also surprise and delight our guests and those who are simply passing through. The village residents have heard many compliments about the stops, they are very protective of them and are proud of the new symbol of Yarova,” says Anna Hladka. “It is a joint project between the authorities and the community which builds mutual trust and willingness to cooperate, and we all understand that we must overcome the stereotype that the government needs to do everything for us, and that we should not participate in social processes at all.”

The community is not resting on its laurels – in the near future reflective placards with street and lane names will be put up to make it easier for the emergency services to find addresses. In addition, a recreation area will be installed at the lake in the spring with a mosaic gazebo: these projects are also supported by the British Council Active Citizens Programme.

As local residents and the authorities became concerned about the infrastructure in the village, they came up with the idea of the project. In total, 4 stops were repaired and painted as murals depicting the history of the village and its symbols (two were repaired in 2017, and it is planned to repair and paint two others in spring 2018). The local authorities helped to install new benches.

Yarova residents waiting with their harvest at the revamped bus stop, 2017

FACTS

45,000
Project budget in UAH for six stops

3,000
Persons have already used the renovated stops

240
Hours spent by the artist to decorate the stops

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The largest map of Ukraine was created by children in yellow and blue t-shirts

Author: Oksana Shperchuk

Background

On 23 August 2016, a new record was set for the map of Ukraine created by the largest number of children in yellow and blue t-shirts. This took place at Shakhtar Stadium in Myrnograd, on the 25th anniversary of Ukraine’s Independence. A total of 1,475 students from the city’s educational institutions were involved in the record attempt. The Executive Committee of the Myrnograd City Council purchased yellow and blue t-shirts for the participants. An application was filed to register the record in the National Register of Records of Ukraine.

The project was supported by numerous partners, including Myrnograd City Council, the Education Department of the District State Administration, representatives of the National Register of Records of Ukraine, and the charitable foundation for the development of the city.

Results

This mass event has improved the image of the city, helped to promote patriotic education for young people and has advanced informal approaches to the development of civil society in Myrnograd.

A new record was set for the map of Ukraine on the 23rd of August 2016, created by the largest number of children in yellow and blue t-shirts. This took place at Shakhtar Stadium in Myrnograd, on the 25th anniversary of Ukraine’s Independence. A total of 1,475 students from the city’s educational institutions were involved in the record attempt. An important identification challenge in the city has been addressed by such initiative. It helped young people understand their identities and promoted their commitment to the development of their state.

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FACTS

1,475
Pupils from local schools created the map

That is how the volunteers created the map of Ukraine and set a new record.
Analysis of the needs and capacity of the Forum’s partner organizations

Analysis of the feedback from the Forum was intended to: 1) determine the willingness of participants to work together; 2) assess how effective the change has been for public council development; 3) assess local partners’ expectations of the “Local Governance and Decentralization Reform” component of UNDP’s Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme; 4) assess possible avenues of cooperation with local partners in all areas of decentralization; and 5) evaluate local partners’ expectations for ongoing decentralization reform over the next three years.

A questionnaire was distributed during the general plenary session on the third day of the Forum. The questions asked were open, to draw out as many ideas as possible and encourage free discussion of the topics.

From the 120 participants present on Days 2 and 3 of the Forum, 41 questionnaires were returned, indicating that about a third of the participants were willing to contribute feedback. This rather low figure means that building the concept of “local ownership” of the results of decentralization is required. Local ownership should be built at the final stage of the annual work cycle with a group of beneficiaries, and this should include drawing up an exit strategy for this intervention.

In 11 of the 41 returned questionnaires, instead of answering open questions the participants responded with marks that are typically used for closed questions, indicating that as beneficiaries they do not have clear requirements for the intervention. It thus appears that informational work should be enhanced and those really needing support should be encouraged to express their needs more clearly. In addition, training is required for partners in the logical structuring of presentations, which will also be helpful for practical project management. Their competence must be enhanced for understanding needs, developing logical arguments, and understanding all aspects of the issue more profoundly.

Ten of the questionnaires gave unclear answers to the questions posed. Almost all of these were submitted by non-partners of the Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme. Therefore, the number of “non-targeted” but active participants of the forum was around 20 per cent of the total number of invited active beneficiaries and appears quite high. In addition, the Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme is successfully building the competencies of the beneficiaries’ contact persons, and
is correctly choosing the entry points, since after two and a half years of work, there is now a clear difference in the level of understanding of the issue between participants at "entry" and "experienced" levels. For the more experienced partners, 75 per cent of the programme interventions have been completed, while with entry-level partners, only about 15 per cent of the work has been done. The Programme can build up the competence of the beneficiaries by 10-15 per cent every six months, and operate in four-year cycles.

In 6 of the 33 questionnaires returned by the partners, it was actually stated that the person was representing a settlement that was not a partner community of the Programme, although this was not true (these communities were actually Programme partners). Therefore, it is necessary to improve the effectiveness of informing the key beneficiaries and the initiative groups about the Programme, including information about what the Programme specifically does in their communities. This is especially true for the journalists who represents these communities. This, by the way, is confirmed by the analysis of the answers from the most active and advanced partners. They want to inform the wider public about the achievements of amalgamated Hromadas and the principles of participatory democracy. At the same time, we have noted that the entry-level partners are not only significantly less competent than the advanced partners, but also significantly less motivated to participate in the Programme's joint initiatives.

Around 30 per cent of the questionnaires did not clearly identify gender. In addition to usual suspicions, one can see here a reluctance to be gender-differentiated with regards to the answers to this questionnaire. Integrating the gender component and the human rights-based approach in future stages of the Programme is seen as important and welcomed by the communities.

The open-ended question “What do you want to achieve in the field of decentralization over the next three years?” received the following most significant responses:

- “Conduct the 2020 local elections under the new administrative and geographical framework. Ensure that legislation and the rules and regulations are adapted to meet this challenge. Promote training of local councils and authorities for this purpose.”
- “Introduce participatory democracy. Announce a grant competition of community initiatives. Teach project management. Create a bank of ideas in our city, and wider, for the amalgamated community. Encourage public activism and strengthen the capacity of government bodies to cooperate with community councils. Engage in dialogue and professional development.”
- “Complete the creation of the amalgamated territorial community and establish cooperation in this new community by implementing several joint projects.”
- “Inform the public about the benefits and opportunities of decentralization. Developing public councils connected to local authorities makes it possible to bring all community’s achievements into local government.”
- “Complete administrative decentralization. Improve revenue collection and budget management. Carry out strategic and organizational planning for fully-fledged community operations, and the corresponding legislation for its work.”
- “Create an area for comfortable living within the community. Improve the investment climate. At the same time restore the amalgamated territorial community’s infrastructure. Create modern educational conditions and establish a network of modern healthcare facilities.”
- “Strengthen the community’s self-sufficiency for effectively managing its growing financial resources, its ability to build constructive relations with NGOs, and its ability to introduce innovative development tools.”

This Forum's is a specialized event. At the same time, as the target participants quickly become experts in this topic, the question arises of how the wider community could be properly informed about the reform process when the issues are so specialized. Most likely, the wider population in the partner communities should become more involved in the process of discussing and understanding the changes brought about by the reform.

In general, the city councils are not prepared to invest significant resources in promoting decentralization in various functional areas, but they are ready to participate in events or host them. NGO partners are ready to participate in donor programmes in their areas: they are ready to share their experience, but rather than organize events, they prefer to participate in donor-funded activities. Unlike in rural communities, in cities the effects even of a successful initiative are blurred, so partners can apply the experience they have gained, but expect to be provided with resources to complete their activities. This means that these partners’ “local ownership” of the results of decentralization is not yet complete, and must be built in 2018.

As about half the respondents are still submitting their statements in an unstructured way, exercises in joint annual planning in small groups would help to build this competence, and would be useful for all partner communities. In addition, many responses reveal a need for assistance with drafting implementation plans – both for strategies and for organizational development plans of the Programme’s partner amalgamated communities.

About 10 per cent of those polled have a visible desire to learn about project management and initiate project competitions, as well as to implement projects, including via Public Councils. Training in project management will significantly enhance the competence of Public Councils and initiative groups that cooperate with the local authorities in Eastern Ukraine. Another potential training topic would be how to overcome communication barriers between municipal self-governance and the civil society, and how to make joint decisions.
Community Councils

*A Community Council is a consultative and advisory body for executive bodies and local self-government bodies that provide a balanced approach to the representation of different views and political beliefs. The council ensures that public opinion is being considered in decision-making processes.

With UNDP support, Community Councils have been created or initiated in 38 communities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

Community Councils comprise 510 members of civic organizations (34% women, 57 men).

Legend

- Established Community Council
- Initiated Community Council
- Area around the contact line

38 communities
510 members of civic organizations
Community Councils

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Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme

Citizens' Advisory Bureaus
DONETSK AND LUHANSK OBLASTS

With financial support from Sweden and Switzerland, UNDP supports five citizens’ advisory bureaus to support the government in providing administrative, psychological and legal aid to the vulnerable population in the aftermath of the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.

The bureaus now cover 28 cities, towns and villages with a combined population of 690,070, including those residing alone the contact line and in the grey zone. In 2017 alone, some 23,000 men and women, including those living close to the contact line, received support through five bureaus.

Legend

- 'Contact line' as of June 2016 (OCHA)
- Stationary CAB location situated in the large city center
- Mobile CAB location with schedule visits to other covered areas
- Range of service provision
With financial support from Sweden and Switzerland, UNDP supports five citizens’ advisory bureaus to support the government in providing administrative, psychological and legal aid to the vulnerable population in the aftermath of the conflict in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. The bureaus now cover 28 cities, towns and villages with a combined population of 690,070, including those residing along the contact line and in the grey zone. In 2017 alone, some 23,000 men and women, including those living close to the contact line, received support through five bureaus.
Iryna Zhuchenko  
Governance advisor  
UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Program

In raising the capacity of public councils and local government bodies, the main goal of UNDP is to restore a broad range of government functions, in order to ensure that there will be balanced representation of political views, a strengthening of local government bodies, and increased participation of activists and civil society organizations in addressing local development issues.

Establishing dialogue also transforms the authorities themselves: from “an authority over the community” to “an authority with the community”. The key objective is to ensure the openness and transparency of the decision-making process, as well as of the authorities and of civil society organizations.

UNDP is helping to raise this capacity in community councils, by developing training programmes, organizing study tours and exploring best practices in Ukraine and Europe, by involving professional experts and advisers in tackling the local authorities’ most urgent issues, and by creating a network of Citizens’ Advice Bureaux: independent structures to help citizens deal with post-conflict situations. For this reason, periodic exchange of experience and best practices among leading activists and programme partners is essential.

Maksym Filiak  
Strategic Planning Specialist  
UNDP Recovery and Peacebuilding Program

For decentralization reform to enable amalgamated communities to systematically raise funds to improve their welfare, carry out repairs, and develop their educational and cultural capacity, each amalgamated community needs a practical and effective plan. Community management bodies often have such plans, but they have frequently ended up on the shelf, instead of being practically used. Our task is to change this approach to planning by providing partner communities with a “roadmap” for implementing development steps. Therefore, with UNDP assistance, amalgamated territorial communities in government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts are now developing such updated strategies for the next four years.

For amalgamated communities to manage their development, changes are required within their governing bodies. This is why UNDP is now helping communities in the Donetska and Luhansk oblasts to plan for their development. After all, the scale of the communities’ management responsibilities has grown, and their training needs have increased. These plans will also permit the introduction of higher standards for the provision of administrative services.

In order to enable communities to raise funds through a project mechanism popular in many other countries, the amalgamated community staff and activists, supported by UNDP, are receiving support for training in project management. The communities should make full use of the new funding opportunities, which are making their communities richer. We wish our partners every success in these promising endeavours.
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Best practices of community-based socioeconomic development in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine

Findings from the Forum: “The role of local governance and civil society institutions in decentralization process”
(November 15–17, 2017; Svyatogirsk, Ukraine)