

# The year we never expected

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Strategies and Technologies for Effective Partnership, NGO



## The year we never expected

**This is a typical early-summer view in the Zaporizhzhia region – somewhere on the road to the small town of Chernihivka, halfway between Zaporizhzhia and Berdiansk.** Of course, a spontaneous shot through a car window cannot depict all the beauty of vast blooming fields.

However, this picture is special and valuable in its own way: we took it in June 2021 while visiting partner communities. Back then, looking at fast-changing landscapes and peaceful scenes of everyday life in towns and villages, no one could imagine how much our world would change in a year.

When the Russian army invaded Ukraine, our team had three ongoing projects designed to promote local economic development and democracy in eastern Ukraine. After February 24, we had to suspend them for a while and later adjust to new conditions and the urgent needs of partner communities.

We would like to thank our financial partners, who made it possible to proceed with our work and refocus current projects on helping affected communities and supporting volunteers.

We are most grateful for the trust of our new donors and associates, who helped us expand our legal aid activity. Thanks to their support, we have recruited more lawyers to provide free counselling, documentation assistance and other legal services for internally displaced persons and relocated local governments in Zaporizhzhia.

It is hard to review and summarize this past year. And yet, here are some results of our activity for your attention. With faith in Victory, we continue our work in 2023.

**Team of the NGO  
Strategies and Technologies  
of Effective Partnership**

### Activity areas in 2022

- **Promoting** civil society development at the community level
- **Strengthening** capacity of NGOs in small cities and communities
- **Improving** institutional capacity of local development agencies and centres
- **Increasing** wartime capacity and safety of municipal institutions and enterprises

**7** projects implemented during 2022

**5** new projects started in 2023

**2** organizational capacity building programs

**5** new financial partners and donors

- **Support** — financial, technical and organizational — of volunteer centres and humanitarian hubs, especially in Eastern Ukraine
- **Assistance** to vulnerable people, including humanitarian cooperation with local governments and NGOs to ensure safe evacuation and temporary accommodation of IDPs, provision of relief items



Photo: Vitalii Lysenko





## Resilience of communities in eastern Ukraine

### University of the Third Age

**Donor:** EU4 Resilient Regions programme / GIZ GmbH

■ **November 2021 — July 2022**

Initially, the project was designed to reduce the social isolation of elderly people who live in villages of Shakhove community by introducing a new public service, **University of the 3d Age**.

To support this innovation, STEP intended to equip multimedia rooms where retired people could continue to learn, achieve personal growth and communicate with neighbours. Six such spaces were to appear at village cultural centres.

Before Russia's full-scale invasion, STEP had already conducted training for social workers and purchased **equipment for multimedia rooms** of the University of the 3d Age. Today, specialists of Shakhove community use this equipment to provide social services to the local population.

**From April 2022 until its completion**, the project aimed to support Shakhove community and strengthen its wartime capacity.

The priority remained to help older people, as well as social workers and other specialists who assist IDPs and vulnerable populations.

**2 trainings** on innovations in social work for employees of the Centre for Social Services of Shakhove community, exchange of experience with Shyroke and Selydove communities

**2 creative workshops** at the University of the 3d Age

**6 multimedia packages** for village cultural centres

### Local partners:

- Shakhove village council of Donetsk region (Shakhove village territorial community)  
Website: [shahivska-gromada.gov.ua](http://shahivska-gromada.gov.ua)
- Centre for Social Services of Shakhove village council, municipal enterprise
- Village chiefs (starostas), local initiative groups and volunteers

### Assistance provided:

- **relief items** for temporary accommodation of internally displaced persons and assistance to vulnerable populations;
- **mental health support groups** for people in difficult life circumstances;
- **psychological consultations** for social workers (online and by phone);
- **information campaign** "How to help yourself and others in crisis";
- **first aid training** for community workers and local activists.

**400 members** of mental health support groups

**300 vulnerable people** received humanitarian aid

**100 hours** of individual counselling

**3 social spaces equipped** for temporary accommodation of IDPs (purchased kettles, microwaves, multicookers, sleeping kits)



Both IDPs and local residents received help through psychological support groups



Meetings in the University of the 3d Age before and after February 24, 2022



# Support for local governments



## Increasing the institutional capacity of development agencies in communities of the Zaporizhzhia region

**Donor:** Fostering economic participation of vulnerable groups including internally displaced persons in Ukraine / GIZ GmbH

■ **December 2021 — August 2022**

The project was developed following a prior study on local development agencies and their institutional needs. It included training, expert advice and technical assistance to strengthen the institutional capacity of development agencies in four communities: **Vasylivka, Prymorsk, Chernihivka and Yakymivka.**

Soon after Russian troops attacked Ukraine, they occupied the territories of all four communities. Unwilling to cooperate with invaders, local government officials and specialists fled to Zaporizhzhia city, as did many residents.

Working on a strategy for Yakymivka Development Centre, January 2022

In April, STEP helped to equip **offices of relocated communities** in Zaporizhzhia. The project team also revised a training program considering most topical issues of work under martial law and added a psychological support component.

**In April 2023**, about 130,000 IDPs were registered in Zaporizhzhia. Most of them were displaced within the Zaporizhzhia region.



## Local partners:

- Vasylivka city council  
<https://www.facebook.com/vasgromada>
- Prymorsk city council
- Chernihivka village council  
<https://www.facebook.com/chegromada>
- Yakymivka village council

## Activities & accomplishments

- Equipped mobile offices of local governments of partner communities in Zaporizhzhia: **purchased laptops, tablets, multi-function printers.**
- Training for local specialists on organization of work in relocation, labor relations under martial law, cooperation with volunteers.
- Consultations on fundraising for humanitarian projects. One of the projects developed with expert support received funding from the International Renaissance Foundation and was implemented by NGO STEP and Yakymivka Development Centre.
- To facilitate cooperation between communities, STEP organized a round table involving officials from the city administration of Zaporizhzhia. The partners discussed ways to support IDPs and improve workplaces for relocated community specialists.
- Cooperation with Vasylivka, Prymorsk, Chernihivka and Yakymivka local councils continues in 2023 within the new project, **Support of Territorial Communities of the Zaporizhzhia Region.**



Strategic meeting with Vasylivka local development agency, January 2022



Round table for relocated communities in Zaporizhzhia city hall





## Helping those who help people

### Strengthening local democratic governance

**Donor:** National Endowment for Democracy

■ **March 2022 — September 2022**

The project started in March 2021 to improve the transparency and accountability of local governments in eastern Ukraine, focusing on inclusive strategic planning for community development.

In March 2022, the project was amended to support volunteer initiatives in partner communities.

#### Supported initiatives:

- **Support centre for residents of temporarily occupied territories**, NGO YES (Tokmak — Zaporizhzhia)
- **Volunteer hub to support IDPs**, NGO MainStream (Zaporizhzhia)
- **Volunteer centre to support the population of affected communities of the Kharkiv region**, NGO FORBOR and Borova village council (Kharkiv)

■ **Aid centre for IDPs** in Pokrovske community of the Dnipro region

■ **Tabby Cat** — association of volunteers who sew humanitarian goods for soldiers, hospitals, IDPs (Zaporizhzhia)

■ **Volunteer centre to support residents of Prymorsk and Berdiansk communities** of the Zaporizhzhia region, NGO Prymorsk 24/7

■ **Aid centre for residents of Chernihivka** in Zaporizhzhia, NGO Platform of Development and Chernihivka village council

More about the project activities before February 2022



Thanks to NED's grant support, our partners strengthened their capacity to help the affected population:

- **arranged** new premises for the work of volunteers or furnished existing ones;
- **improved** internal processes, e.g. collecting requests for aid, accounting and reporting;
- **organized** delivery of humanitarian goods and evacuation of people;
- **helped** to improve the delivery of social services in their communities;
- **organized** remote work of volunteers, conducted awareness campaigns for IDPs and people on temporarily occupied territories;
- **attracted** new volunteers and humanitarian partners.



7

**volunteer initiatives** to support affected and host communities, IDPs, other vulnerable populations and Ukrainian army

20

**territorial communities** received assistance, including 12 temporarily occupied, 6 front-line, 2 host communities, and the cities of Zaporizhzhia and Kharkiv

16000+

**people** received humanitarian and other aid thanks to the volunteering activities of our partners (April-September 2022)



## Free legal aid

## Safe evacuation

### Immediate humanitarian support of the war affected vulnerable people in Zaporizhzhia region

**Donor:** HEKS/EPER (Swiss Church Aid)

■ **June — December 2022**

The project was implemented in close cooperation with **Zaporizhzhia city council** and its structural units responsible for the registration of displaced people, their temporary accommodation in municipal shelters and other social assistance.

**HEKS/EPER** helped to purchase fuel for municipal buses that provided evacuation and transfer for IDPs within the city of Zaporizhzhia (registration centres — shelters — evacuation trains).

#### Partners:

- Service for Children's Affairs of Zaporizhzhia city council
- Department of Social Protection of the Population of Zaporizhzhia city council
- Zaporizhelektrotrans, Municipal enterprise (public transport provider)
- Department of Education and Science of Zaporizhzhia city council

# 8212

people received help during evacuation, as well as travelling from places of registration to shelters and evacuation trains, incl. 2988 children, 4912 women, and 312 men.

### Free legal aid for IDPs in the Zaporizhzhia region

**Donor:** the Representation Danish Refugee Council in Ukraine (sub-grant)

Our experts provide legal counselling, documentation assistance and other legal services directly in places of registration and accommodation of IDPs. These are evacuation points, shelters and collective centres.

By April 2023, **more than 2,000** people in Zaporizhzhia received legal assistance thanks to the project.

#### Project statistics:

- **3** lawyers — legal aid providers;
- **1621** people received one-on-one legal counselling;
- **475** participants of group awareness rising sessions;
- **2500+** people raised their legal awareness through printed materials



■ **June 2022 — April 2023**

Conducted under the project «Protecting Humanitarian Rights and Freedoms and Safeguarding Internally-Displaced Persons and Conflict-Affected Communities from Risks Arising from Explosive Ordnances in Ukraine».

Grant by: European Commission – Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

# 4500+

people received legal aid and information on relevant rights of IDPs through individual counselling, group awareness sessions and printed materials







## Humanitarian cooperation

### Emergency response to the wartime needs of communities

**Financial partner:** Carlsberg Ukraine

■ **June — August 2022**

In order to help partner communities better respond to wartime challenges, we purchased and then donated:

- tablets and Wi-Fi routers to the Service for Children's Affairs in Zaporizhzhia;
- equipment and supplies to the IDP Registration centre and municipal shelters;

- instruments and protective gear to the city emergency and rescue services;
- refrigerators and washing machines to medical and social institutions of Shyrokye community near the city of Zaporizhzhia.
- The funds were also used to pay for the delivery of **5 humanitarian cargoes** to Zaporizhzhia (a total volume of 100 tons).

### Support for women with children of Yakymivka community

**Donor:** Humanitarian Solidarity grant program by the International Renaissance Foundation and CARE Deutschland

■ **September — October 2022**

Implemented together with **Yakymivka village council** (office in Zaporizhzhia) and Yakymivka Development Centre.

**Funding was used to purchase and distribute relief goods to IDP families:**

- **190** family food packages;
- **190** hygiene kits for women;

- **54** baby food packages and hygiene products for children up to 3 years old;
- **200** children's hygiene kits.

Total number of people who received relief items: **446** IDPs from Yakymivka community, including **256** children.

## Organizational development



Photos on page 13: Halyna Kolesnyk/LDN/General meeting of the Legal Development Network

### Capacity development of local NGOs – legal aid providers in Ukraine (project of the Legal Development Network)

■ **September 2022 — April 2023**

In September, STEP joined the project of the **Legal Development Network** aimed at strengthening the organizational capacity of relocated NGOs with a particular focus on improving legal services.

Our Chairperson of the Board, **Kateryna Maltseva**, worked as a mentor to project participants. In addition, our lawyers and managers completed thematic training for legal aid providers.



### Digital security support for Ukrainian civil society

Project of the NGO Internews-Ukraine

■ **November 2022 — February 2023**

During the project, STEP's staff enhanced their **knowledge and skills in digital security** and received expert advice to reinforce the organization's cybersecurity.

Also, thanks to small grants from the **International Renaissance Foundation**, we received wireless modems for high-

speed Internet and power banks. This equipment enabled our team to continue work during scheduled and emergency power outages caused by Russian missile attacks in winter 2023.

**Total cost of the equipment received within the project is UAH 16,200.**



## Financial report

income **6 212 530 UAH**

**funds received through grant competitions, targeted charitable donations, including non-financial receipts in the amount 84 500 UAH**

### Financial partners:

- National Endowment for Democracy
- Fostering economic participation of vulnerable groups including internally displaced persons in Ukraine / GIZ GmbH
- EU4 Resilient Regions programme / GIZ GmbH
- HEKS/EPER (Swiss Church Aid)
- Representation Danish Refugee Council in Ukraine / European Commission – Directorate – General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)
- Carlsberg Ukraine, PJSC
- International Renaissance Foundation and CARE Deutschland within the Humanitarian Solidarity grant program

expenses

**6 212 530 UAH**

**expenditures to carry out grant and other cooperation projects in accordance with approved budgets**



### December 2022 — April 2024

Bolstering the wartime capacity and sustainability of local CSOs, donor: National Endowment for Democracy

### February — April 2023

Access to high-quality primary legal aid for IDPs of Vasylivka and Yakymivka territorial communities, donor: UNDP

### February — September 2023

Support of territorial communities in the Zaporizhzhia region, donor: Promoting economic participation of vulnerable groups including internally displaced persons in Ukraine project, GIZ GmbH

### April — December 2023


Everyone Counts — Inclusive Data for Stability and Development, implementing partner in Zaporizhzhia and Dnipro. Project of the IOM Mission in Ukraine, donor: Government of Canada

### May 2023 — April 2024

Free legal aid for IDPs in Zaporizhzhia, implementing partner. Project of the Representation Danish Refugee Council in Ukraine, donor: ECHO







We are grateful to all our partners, donors, organizations, institutions and volunteers who worked with us during this difficult year.

We thank the Armed Forces of Ukraine, all brave men and women who protect Ukrainian freedom and unity, and those who contribute to the resilience of our country through their donations, volunteering and other personal involvement.

We remember all heroes who died in the war and we continue to care for people in need.

**We believe in Ukraine's Victory, in justice and humanity, in the recovery and further democratic development of our society.**

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Other photos used in the report were taken during events of the NGO STEP or provided by our partners within joint projects.

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