



Kingdom of the Netherlands



Annual Project Report

SUPPORT TO THE STABILIZATION AND RECOVERY OF WAR AFFECTED COMMUNITIES (FRONTLINE, RETURN AND HOSTING AREAS)

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

CSO	Civil society organization
CSSCWG	Community Security and Social Cohesion Working Group
EU	European Union
FLAS	Free Legal Aid System
GDP	Gross domestic product
IDP	Internally displaced person
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support services
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
SCORE	Social Cohesion and Reconciliation Index
SHARP	SCORE-inspired Holistic Assessment of Resilience of Population
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN RPP	United Nations Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Executive Summary

The large-scale war in Ukraine, now entering its third year, has led to a substantial loss of life, unparalleled displacement of people both internally and to neighbouring countries, and extensive destruction of infrastructure. As of December 2023, an estimated 5.9 million people were recorded as refugees across Europe¹, while some 3.7 million people remain forcibly displaced inside the country². Access to and delivery of essential social services, as well as employment and livelihoods, for people in the most war-affected regions, especially residents of the frontline communities and vulnerable groups, continue to remain a challenge. According to preliminary findings from a recent study by UNHCR, the United Nations Refugee Agency, the majority of Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people surveyed (65 and 72 percent respectively) still expressed a desire to return home one day. However, the proportion has declined, with more expressing uncertainty due to the ongoing war.³

The current Project is structured to tackle the challenges arising from the war by establishing an enabling environment which involves community-level systems and mechanisms for planning and implementing locally led initiatives, enhanced institutional and citizen capacities for dialogue and collaboration, and improved justice service provision. These components are aimed at supporting the return and recovery process in the partner communities. Furthermore, the Project is dedicated to involving young

individuals, both women and men, fostering their active and meaningful participation in community-level dialogues and planning. Special attention is given to supporting the reintegration of men and women demobilizing from the frontline back into their communities of origin. The Project is being implemented in Sumy Oblast, one of the regions significantly affected by damage and destruction during the February 2022 military offensive and subjected to temporary occupation.

As evidenced by recent data, the state institutions responsible for national security and defence enjoy the highest trust in the country with Sumy Oblast following the national trend on the trust in the Armed Forces (99 percent), State Emergency Service (95 percent) and police (55 percent).⁴ The recent SCORE-inspired Holistic Assessment of Resilience of Population (SHARP) results also demonstrate overall confidence in regional (51 percent) and local (48 percent) authorities in Sumy Oblast. Furthermore, non-governmental organizations, which are also among the most trusted institutions in the region (83 percent), can support public institutions in recovery process by helping displaced persons and providing critical services to the local population, as well as boosting and coordinating civic engagement and social cohesion in general.⁵ At the same time, the low level of trust in the Prosecutor General's Office (34 percent) and in courts (21 percent), which mirrors the national trend, continues to highlight the

¹ UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Operational Data Portal, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>

² Ukraine Displacement Data: IDP Estimates, IOM, September 2023, <https://data.humdata.org/dataset/ukraine-idp-estimates>

³ Lives on hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees, Refugee Returnees and IDPs from Ukraine #5 Summary Findings, UNHCR, February 2024, <http://bit.ly/3uJbikA>

⁴ According to the SHARP 2023 results, 99 percent people in Sumy Oblast and 98 percent overall in the country fully or somewhat trust the Ukrainian Armed Forces, 95 percent in Sumy Oblast and 94 percent nationwide fully or somewhat trust State Emergency Service and 55 and 60 percent respectively trust the National Police; https://api.scoreforpeace.org/storage/pdfs/PUB_SHARP23_Oblast-Profile_Sumy-December.20.2023.pdf. The SCORE-inspired Holistic Assessment of Resilience of Population (SHARP): Assessing Social Cohesion, Resistance, and People's Needs in Ukraine Amid Russian Full-Scale Invasion, conducted by the Partnership Fund for a Resilient Ukraine (PFRU), in cooperation with the USAID funded Democratic Governance East (DG East), USAID's Transformation Communications Activity (TCA), and UNDP.

⁵ SHARP 2023, <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/sharp/2023/1/map?row=tn-2-0>

urgency of judicial reform in Ukraine.⁶ The survey also highlights a relatively high level of satisfaction among the local population with the provision of administrative services (64 percent). However, only 25 percent believe that justice services are delivered efficiently, indicating that improvements are needed in this area.

Looking at various aspects of social cohesion and civic engagement in the region, in 2023 local residents demonstrated high levels of sense of civic duty (7.5)⁷, community cooperation (5.9)⁸ and social cohesion in their communities (6.6)⁹. Remarkably, in Sumy Oblast, people also have a strong sense of belonging to a settlement (8.2)¹⁰, despite pressure from prolonged hostilities, continuous missile attacks and pressing humanitarian challenges. The SCORE 2023 results showed, however, that the social proximity (4.4) as well as readiness for dialogue among the local citizens is moderate (4.7)¹¹, meaning more dialogues platforms are required to be created and further supported in the local communities.

As an initial step to comprehensively address the needs of the conflict-affected people and ensure effective realization of project objectives, UNDP established partnerships and engaged in consultations with the local stakeholders. Notably, discussions were held with the representatives from the Sumy Oblast Administration, the Agency of Regional Development, the judiciary, the Free Legal Aid System, and civil society organizations. Through these extensive deliberations, shared visions and priority measures were collaboratively established to achieve the Project's goals.

Furthermore, as part of its comprehensive effort to strengthen community-veteran coordination

and support reintegration of veterans, the Project delivered a training programme on protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities in policing and ethical communication. As a result, 24 police officers (13 women) from Sumy Oblast acquired practical skills in the fundamentals of ethical police communication with individuals with disabilities, and learned effective ways to interact with them while performing police duties.

To further enhance the community-based reintegration of veterans, the Project facilitated the participation of three representatives (all women) from the Centre of Veterans' Development at Sumy State University in a specialized training programme for trainers. This programme was a crucial part of a pilot project initiated by the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, introducing the role of a veteran's assistant in transitioning from military service to civilian life. The successfully trained trainers are now conducting sessions for veterans' assistants in Sumy Oblast. The initial group of nine assistants (four women) completed the training at the Centre of Veterans' Development in Sumy, and five of them (two women) are now employed, providing essential services to veterans and their families. This support ensures better access to administrative, social and other services for veterans in Sumy Oblast, aiding their adaptation to civilian life after military service.

In addition, the Project has commenced its work on supporting local civic initiatives aimed at ensuring better access to legal services, fostering the reintegration of veterans at community level and advancing community recovery. In this regard, the Project has announced several calls for proposals for experienced and motivated NGOs working in Sumy Oblast to develop and implement the above-mentioned initiatives.

⁶ SHARP 2023, <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/sharp/2023/1/map?row=tn-2-0>.

⁷ SHARP 2023, <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/sharp/2023/1/map?row=tn-79-65>. Points on a 1-10 scale.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ reSCORE Ukraine 2023: SCORE for Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction, <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/score/2023/1/map?row=tn-38-31>.

¹⁰ SHARP 2023, <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/sharp/2023/1/map?row=tn-79-65>. Points on a 1-10 scale.

¹¹ reSCORE Ukraine 2023: SCORE for Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction, <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/score/2023/1/map?row=tn-38-31>.

Context Overview

Since the Russian Federation's 24 February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the war – now entering its third year – has already led to significant loss of life, unprecedented displacement (internally and to neighbouring countries), and devastating destruction of Ukraine's infrastructure. According to estimates, over 21 million people have been affected by the war, and nearly 18 million require humanitarian assistance.¹²

In its latest report, the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU) has verified 30,457 civilian casualties since 24 February 2022 – comprising 10,582 killed and 19,875 injured, with the actual numbers likely to be significantly higher.¹³

The total amount of documented direct damages caused by Russia to Ukraine's infrastructure has reached US\$152 billion. The most affected sectors have been housing (almost US\$56 billion, or 37 percent of total damage), transport (almost US\$34 billion, or 22 percent), commerce and industry (almost US\$16 billion, or 10 percent), energy (almost US\$11 billion, or 7 percent) and agriculture (US\$10 billion, or 7 percent).¹⁴ By January 2024, over 250,000 residential buildings, 3,800 educational facilities, 1,300 health care institutions and 580 administrative buildings of state and local administration had been damaged or destroyed.¹⁵ As of end-December 2023,

recovery and reconstruction needs are estimated at US\$486 billion, which is approximately 2.8 times the estimated nominal gross domestic product (GDP) of Ukraine for 2023.¹⁶

The destruction of the Kakhovka Dam on 6 June 2023 caused massive flooding in southern regions of Ukraine, leaving behind devastation, an unconfirmed number of civilians killed and injured and a worsened humanitarian situation in areas already facing the dire consequences of the war.¹⁷ According to the report of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), direct damage to infrastructure and assets amounted to US\$2.79 billion, while losses exceeded US\$11 billion, with the lasting environmental impact being the biggest concern. The initial estimate for total recovery and reconstruction needs is over US\$5 billion, and this figure is expected to grow as more detailed assessments are carried out.¹⁸

Heavy and intense bombardments combined with ground fighting continued throughout 2023, resulting in a persistent pattern of civilian death and destruction with serious humanitarian impact. Attacks on port and grain infrastructure since the termination of the Black Sea Initiative in July created additional challenges for agricultural exports from Ukraine.¹⁹

¹² Ukraine Data Explorer, OCHA, <https://data.humdata.org/visualization/ukraine-humanitarian-operations/>

¹³ Two-Year Update - Protection of civilians: impact of hostilities on civilians since 24 February 2022, OHCHR, February 2024, <https://bit.ly/3le8v6k>

¹⁴ Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3), February 2024, the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Union, the United Nations, <https://bit.ly/4bRUSHc>

¹⁵ Damages to Ukraine's Infrastructure, Kyiv School of Economics (12 February 2024), <https://bit.ly/3Td2UU6>

¹⁶ Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3), February 2024, the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Union, the United Nations, <https://bit.ly/4bRUSHc>

¹⁷ Ukraine – Humanitarian Impact and Response Flash Update #8: Destruction of Kakhovka Dam (22 Jun 2023), UN OCHA, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-humanitarian-impact-and-response-flash-update-8-destruction-kakhovka-dam-22-jun-2023-enuk>

¹⁸ Post-Disaster Needs Assessment - 2023 Kakhovka Dam Disaster, Ukraine, UN OCHA, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/post-disaster-needs-assessment-2023-kakhovka-dam-disaster-ukraine-enuk>

¹⁹ Ukraine: Situation Report, OCHA, February 2024, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>



People fleeing the war-affected regions of Ukraine. Photo credit: UNDP / Oleksandr Ratushniak

The ability of local authorities and service providers to sustain a minimum level of services has also been severely hampered in war-affected areas, as employees have fled or can no longer access their workplaces. The forced displacement has placed an additional burden on local service providers in host and transit communities, including administrative, health care, mental health, and social services, and services to ensure access to justice. According to the State Emergency Service (SES), large areas of Ukraine require demining. Mines, booby-traps, and improvised explosive devices have been left behind, posing a significant danger to civilians and returnees.

Millions of people across Ukraine are dealing with mental health issues, rooted in the trauma

caused by the war. Nearly 10 million people are estimated to be at risk of or living with a mental health condition, and 3.9 million people are estimated to suffer from moderate to severe symptoms, according to the World Health Organization. Children are particularly affected, with over 1.5 million girls and boys requiring some form of assistance in managing stress, anxiety or other mental health issues, according to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).²⁰ Mental health and psychosocial support services will be critical to address trauma and stress disorders. The deterioration of mental health has emerged as one of the top three issues affecting Ukrainian youth. Provision of assistance to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence is a particular concern: rape has emerged as a weapon of war,

²⁰ Ukraine: Situation Report, OCHA, February 2024, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>

and a toxic, hyper-masculine environment has led to a sharp increase in incidence of conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse and human trafficking.

The full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation of Ukraine gave rise to many legal issues that required urgent resolution: from the status of internally displaced persons to the need for prompt responses to requests from people affected by the war. This naturally led to an excessive workload for organizations and institutions that provide legal assistance in Ukraine, because demand for legal services has increased rapidly.²¹

A series of attacks on energy infrastructure across Ukraine in the 2022/2023 winter season caused severe disruption to the functioning of power plants and energy transmission systems. Throughout 2023, regular intense attacks on infrastructure occurred across all of Ukraine, with eastern and southern regions being more affected due to their proximity to the frontline. As of December 2023, the attacks on energy infrastructure have caused over US\$10 billion

in damage. Additionally, the district heating sector has incurred more than US\$2.1 billion in damages.²²

Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues to cause daily destruction of civilian infrastructure, death and suffering, and to generate humanitarian needs. The impacts of war are uneven, and the greatest effects are felt by women, persons with disabilities, children and youth, IDPs, and the elderly. The war has caused significant loss of jobs and income in the private sector, as well as loss of purchasing power and loss of assets among Ukrainians, particularly the most vulnerable. The estimated gross domestic product (GDP) for 2023 is 74 percent of 2021 GDP in real terms. Different regions of Ukraine are facing different challenges: regions close to active combat zones are experiencing acute humanitarian needs, while safer areas need urgent economic stabilization and resilience building assistance. Overall, there have been dramatic setbacks in the country's development and in its progress toward many of the Sustainable Development Goals.

21 <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/press-releases/system-free-legal-aid-ukraine-demonstrates-high-level-resilience-war-conditions-undp-report>

22 Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3), February 2024, the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Union, the United Nations, <https://bit.ly/4bRUSHc>

Project Results

Outcome 1.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL JUSTICE SERVICE PROVIDERS MORE EFFECTIVELY IMPLEMENT RESPONSE AND RECOVERY PROCESSES

Output 1.1.

Community-driven response to the crisis is enabled and supported through capacity development of CSOs, initiative groups, volunteer groups on restorative practices for mental health and through MHPSS service provision for key vulnerable groups

Millions of people across Ukraine are dealing with mental health issues, rooted in the trauma caused by the war. Nearly 10 million people are estimated to be at risk of or living with a mental health condition, and 3.9 million people are estimated to suffer from moderate to severe symptoms, according to the WHO. Children are particularly affected, with over 1.5 million girls and boys requiring some form of assistance to manage stress, anxiety or other mental health issues, according to UNICEF.²³

Given these findings, the Project is working to build the capacity of mental health professionals and civil society organizations to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge, skills and equipment they need to provide effective and inclusive psychological support for people affected by the war.

More specifically, in April 2024 the Project is planning to conduct a comprehensive six-day training programme, specifically tailored to the needs of school psychologists from partner communities in Sumy Oblast. The primary focus of the training programme is to equip these psychologists with the knowledge and skills they need to effectively implement Cognitive Processing Therapy, an innovative and evidence-based therapeutic approach. It is envisaged that through this programme the participants will gain valuable insights and techniques to support veterans, their family members and other vulnerable groups in their communities to deal with complex psychological challenges. It is planned that at least 30 school psychologists will undergo the training and will be equipped with the knowledge and practical skills they need.

In addition, the Project will supply tablets with the necessary software for the trained school psychologists to enable them to provide their services more effectively. Moreover, the Project plans to provide financial support for community-identified mini-initiatives to further increase the capacities of mental health specialists, as well as for various awareness raising and learning activities in the partner communities.

Output 1.2.

Enhanced crisis response and capacity of justice system to ensure need-responsive service provision, and improved awareness of legal services for war affected populations

The full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation has given rise to multiple legal issues involving both internally displaced persons and other war-affected persons. In addition, law during wartime is dynamic, making it difficult for the general public to keep track of changes. For this reason, citizens' access to high-quality and qualified legal aid is a priority.

According to a study of the availability of legal aid in the context of martial law.²⁴ since February 2022 there has been an increase in requests to the free legal aid system, specifically among internally displaced persons due to displacement and an increase in the level of vulnerability. The types of requests for legal assistance from displaced persons include registration of status (16.8 percent) and targeted financial assistance for their living expenses (9.7 percent). On the other hand, the local population more often requests legal assistance on issuance of personal documents (4.2 percent), inheritance (3 percent), and notary services (2.8 percent). Registration for social benefits is relevant for both the local population (6.7 percent) and internally displaced persons (7.5 percent).

In general, 10 percent of citizens and a quarter of internally displaced persons required legal aid during the war. In the vast majority of cases, this was about receiving primary legal aid: consultations and clarifications on legal issues (41 percent), drawing up documents not related to court cases (35 percent), or information about rights and laws (30 percent).

In the wake of the large-scale war in Ukraine, access to justice has markedly diminished in remote settlements, making interventions – including technical assistance – imperative. These measures are intended to empower Free Legal Aid System (FLAS) lawyers to provide their services to all individuals affected by the war, reaching the most vulnerable women and men.

During the reporting period, contacts were established with partners at the national and local levels, namely with the judiciary and Free Legal Aid System, and other beneficiaries. As a result, joint visions and priority measures were agreed to enhance the justice system and access to legal services. Finally, working meetings are being prepared and planned at expert level.

At present, no assessment is available on the needs of the veterans and their family members for legal services. At the same time, the issues of social protection and other state-guaranteed services are the subject of intense media and public attention. Following consultations with stakeholders and partners, a clear need has emerged to expand and strengthen the level of awareness and accessibility of legal services for veterans and their family members. While due to security

²⁴ UNDP, Availability of Legal Aid in the Context of Martial Law, February 2023, <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/legal-aid-availability-context-martial-law>

considerations the government of Ukraine does not at present share information on the exact number of veterans expected to return and returning from active military service to communities, it can be assumed this number will be increasing drastically compared to the pre-war situation. Therefore, addressing the data gap and the absence of data analysis regarding the unique legal needs of a substantial group like veterans and their family members is crucial for facilitating further evidence-based interventions.

In view of this, the Project will assess the legal needs of the veterans and their family members. To identify trends and ensure a level of generalization of the results, this assessment will be implemented in Sumy, Chernihiv and Kharkiv oblasts. The results of the study will be used by UNDP for further planning of its capacity-building interventions for legal service providers, as well as by the Free Legal Aid System and other relevant legal services providers for more tailored planning of their work to meet existing service provision needs for the veteran community. To date, the Project has developed two terms of references (for a sociological company and an individual consultant to develop the analytical part of the study). The assessment is scheduled to commence in 2024.

Furthermore, the Project has announced a call for proposals for a grant initiative focused on delivering free legal assistance to veterans and their family members in Sumy Oblast. This effort will also involve the gathering of statistical data and the creation of an analytical report on legal needs within the grant project's target group.

Moreover, under this output, the Projects will introduce a digital solution, known as the e-Damage Registry, to collect and store judicial expert opinions specifically related to assessing war-induced damage to personal property. This entails digitalizing current paper-based expert opinions, using a qualified digital signature, and securely stored in a dedicated module. Subsequently, these expert opinions will be accessible in court cases through a secure access system, ensuring the consistency and compliance of electronically processed opinions with all relevant requirements.

The functional module is anticipated to streamline the storage and management of judicial expert opinions in electronic format, providing reliable and secure access. Additionally, it is expected to simplify the distribution process, reducing costs associated with hard copies of documents in court cases. It will also ensure swift access to judicial expert opinions for authorized individuals, ultimately enhancing the overall capacity and efficiency of the judicial management system.

Outcome 2.

SOCIAL FABRIC IS STRENGTHENED, AND SOCIAL DIVISIONS ARE BRIDGED THROUGH GREATER INSTITUTIONAL AND CITIZEN DIALOGUE, AND THROUGH ENABLING REINTEGRATION OF VETERANS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

Output 2.1.

The Community Mobilization for Community Security and Social Cohesion (CSSC) methodology is expanded to promote civic engagement and dialogue as tools for community stabilization and recovery

The project activities are concentrated on enhancing community security in Sumy Oblast through the application of a community mobilization approach. The methodology was developed and successfully implemented by the United Nations Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme (UN RPP). It is intended to foster synergies between local residents and authorities to enable them to respond effectively and in an inclusive and participatory manner to challenges in the area of community security, and to enhance the community development process. The community mobilization approach includes the establishing dialogue platforms and formats such as Community Security and Social Cohesion Working Groups (CSSC WGs), as well as other dialogue meetings.

CSSC WGs are set up to provide space for discussions, information sharing and raising security and development concerns among local authorities, security providers and communities at grassroots level. The CSSC WGs established in the east of Ukraine during RPP implementation proved to be effective and sustainable at mobilizing community members to address the most pressing security issues in their settlements. Moreover, since the beginning of the large-scale war, the CSSC WGs have become an entry point for practical humanitarian-development nexus implementation at local level, through mobilizing conflict-affected communities for action.

Importantly, these dialogue platforms enable local decision-makers to capture the different needs of all community members, including from vulnerable groups, and to tailor the recovery response to the community issues flagged, making local policies more gender-responsive and inclusive. Using working groups in communities that have experienced post-conflict reconstruction enables the maximum number of stakeholders to be involved in this process, creating prerequisites for co-creating a safe environment and strengthening the social fabric. In a 2023 survey of CSSC WG members, conducted in 12 oblasts of Ukraine, 85 percent of respondents stated that the goals of the working groups had been achieved, and 89 percent believe that CSSC WG activity contributes to positive changes in their communities. In addition, more than 87 percent believe that the work of the CSSC WG contributes to the local recovery process.

As an initial step, the Project conducted consultations with representatives of the Sumy Oblast Administration, the Agency of Regional Development and civil society organizations active in the region. These criteria encompass the community's preparedness to prioritize the development of the veterans' and their family members' ecosystem, geographical location, security situation, the feasibility of implementing development interventions, and the proportion of veterans and youth within the community's total population. Overall, it is planned to establish six CSSC WGs in Sumy Oblast.

Furthermore, the Project has hired a dedicated Community Mobilization Officer for Sumy Oblast who will coordinate work on community mobilization in the region. The Project is currently working to select a partner civil society organization that will support implementation of the Community Mobilization Methodology for Community Security and Social Cohesion in the region. However, given the ongoing war and the related displacement, there is a shortage of capable and experienced local CSOs; therefore, the Project had to re-announce the call for proposals several times. Meanwhile, it was decided to commence the activities on community mobilization and look for capable organizations for implementation. As of today, a consortium of NGOs has been formed to apply with a joint proposal.

Output 2.2.

Solutions are developed, financed, and applied, for community-based reintegration of veterans

The Project announced a call for proposals for NGOs working with veterans and their families in Sumy Oblast. Within this grant competition it is envisaged to support local civic initiatives aimed at fostering the reintegration of veterans at community level and increasing community readiness to support veterans, including:

- Reintegrating veterans and their families, emphasizing preservation and restoration of physical and mental health.
- Providing innovative forms of direct support for veterans and their families.
- Enhancing service quality for veterans and families in collaboration with local authorities.
- Organizational and institutional support for veteran NGOs.
- Establishing a mentoring system to support veteran entrepreneurship.
- Measures to organize social support for veterans and their families.
- Building trust between veterans and local authorities.
- Arts projects as a means of social cohesion for veterans in the community.
- Reintegrating veterans through sports.

The grant projects are expected to be implemented during May – December 2024.

Moreover, the Project intends to facilitate the creation of a digital solution tailored for the veteran community. This initiative will furnish information about businesses offering services that give discounts for veterans or actively support them.

Output 2.3.

Enabling conditions for strengthened community-veteran coordination mechanisms and more effective advocacy efforts and protection of the rights of veterans are created

Supporting demobilized women and men from the armed forces, regardless of their disability status, in realizing their right to work is crucial. Unfortunately, finding employment is challenging, especially for individuals with disabilities, and this challenge is amplified in smaller rural communities. The impact of the war on Ukraine's job market further complicates the situation. Therefore, ensuring sustainable livelihoods is a key factor for the successful reintegration of veterans into civilian life, and plays a vital role in the broader return process.

On 18-19 December 2023, a 2-day training session on protection of the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of persons with disabilities in policing and ethical communication was conducted in Vynnyki, Lviv Oblast. Twenty-four police officers (13 women) of the preventive sector of the Main Departments of National Police in Sumy Oblast increased their knowledge of the existing rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of people with disabilities, along with the nosological forms of disability and their descriptive characteristics, especially in relation to the challenges faced in protecting these individuals while performing police functions. Furthermore, during the training session the trainees studied international approaches employed by the police in working with people with disabilities and combating violence against them. In addition, the participants acquired practical skills in the fundamentals of ethical police communication with individuals with disabilities, and learned effective ways to interact with them while performing police duties, taking into account their limited capabilities.

As part of its efforts to facilitate the community-based reintegration of veterans, the Project supported the participation of specialists working with ex-combatants (assistants of veterans) in a dedicated training programme for trainers. This training programme, entitled "Theory and Practice of Training Specialists in Supporting War Veterans and Demobilized Persons", was an integral part of a pilot project aimed at introducing the role of veteran's assistant into the system for transitioning from military service to civilian life. Training took place on 19-21 July 2023 in Truskavets, Lviv Oblast, and on 18-20 September 2023 in Kyiv.²⁵ In total, 58 participants (46 women, including 3 representatives (all women) of the Centre of Veterans' Development in Sumy State University)²⁶ increased their capacity to train specialists in supporting war veterans and demobilized persons in the pilot project on introduction of the role of veteran's assistant to the system for transition from military service

²⁵ The organization of the event was co-funded by the European Union.

²⁶ The participants included representatives of Veteran Development Centres at various universities involved in the experiment, including Vinnytsia National Technological University; the University of Customs and Finance, Dnipro; Lviv Polytechnic National University; Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, Mykolaiv; Kyiv Avia Technical University, Sumy State University; Zhytomyr National Technical University; and Kharkiv Karazin National University; as well as nine experts from the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine.

to civilian life. The event also helped promote understanding of veteran policy in the professional environment and society through the concepts of development of veterans and demobilized persons, empowerment, and a community-based approach to reintegration, as well as to shape a vision for the reintegration process in the minds of the participants.

As a result, trainers who successfully completed the capacity-building programme are now delivering training sessions for veterans' assistants in Sumy Oblast. Notably, in December 2023, the first group of nine assistants (four women) already completed the training course organized in the Centre of Veterans' Development in Sumy State University. Five assistants (two women) have already been employed in local communities and are currently providing services to veterans and their family members. With their support, members of the veteran community in Sumy Oblast now have better access administrative, social and other services for veterans and receive comprehensive support when adapting to civilian life after military service.

Sumy Oblast is one of 10 Ukrainian regions involved in the pilot initiative of the Ministry of Veterans Affairs to establish the role of veteran's assistant. The intention is to expand this initiative to every territorial community across Ukraine. Moreover, there are plans to officially include the position of specialist accompanying war veterans and demobilized individuals into the national classification of professions.

Outcome 3.

CITIZENS, ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN AND MEN, TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN INCLUSIVE, AREA-BASED PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SECURITY AND RECOVERY INITIATIVES

Output 3.1.

Youth has enough capacities to be engaged in local recovery and national policymaking to become a part of the dialogue and experience sharing among civil society organizations (incl. EU-based)

The SHARP study,²⁷ conducted in 2023, indicated that the sense of civic duty is higher among young people (8.2) than the general population (7.5), making youth a driving force for any future recovery process.²⁸ The survey shows that young people strongly associate themselves with the country, feel responsible for it, and support state efforts to defend sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Therefore, the key strategic focuses of the Project include empowering young people to act as agents of change and offering them opportunities to engage in decision-making and recovery processes within their communities.

To unleash the potential of young people, the Project is focusing on mobilizing and building the capacities of the young boys and girls in Sumy Oblast, as well as raising awareness among local authorities about the significance of involving youth for a more inclusive and sustainable future.

²⁷ <https://app.scoreforpeace.org/en/ukraine/sharp/2023/1/map?row=tn-2-0>

²⁸ Scale 0-10; for 18-35 age group.

With this in view, the Project has planned several capacity-building activities to be conducted in 2024. A training programme on restorative practices for volunteers is scheduled for the beginning of the year 2024 (end of January).

Further to this, a Youth Ideathon #SOLVE_IT will be organized and held in April 2024. The event is expected to gather young leaders from eight regions, including Sumy Oblast, and is intended to increase youth engagement in increasing community security and recovery planning and ensure their proactive role in community restoration.

Another training event, titled "From Idea to Volunteer Project," is scheduled for May. The objective is to support the professionalization of volunteerism by providing participants with the essential skills and knowledge to transform their volunteer efforts into structured and impactful projects.

Finally, in July 2024, the Project will launch a "Young Ambassadors of Recovery" programme in communities where Recovery and Development Offices are functioning, namely in Sumy. These offices serve as platforms for effective cooperation, bringing together representatives of local authorities, international organizations, media organizations, civil society, and businesses to coordinate international aid and prioritize reconstruction projects. The programme aims to engage young people in the work of the Recovery and Development Offices establishing a sustainable, youth-led model for active participation in post-conflict recovery. It is envisaged the Young Ambassadors of Recovery will collaborate closely with local administrations, the Recovery Offices, and potentially other key stakeholders, positioning the Recovery Office as a pivotal platform for their activities.

Output 3.2.

Whole-of-community initiatives are identified and financed to empower citizens, people with disabilities as a result of the ongoing war, and other vulnerable groups to participate in and benefit from community recovery and service provision

This project output is dedicated to fostering community recovery and service provision in areas affected by war. The goal is to collaboratively identify and fund comprehensive community initiatives that empower all citizens, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups, to enable their active participation in and benefit from the recovery and service provision efforts.

Through the small grants fund, the Project will render support for implementation of at least 10 civic initiatives to address community-based challenges and support local recovery process. Capacity-building interventions will be also organized for CSOs and citizens' groups on project management, conflict-sensitive programming, community engagement and development of performance indicators, as well as communications to ensure public visibility of the initiatives.

Moreover, the Project will support the creation and testing of social entrepreneurship models for civil society organizations. This approach serves as a mechanism for ensuring sustainable funding for their activities, concurrently yielding benefits for the community.

Risks and Analysis

1 The main risks to effective Project implementation are primarily related to the ongoing war in Ukraine and include:

- Capture by the Russian army of other territories of Ukraine and consequent worsening of the security situation in project locations.
- An increased number of ad hoc missile attacks throughout the Project partner communities, leading to further displacement.
- Increased population flows out of Ukraine and within the country leading to shortages of qualified workforce and suppliers.
- Inability of national and local institutions to function effectively, due to volatility in state financing and local budgets cuts, leaving no resources for development.
- Severe disruption to power and internet supplies.
- Critical macroeconomic turbulence.

Deterioration of the security situation in the Project partner communities may preclude the minimal security conditions necessary for programming. This is particularly true as many of these areas remain in close proximity to the front line or the border with the Russian Federation, and could face renewed/increased fighting and become inaccessible.

To minimize these risks, the Project is being implemented under the guidance of the United Nations Department for Safety and Security and the authority of the United Nations Designated Security Official.

Project staff will also continue to liaise with Ukrainian authorities to secure a safe environment for Project staff and implementing partners. Risk assessment and mitigation will include regular political and security analysis and consultations with key partners and security service providers. Tested business continuity and security plans and standard operating procedures are in place and are updated regularly to mitigate the impact of existing and potential threats to Project beneficiaries and UNDP staff.

2 Insufficient availability of well-qualified contractors and NGOs, as well as suppliers willing to deliver equipment to war-affected areas, may delay some Project activities. The required procurement and payment mechanisms will be accelerated through enhanced UNDP operational capacity, supported by Project resources. The appropriateness of community engagement modalities will be assured through rapid conflict analysis of the target areas and participatory dialogue with local authorities and community leaders.

3 Replacement of local or national government leaders, or the inability of local governments to function due to conflict or political transition, is another political risk. The risk of government turnover will be mitigated by identifying and aligning with key public service specialists, security providers and community members who can support and promote ongoing implementation of the Project activities.

4 The potential expansion of the large-scale military invasion in Ukraine to the Project's partner communities could necessitate a shift in partner priorities, resulting in the repurposing of project activities and funds by UNDP in response to the war.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

1

Due to the long-lasting armed conflict in eastern Ukraine and the subsequent large-scale invasion by the Russian Federation, provision of qualified psychological assistance to war-affected people will remain urgent, and there will be a growing demand among professionals for improved mental health methods for providing psychological support. Furthermore, even where qualified mental health professionals remain active, partner stakeholders have highlighted a strong need to build their qualifications to specifically work with vulnerable groups such as demobilizing women and men, who required specialized care and tools to support their mental health.

2

Connected to the point above, (re)integration of veterans at community level and enhancing the capacities of local communities to receive veterans, including those with disabilities, is one of the most requested areas for development support within recovery planning and implementation. It is envisioned that capacity development programmes will support this request. Additional efforts should be made to assess the readiness of communities for veterans' reintegration, and provide evidence for national and subnational policy making processes and action plan development.

3

The Project encountered challenges in identifying a suitable civil society organization to support implementation of the Community Mobilization Methodology for Community Security and Social Cohesion in Sumy Oblast. Despite extending the deadline for the call for proposals three times in 2023, no appropriate proposals were received. The decreased capacity of CSOs, attributable to war-related mobility and a shift towards humanitarian activities and volunteering for Ukrainian military forces, was identified as the primary reason. Given these circumstances, a decision was made to initiate activities in the region and seek capable partners during the implementation process. As of February 2024, there is an intention to re-announce the call for proposals. A consortium of NGOs has been formed to submit a joint proposal, reflecting ongoing efforts to identify and engage suitable partners for the Project.

Annex 1.

Project Results Framework

Nº	Indicator	Baseline [2022]	Target [2025]	Result [2023]	Source	Comments
OUTCOME 1		Local communities and local justice service providers more effectively implement response and recovery processes.				
1.1	Level of trust in local institutions (Scale 0-10)	6.1	6.7	4.7	SHARP assessment	The SHARP 2023 results demonstrate a decrease from the previous year, which can be attributed to citizens' fatigue from the war that is challenging their resilience. The prolonged hostilities, missile attacks across the country including those on the energy infrastructure added to the overall exhaustion as well as influenced people's mental well-being. Along with that, overall level of community cooperation has slightly increased, along with the level of civic optimism remaining quite high, which indicates that Ukrainians remain strong, cohesive, and reliant on each other.
1.2	Trust in courts (Scale 0-10)	4.4	4.8	3.2	SHARP assessment	
1.3	Trust in Prosecutor General's Office (Scale 0-10)	5.2	5.7	4.2	SHARP assessment	
1.4	Trust in NGO (NGOs / CSOs) (Scale 0-10)	7.3	8.0	7.0	SHARP assessment	
1.5	Satisfaction with provision of justice services (% of those who think justice services (e.g., courts) in their locality are provided very or somewhat efficiently)	37%	41%	24.5%	SHARP assessment	
1.6	Satisfaction with provision of administrative services (% of those who think administrative services (e.g., TSNAP, residence registration, issuing passports and other documents) in their locality)	69%	76%	63.9%	SHARP assessment	
1.7	% of respondents who report "sufficient" availability of psychological counselling and support services in their locality (disaggregated by age and sex)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	37.9%	SHARP assessment	
Output 1.1: Community-driven response to the crisis is enabled and supported through capacity development of CSOs, initiative groups, volunteer groups on restorative practices for mental health and through MHPSS service provision for key vulnerable groups.						
1.1.1	Cumulative number of mental health professionals assisted with capacity development initiatives who report and improvement in their skills (disaggregated by sex)	0	No less than 75%	0	Project records	
1.1.2	Number of first responders trained on stress management and prevention of harmful copying mechanisms who report and improvement in their skills, disaggregated by sex, and age	0	No less than 75%	0	Project records	

N°	Indicator	Baseline [2022]	Target [2025]	Result [2023]	Source	Comments
Output 1.2: Enhanced crisis response and capacity of justice system to ensure need-responsive service provision, and improved awareness of legal services for war affected populations.						
1.2.1	Needs assessment of the legal needs of the veterans and their family members completed and results shared with project stakeholders	NO	YES	NO	Project records	
1.2.2	Number of war-affected individuals benefiting from legal aid services and advice, disaggregated by sex	0	30,000 of beneficiaries (at least 40% of women)	0	Free Legal Aid System statistics	
1.2.3	“eZbytky” platform is launched and operational	NO	YES	NO	Project records	
OUTCOME 2		Social fabric is strengthened, and social divisions are bridged through greater institutional and citizen dialogue, and through enabling reintegration of veterans in their communities.				
2.1	Community cooperation (Scale 0-10)	5.7	10% increase over baseline	5.9	SHARP assessment	
2.2	Mobility intentions (% of those who plan to move to another oblast or to move abroad in next month)	5%	10% increase over baseline	2.3%	SHARP assessment	
2.3	Sense of belonging to the settlement (Scale 0-10)	8.5	10% increase over baseline	8.2	SHARP assessment	
2.4	Community cohesion (Scale 0-10)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	6.6	SCORE assessment	
2.5	Openness to dialogue (Scale 0-10)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	4.7	SCORE assessment	
2.6	Intergroup Social Proximity (Scale 0-10)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	4.4	SCORE assessment	
Output 2.1: The Community Mobilization for Community Security and Social Cohesion (CSSC) methodology is expanded to promote civic engagement and dialogue as tools for community stabilization and recovery.						
2.1.1	Number of community level working groups established and effectively functioning in Project's partner communities	0	6	0	Project records	
2.1.2	Number of individuals who are actively participating in the work of community level working groups (disaggregated by sex, age, and disability status)	0	180	0	Project records	
2.1.3	Percentage of members of community level working groups who feel their voices are taken into account in improving community security and recovery	0	No less than 75%	0	Survey of the CSWG members	

N°	Indicator	Baseline [2022]	Target [2025]	Result [2023]	Source	Comments
Output 2.2: Solutions are developed, financed, and applied, for community-based reintegration of veterans.						
2.2.1	Number of veteran-mentors with improved capacity to support newly demobilizing individual to transition from military to civilian life (disaggregated by sex)	0	20	9 (4 women)	Project records (pre/post training survey)	In December 2023, the first group of nine assistants already completed the training course organized in the Centre of Veterans' Development in Sumy State University.
2.2.2	Number of veteran organizations trained to engage with community platforms to design and implement project in support to community recovery	0	30	0	Project records	
2.2.3	Number of veterans benefiting from community-based initiatives addressing their specific needs (disaggregated by sex, age, disability status)	0	150 (40% women)	0	Project records	
Output 2.3: Enabling conditions for strengthened community-veteran coordination mechanisms and more effective advocacy efforts and protection of the rights of veterans are created.						
2.3.1	Desk study of existing models of employment of veterans in law enforcement agencies completed and results shared with project stakeholders	NO	YES	NO	Project records Evidence of launch event	
2.3.2	Number of staff in human resources departments of law enforcement and civil protection agencies benefiting from improved knowledge on inclusion within their personnel of veteran with disabilities and people with disabilities in general (disaggregated by sex)	0	30 (70% women)	24 (54% women)	Project records Pre training survey	
OUTCOME 3		Citizens, especially young women and men, take an active role in inclusive, area-based planning and implementation of security and recovery initiatives.				
3.1	Sense of civic duty ²⁹ (Scale 0-10; only for 18-35 age group)	7.8	15% increase over baseline	8.2	SHARP assessment	
3.2	Civic engagement (Scale 0-10; only for 18-35 age group)	3.2	15% increase over baseline	3.8	SHARP assessment	
3.3	Active citizenship (Scale 0-10; only for 18-35 age group)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	6.1	SCORE assessment	
3.4	Locality satisfaction (Scale 0-10; only for 18-35 age group)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	6.5	SCORE assessment	
3.5	Migration tendency (Scale 0-10; only for 18-35 age group)	n/a	10% increase over baseline	5.2	SCORE assessment	

²⁹ Due to the small number of respondents (34) the findings are not considered to be generalizable to the wider youth population in Sumy Oblast.

N°	Indicator	Baseline [2022]	Target [2025]	Result [2023]	Source	Comments
Output 3.1: Youth has enough capacities to be engaged in local recovery and national policymaking to become a part of the dialogue and experience sharing among civil society organizations (incl. EU-based).						
3.1.1	Number of youth organizations trained to engage with community platforms to design and implement project in support to community recovery	0	5	0	Project records	
3.1.2	Number of youth participating in exchange activities (disaggregated by sex)	0	20 (11 young women)	0	Project records	
3.1.3	Number of youth-led initiatives implemented in partner hromadas	0	5	0	Project records	
Output 3.2: Whole-of-community initiatives are identified and financed to empower citizens, people with disabilities as a result of the ongoing war, and other vulnerable groups to participate in and benefit from community recovery and service provision.						
3.2.1	Number of community infrastructure objects being identified and rehabilitated through participatory and community-led consultation processes	0	2	0	Project records	
3.2.2	Number of local recovery projects planned in a conflict and gender sensitive manner and implemented by CSOs and citizens groups (including those led by women, youth, and ex-combatants)	0	10	0	Project records	
3.2.3	Number of communities where social entrepreneurship models are successfully being piloted (disaggregated by women- and youth- led social enterprises)	0	2 (50% youth-led social enterprises 50%; female-led social enterprises)	0	Project records	