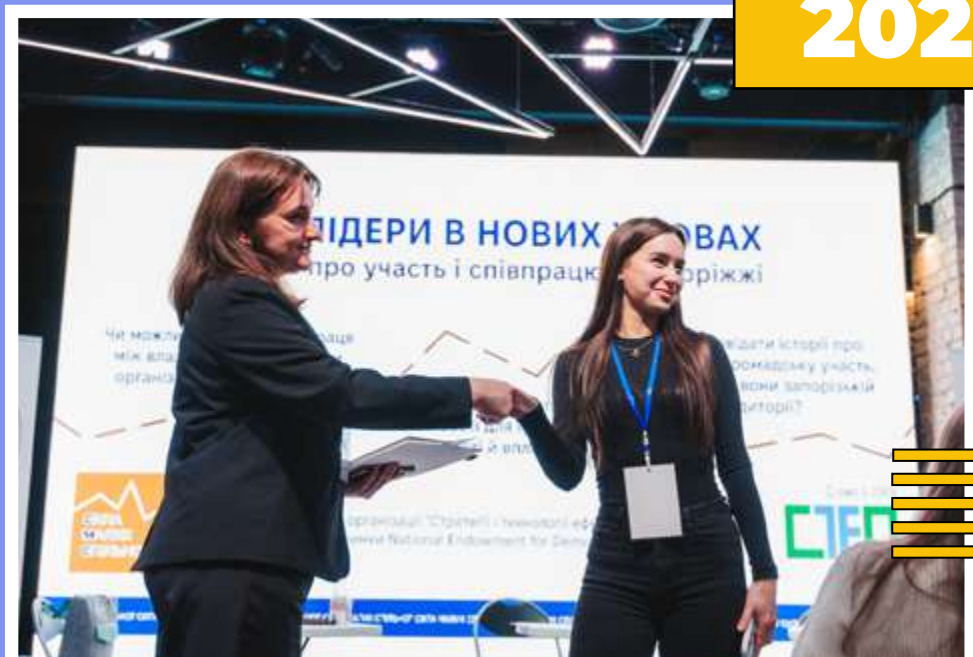




NON-GOVERNMENTAL
ORGANIZATION
“STRATEGIES AND
TECHNOLOGIES FOR
EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP”

ANNUAL REPORT

2024





**WE PROMOTE PARTNERSHIPS
THAT HELP STRENGTHEN
AND REBUILD UKRAINE,
LAYING THE FOUNDATION
FOR A DEMOCRATIC AND PEOPLE-
ORIENTED SOCIETY.**

— **Mission of NGO STEP**



The sixteenth year of our work turned out to be full of projects, events, partnerships and various activities.

We administered 11 projects, cooperated with our traditional partners and found new ones. Tried new formats: for the first time we worked in a consortium, held an online intensive for CSOs and became co-organizers of a large youth forum.

We helped to equip public spaces in Zaporizhzhia villages and to purchase important equipment for inclusive resource centers. We initiated experience exchange visits, shared knowledge, studied ourselves and inspired others for ideas and actions.

Thanks to the support of international donors and civil society sector colleagues, we continued to develop the system of legal aid providing in communities. We provided legal support to more than 4,000 citizens, including internally displaced persons, war veterans and their family members, volunteers, residents of rural communities.

Finally, we returned to the priorities we started our work with in 2009 — supporting and empowering children and youth. Together with partners, we helped to prepare a strong team of youth workers and to create a city youth center.

You can read about all of this in our regular annual report.

We are grateful to everyone who was involved in our successes and useful activities. And, of course, we are unconditionally and boundlessly grateful to all those who, with their heroism and resilience over the past 10 years, give us the opportunity to do our work.

— **Team of the NGO STEP**

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— Concluding meeting of participants of the Teple Misto Mentoring Program for CSOs (August 2024)

— Photo: Anton Soronchak

1

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



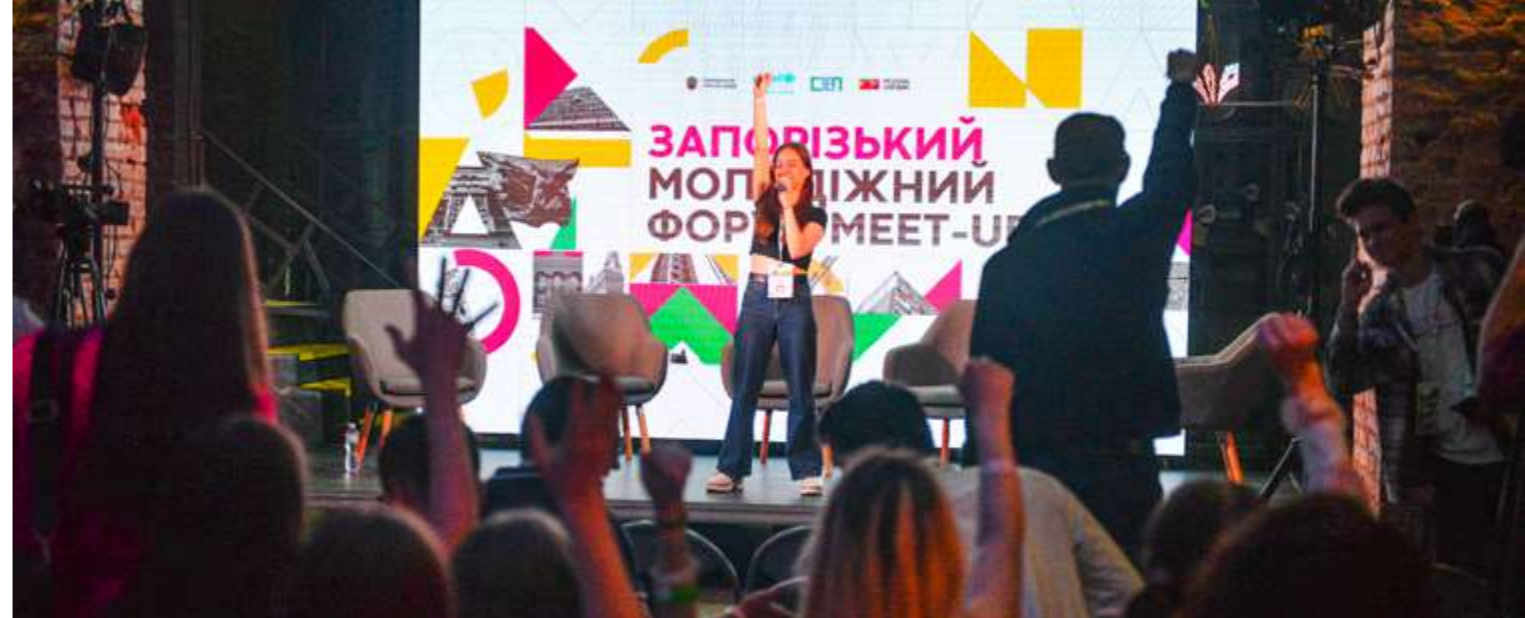
**NGO STEP
SUCCESSFULLY PASSED
THE AUDIT OF ITS 2023
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS.**



Important events and achievements

- Conducting the **Cohesion Hub** — a week-long strategic intensive for community leaders from Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv and Poltava regions — together with IOM Ukraine and a number of other partners. That was the largest event in which we have been involved as organizers
- Receiving financial, expert and informational support from the **Legal Development Network (LDN)** within the program of strengthening the capacity of local organizations to respond to the challenges of war.
- Launching a joint initiative to support relocated communities together with the LDN.
- Participating in Mentorship Program of the innovation platform "Teple Misto" for CSOs.
- Joining the strategic retreat of partner organizations of the **National Endowment for Democracy (NED)**.

— INITIATIVES
— LEARNING
— MEETINGS



Creating a consortium

In May together with a number of partners we conducted the Zaporizhzhia Youth Forum MEET-UP. And in July we started our new project with a very ambitious goal: "to relaunch" youth policy in Zaporizhzhia.

That was the first project that NGO STEP implemented in a consortium — together with the NGO "Molod Online" with the support of the Zaporizhzhia City Council and UNICEF, thanks to the financial assistance of the German KfW development bank. The key event of the project in 2024 was the opening of the first municipal youth center in Zaporizhzhia.

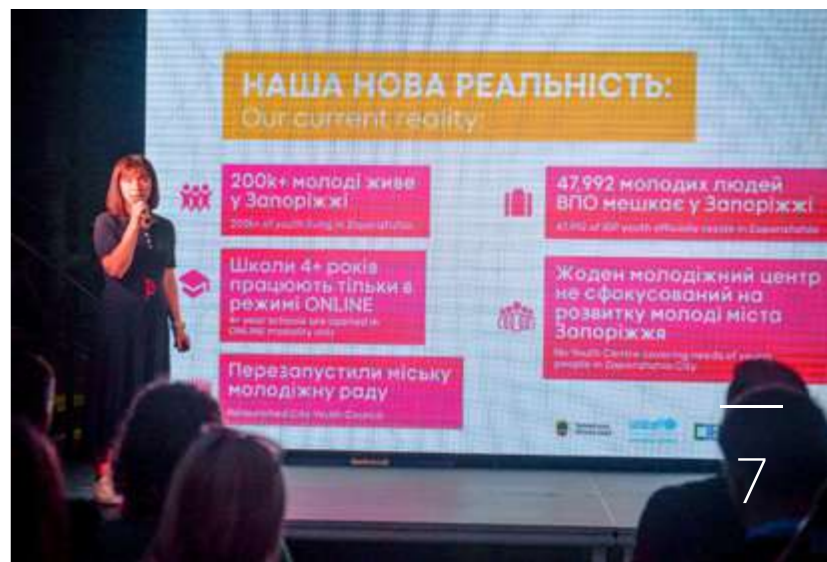
SINCE 2009, TALKS BEGAN ON ESTABLISHING A CITY YOUTH CENTER. STEP WORKED THEN WITH SMALL BUT MEANINGFUL INITIATIVES, STARTING WITH THE CREATION OF THE FIRST YOUTH COUNCILS IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES. TOGETHER WITH YOUNG PEOPLE, WE CARRIED OUT THE ACTIVITIES THEY THEMSELVES WANTED TO DO. THIS BECAME A GRADUAL JOURNEY TOWARD SUCH AN IMPORTANT PROJECT OF YOUTH INFRASTRUCTURE.

— **Oleksii Ahientaiev, Chairman of the Board of NGO STEP**

Growing through partnerships

Cooperation with UNICEF and work in a consortium is of great importance for our institutional development. We managed to:

- Strengthen program activities by engaging the expertise of partners.
- Expand partnerships with municipal institutions of Zaporizhzhia.
- Improve the set of internal policies on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Undergo a micro-assessment for UNICEF implementing partners regarding compliance with HACT (Harmonized Approach to Cash Transfers) requirements.
- Currently we are working on new policies to improve our financial management, procurement, work with personnel, monitoring and risk consideration, as well as..
- Implement real changes, providing youth with new opportunities for self-development and socially important actions in their hometown.





— Author: Yulia Bilyk, communication manager of the Legal Development Network. First published on the LDN website (full text)

“RESPONSE TO THE NEEDS OF PEOPLE IN ZAPORIZHZHIA REGION”: HOW STEP NGO WORKS IN THE TENTH YEAR OF WAR

At the end of 2023, the STEP NGO wrote a development strategy for the next two years, taking into account today’s reality.

“We realised that we don’t have a lot of people, so we need to go step by step: we are working according to the plan,” says **Oleksii Ahentaiev**.

At the same time, the organisation is flexible and open to change. In 2022, after the full-scale invasion, STEP, like many other NGOs, activated the humanitarian aid program, delivering food, medicine and household chemicals to people in need. Now the priority is to provide legal and psychological assistance to the population, as well as education. Advocacy is a new area for the NGO.

“We not only provide legal aid, but also try to respond to negative phenomena, inconsistencies, and gaps in legislation. Since we work in communities, we react and try to implement changes to improve the legal framework in the country,” emphasises **Anton Stasik**, the lawyer at the NGO STEP.

Representatives of the STEP NGO are convinced that their team is able to respond to any

“WE RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR REGION, TO THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE HERE”

circumstances: if necessary, they will provide humanitarian assistance and join the processes of reconstruction and reintegration.

Synergistic effect

In the first half of 2024, lawyers of the STEP NGO provided residents of the Zaporizhzhia region and internally displaced persons with 201 individual consultations and held 5 public events online and in the format of group consultations on principal issues in communities. The lawyers advise local residents, internally displaced persons and war-affected people on how to properly record property damage and theft, and help people file claims through Diia.

Legal counselling is provided in synergy with psychological counselling. After all, often a person who applies for legal aid also needs psychological help, and vice versa.

“What is the strength and accuracy of this approach? The fact that we respond to the needs of our region, to the needs of the people who live here. As a frontline city, we live in such conditions that psychological help is extremely necessary, and people are increasingly aware of this. We not only provide assistance in the form of algorithms for dealing with certain situations, but also educate people, both legally and about the fact that it is normal and necessary to seek psychological help, because it is better to pay attention to symptoms in time than to treat chronic diseases for a long time,” explains **Anton Stasik**.

In February 2024, STEP continued its cooperation with the Yakymivka Territorial Community in Zaporizhzhia Region and the teaching staff of Zaporizhzhia General Education Sanatorium Boarding School No. 7. Over the course of six months, the organisation’s psychologists provided individual counselling to 30 community members and held five group sessions.

Preserving the identity of communities

Speaking about the prospects for the near future, Oleksii and Anton talk about the need to support relocated communities, people who have left their homes in the occupied territories and moved to Zaporizhzhia. It is difficult for IDPs to find their place in the new communities,



“WE WANT TO PRESERVE THE IDENTITY OF RELOCATED COMMUNITIES, THE CONNECTION OF PEOPLE WITH THE COMMUNITY”

and there is a so-called crisis of sense. **Oleksii Ahentaiev** gives the example of the Yakymivka Village Community, where about 60% of residents moved to Zaporizhzhia:

As rural residents, they cannot find a job in the city because they do not have the appropriate qualifications. Our idea is that, for example, the city of Kherson, Mykolaiv or any other city that needs specialists who know how to work on the land can invite these people to live and work in urban communities as a diaspora.”

“We want to preserve the identity of the relocated communities, the connection of people with the community, so that they identify themselves as ‘I am Enerhodar’, ‘I am Mariupol’, so that it is not a name, but a real identity. This solves several issues at once. First, it helps to find the meaning of the community’s existence now. Secondly, it creates a community that will return to their towns and villages after the liberation and starts rebuilding them,” **Anton Stasik** emphasises.

The ideas for supporting the relocated communities were supported by the Legal Development Network. Joint closed discussions are planned to find tools to respond to the challenges faced by the relocated communities. This is not only an opportunity to help residents of the temporarily occupied communities, but also to strengthen the brand of both the organisation and the Union.

— [Full text is available on the LDN website](#)



— Participants of the training on communications for CSOs and local governments (November 2024)
Photo: Kateryna Klochko



2

CIVIL SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT AT LOCAL LEVEL



THE POWER OF SMALL COMMUNITIES

WHAT this project is about

“Power of Small Communities” is a two-year project conceived and launched in the first year of the full-scale Russian invasion with the aim of supporting resilience of local CSOs and promoting cross-sectoral cooperation.

Eight communities took part in the project — four from the western regions of Ukraine (in 2023) and four — from Zaporizhzhia region.

In each community STEP worked with local NGOs, volunteer groups, local authorities. Partners received a resource, expert and informational support to implement initiatives for communities’ cohesion and strengthening.



Initiatives supported in 2024

The 2nd phase covered relocated and rear area rural communities of **Zaporizhzhia region**, which remain a priority in STEP’s work.

— NGO “MainStream” and the Development Agency of the Chernihivka Community organized trainings on volunteering for relocated youth and English language courses for community specialists and volunteers.

— NGO “Youth in Motion” together with the municipal Development Agency conducted digital literacy and citizen journalism courses for residents of the Vasylivka community and published a community news digest.

— The new community hubs were created in the Petro-Mykhailivka and the Pavlivka communities due to the NGO “YES” assistance. The spaces have children’s areas and comfortable furniture. Local activists plan to hold their events here.

— A new NGO “Zavtra Bude”, which united active residents, was registered in Petro-Mykhailivka during the project. Meanwhile, activists in the Pavlivka community developed a plan of community initiatives for 2025.

Local programs

Support for local initiatives and community spaces was only one of the project components. To create a more sustainable infrastructure for public participation and interaction in communities, STEP proposed to partners to develop **targeted programs** to support volunteering and CSOs.

In total, over two years, partner communities developed six programs with detailed action plans. Their development was initiated both by city councils and by activists.

— The experience of the city of Buchach in Ternopil region demonstrated that the targeted program can become a good reason for networking of active citizens and even lead to new projects and community initiatives. In Buchach, more than 30 (!) active CSOs, municipal institutions, student self-government, cultural centers and religious communities joined the development of the document.

A number of ideas for joint initiatives were born during the work on the program — activists have already implemented a part of them not waiting for the council to approve the document.

THE PROJECT’S PRIORITY IS TO STRENGTHEN THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Other support

Another component of the project was the **capacity building program** for partner CSOs — through training, experience exchange visits and informational support.

— In autumn activists and managers from relocated communities of Zaporizhzhia visited Ivano-Frankivsk and learned about the experience of the platform “Teple Misto” and the innovation center “Promprylad”.

— Together with the NGO “Institute Republic,” we implemented a training program for CSOs, which included both online and offline events.

— A series of publications about “change-makers” and community initiatives appeared in cooperation with the online media outlet SODA.

WHAT DO WE MEAN WHEN TALKING ABOUT THE POWER OF SMALL COMMUNITIES

The power of networking

The city of Buchach and its strong community of activists is the main discovery of the first phase of the project. Two years ago, the NGOs **“Buchach-ART”** and **“Youth Portal of Buchach”** engaged more than 20 partners to hold a Youth Forum in their hometown. Some guests came to the two-day event from other regions of Ukraine.

The Youth Forum is one of numerous community initiatives of Buchach. The city can boast many volunteer groups supporting the Armed Forces of Ukraine and an active Youth Plast training center. No surprise, it was activists who initiated the development of a local program to support volunteering in Buchach.

In December the initiative group completed a draft program with a detailed action plan. And although there was not enough time to approve it at the last session of the city council, the work on the program has already led to the emergence of new partnerships and projects.

“THE PROGRAM SPARKED A WAVE OF ACTION — FROM A CHARITY RUN FOR THE ARMY TO ENGAGING ACTIVITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE. WE ALSO LAUNCHED A SERIES OF POSTS BRINGING TOGETHER ALL YOUTH COMMUNITIES TO SHOWCASE THE OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE IN BUCHACH”

— VITALII OKIPNYI, YOUTH PORTAL OF BUCHACH



KALUSH NOW HAS A TOY THERAPY ROOM, AND VILLAGES IN ZAPORIZHZHIA REGION HAVE OPENED COMMUNITY HUBS.

The power of big ideas

Our partners from the Kalush community proven how important is to believe in your idea and be able to inspire others with it.

In spring 2024 the **NGO “Youth in Action”** opened a fully equipped educational space for children and youth in the city of Kalush. It differs from a number of similar spaces in having a Toy Therapy Room.

The idea was implemented with the help of the city council, NGOs and charitable organizations, patrons, entrepreneurs — in total about twenty partners who believed in the idea of the psychologist Ivanna Hrytsiv and her youth team. The project “Power of Small Communities” also helped by providing furniture and climate control equipment for the new space.

Within our cooperation, NGO “Youth in Action” conducted therapeutic sessions for children and trained 25 specialists who work with people affected by the war. Now the team continues to work in the chosen direction: regularly holding events for children and youth, as well as psychological support groups for adults.

And the Toy Therapy Room keeps growing with new items, as a good idea continues to inspire many generous people.

The power of mutual care

A self-care and potential development are prerequisites for sustainable help to others.

For example, a volunteer group from the village of **Usychi in Volyn region** implemented an entire program for psycho-emotional relief — psychological games, art therapy classes and even yoga. And the **charitable foundation “Union Without a Name”** from Brody organized an off-site psychological training for its female volunteers and members of support groups they take care of. They chose a picturesque ethno-park for the trip — an ideal place for recovery.

Our partners in Zaporizhzhia region chose another interesting cooperation format and organized an English Club. Thanks to this initiative, specialists and volunteers of the Chernihivka community mastered English language at the A1 level. Some participants have already applied their new knowledge in practice during cooperation with foreign volunteers.





PROJECT RESULTS IN NUMBERS

The power of relocated communities

“Brave to Create New” is the name of the youth educational hub opened by the Chernihivka community in Zaporizhzhia. In autumn, the **NGO “MainStream”** held a volunteering course there for displaced youth. Teenagers from the Vasylivka community joined their peers from Chernihivka to take part in the training.

Trainers and mentors focused on team building, time management and event organization. During the course, the teenagers proposed several new initiatives. Three of them were launched immediately — a debate tournament, a New Year’s online marathon, and a fundraising campaign to purchase tourniquets for social workers and teachers.

Many residents from relocated communities are currently living in Zaporizhzhia, and local NGOs are involving them in various educational activities. For example, the **NGO “Youth in Motion”** from Vasylivka organized training on digital literacy and citizen journalism.

199 TOURNIQUETS WERE PURCHASED THANKS TO A FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN BY THE ACTIVE YOUTH OF CHERNIHIVKA

The power of joint actions

In December, new community hubs were opened in two villages in Zaporizhzhia region — in Biliaivka and Petro-Mykhailivka. The spaces are designed for different groups of residents — from young children to adults. Local activists believe that such venues will expand opportunities for meaningful leisure and active participation in community life. They plan to hold trainings, consultations and meetings with representatives of the village council there.

For Biliaivka, the project is especially significant, as the village has no cultural center. This is the first comfortable public space where residents can gather and host some activities.

The people of Petro-Mykhailivka are no less motivated — inspired by their participation in the project, they have already registered an NGO and are ready to carry out their own initiatives.



8 community hubs received resource support, which allowed to improve the conditions for the current work and events of local CSOs.

150 events in communities took place at the initiative of the project’s partners. The largest of them were the Youth Forum in Buchach, a volunteer “toloka” in Usvychi, psychological trainings in Kalush, as well as the course on volunteering for relocated youth in Zaporizhzhia.

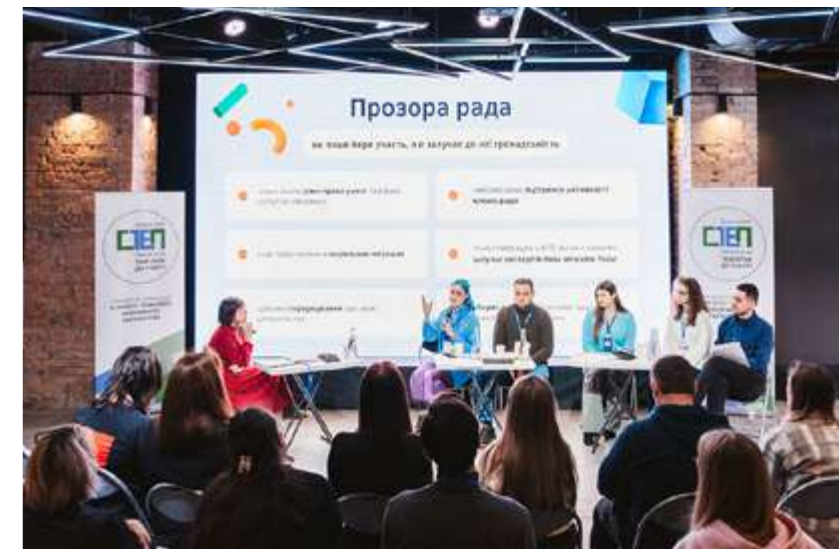
250 000 hryvnias is the average amount of support provided for each community, including purchases for community hubs and local events, payment for the services of trainers and other experts who worked directly with communities and local CSOs.

230 community activists and specialists took part in educational events, forums, study visits and the project survey.

6 stories about civil initiatives and change-makers in communities of Zaporizhzhia were published in the media outlet SODA.



— [Civil Society in Zaporizhzhia region: Survey report \(Ukr\)](#)



“THE PROJECT ‘POWER OF SMALL COMMUNITIES’ BROUGHT OUR ORGANIZATION MANY NEW EXPERIENCES. FOR THE FIRST TIME, WE COLLABORATED WITH COMMUNITIES IN WESTERN REGIONS OF UKRAINE, FOUND NEW PARTNERS AND LIKE-MINDED ALLIES FROM THE CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR AND LOCAL MEDIA, AND TRIED OUT NEW FORMATS OF WORK.”

— Inna Stashchuk, Project Coordinator

— Director of the Zaporizhia City Youth Center
Tamila Tuinova at the Center's opening ceremony
(December 2024)



НОВИЙ ПІДХІД
МОЛОДІЖНОЇ
РОБОТИ У
ЗАПОРІЗЬКІЙ
МІСЦЕВОСТІ

Молодіжний
центр(и)
Youth Center(s)

Активна
молодь
Active Youth

Молодіжна
рада
Youth Council

3

**SUPPORTING
COMMUNITIES:
ZAPORIZHZHIA**



EMPOWERING YOUTH OF ZAPORIZHZHIA

Why is this project so important

This unique project was born from more than six months of cooperation and dialogue between local authorities, international partners, and the civil society, focusing on the challenges, opportunities, and prospects for young people in Zaporizhzhia.

In 2024, more than 200,000 young people lived in Zaporizhzhia, nearly a quarter of whom were displaced from temporarily occupied territories.

With the support of UNICEF and local partners, we set out to revive the youth movement in Zaporizhzhia and build a capable community of young people ready to contribute to the development and recovery of their hometown.

600+ YOUNG PEOPLE IN ZAPORIZHZHIA TOOK PART IN THE PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES IN 2024

What so special and unique

- The project is implemented in a consortium of NGOs "STEP" and "Youth Online" with the active participation and support of city council departments. This approach allows combining resources and expertise from different sectors.
- The project led to the establishment of a new municipal institution, which will provide young people with essential services and free space for self-actualization.
- A comprehensive approach to change-making: from training young people to applying the acquired knowledge and skills in practice, from studying the needs of youth to developing regulatory documents together with them.

What we already succeeded in

In the first six months of the project, our team together with the partners managed to lay the foundation for the institutionalization and development of youth policy in Zaporizhzhia.

We held **more than 50 events** for youth. The most important of them are:

- Training program for candidates for the Youth Center team, including certified trainings "Youth Worker," courses on volunteering, management of youth centers, fundraising, communication and partnerships building.
- Workshops and consultations on the development of city programs to support youth.
- Experience exchange meetings between youth councils from different cities and regions

Capable Youth Council

The Zaporizhzhia City Youth Council underwent thematic training and developed a qualitatively new target program "Youth of Zaporizhzhia 2025–2027." This document contains 32 activities aimed at engaging young people in the life of the city, supporting youth initiatives



and developing youth spaces. Almost 10 million hryvnias were allocated from the city budget for their implementation. In addition, thanks to the advocacy campaign of the Youth Council, a discount student card for municipal transport was introduced in Zaporizhzhia.

U-REPORT Survey

In autumn young participants of the project conducted a large-scale survey on the needs of youth on UNICEF's U-Report digital platform. The study covered more than 900 respondents.

The findings were used in the development of the target program "Youth of Zaporizhzhia 2025–2027" and the city regulation on youth initiatives.



— [U-Report survey on youth problems and needs \(Ukr\)](#)



THE FIRST MUNICIPAL YOUTH CENTER IN ZAPORIZHZHIA



BY THE END OF THE PROJECT, 13,000 YOUNG PEOPLE — BOTH RESIDENTS OF ZAPORIZHZHIA AND NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES — WILL BENEFIT FROM THE ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE YOUTH CENTER.

In December, **the Zaporizhzhia City Youth Center** began operations. Its team consists of the top graduates from the three-month training program within the project. They are highly motivated youth leaders who love their hometown and are committed to creating positive change.

The Youth Center is housed in a 1930s historic building — the **former “Social City” library**. Its reconstruction took more than five months, during which the space was transformed into a modern hub with a rooftop observation deck and a green area for outdoor events, while preserving the building’s **Bauhaus-style** identity.

In addition, one of the city libraries continues to operate within the building. The Youth Center itself can accommodate up to seventy people simultaneously, and its internal layout allows for both large and small-scale events.

All these transformations are the result of cooperation between the Zaporizhzhia City Council and UNICEF, with financial support from the German Development Bank KfW. The projects are being implemented with the direct participation of the NGOs “STEP” and “Youth Online,” assisted by the municipal institution “City Development Institute of Zaporizhzhia” and the relevant departments of the Zaporizhzhia City Council.

Key facts about the city Youth Center and its first accomplishments

- The Youth Center has four main locations: a large hall for events, a library with a coworking space, a kitchen for lunches and informal meetings and a terrace for relaxation.
- The center is run by a team of four young women and four young men. The director, Tamila Tuinova, is 21 years old and combines her work at the municipal institution with her studies in the fourth year at university.
- In the first 2.5 months of operation, the Center hosted 80+ events focused on education, leisure, and social support for young people.
- Additionally, the team of youth workers organized about 40 events across the city, including career guidance sessions in schools.
- In total, from December to February, approximately 1,500 participants, ranging from 10 years old to... respectable age, attended the Youth Center’s events, with the vast majority being under 35.
- Over 200 young residents of Zaporizhzhia took part in world cafés and the city-wide “Ideathon” to discuss the most pressing problems and needs of youth and suggest potential solutions.



THE IDEATHON AND WORLD CAFÉS HELPED DRAFT A VISION DOCUMENT OUTLINING THE PROBLEMS AND NEEDS OF ZAPORIZHZHIA’S YOUTH. IT WILL SERVE AS THE ANALYTICAL BASIS FOR THE CITY’S YOUTH INITIATIVES COMPETITION, WHICH WILL BE HELD FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2025.



PROJECTS TO SUPPORT & STRENGTHEN OUR HOMETOWN

— STEP continues to implement collaborative projects developed and carried out in close coordination with local communities. In 2024, our priority was projects focused on the city of Zaporizhzhia and communities across the Zaporizhzhia region.

Strengthening municipal inclusive resource centers

A new minibus, equipped to transport passengers with disabilities, was delivered to one of Zaporizhzhia's inclusive resource centers. This special vehicle will make it easier for the center's young students to travel to their classes.

In addition, three more inclusive resource centers in different districts of the city received suspension therapy cabins with a full set of accessories.

This equipment is essential for correctional and developmental classes for children with limited mobility and will expand the range of services provided at the centers.

The implementation of this important project was made possible thanks to the financial support of the "Kusanone" program of the Government of Japan.

"WE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR SUCH A SERVICE FOR A LONG TIME. NOW, CHILDREN IN OUR DISTRICT WILL BE ABLE TO RECEIVE BOTH CORRECTIVE AND COMPENSATORY CARE, AS WELL AS UNDERGO DIAGNOSTICS AT THE CENTER, WHICH WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF REHABILITATION SERVICES."

— **Nataliia Lazarieva, Director of the Inclusive Resource Center**



Improving the inclusive education together with Street Child Ukraine

As part of the project "Improving Inclusive Education for Children with Special Needs in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Regions," STEP works with local authorities, educational institutions and the civil society sector.

We carried out a needs assessment of partner inclusive resource centers (IRC) and conducted a study of the needs of children who will receive services there. Five IRCs in the Zaporizhzhia, the Vilniansk and the Bilenke communities received sets of computer equipment, which teachers critically lacked for their work.

Educational and other project events:

- Round table "Assessment of the Needs of Children with Disabilities and Children with Special Educational Needs" and presentation of an analytical report based on the results of sociological research.
- Trainings "Inclusive Education: Effective Approaches, Team Interaction and Support for Participants in Educational Process."
- All-Ukrainian Forum of Inclusive Resource Center Specialists "Comprehensive Support for Children with Special Educational Needs."
- Trainings "Building an Inclusive Space: The Role and Capabilities of IRC".



Opening the Community Hub with the UNDP's support

The new public space will operate in the shelter of the cultural center "Orbita". It has all the essential equipment for conducting working meetings and trainings. Both city organizations and representatives of relocated communities will be able to hold their events there.

In addition, the hub is being actively used by community security and social cohesion working groups established under local authorities within the framework of the UNDP project in Ukraine. Drawing on expertise in various fields, these groups comprehensively analyze community issues and propose effective solutions to address current challenges, enhance safety, and prepare for recovery.

THIS CENTER WILL BE A PLACE WHERE PARTNERSHIPS FLOURISH — WHERE PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS, INCLUDING SOCIAL WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS, AND POLICE, COME TOGETHER TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES WE ALL FACE. IT IS AN EXAMPLE OF HOW INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS CAN HELP ADDRESS LOCAL PROBLEMS.

— **Rehina Kharchenko, Secretary of the Zaporizhzhia City Council**

— Round table discussion “Housing Certificates: Challenges in Obtaining and Using. The Case of Zaporizhzhia Region” (October 2024)
Photo: DRC Ukraine



ЕКОНОМІЧНИЙ
РОЗВИТОК



4

LEGAL CAPACITY OF CITIZENS AND COMMUNITIES



FREE LEGAL AID PROJECTS | WITH DRC

SINCE 2022, STEP HAS BEEN WORKING UNDER PROJECTS OF THE DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (DRC), PROVIDING LEGAL ASSISTANCE TO WAR-AFFECTED INDIVIDUALS IN THE ZAPORIZHZHIA REGION. DURING THIS PERIOD, OUR LEGAL TEAM HAS PROVIDED FREE LEGAL SUPPORT TO 7,000+ PEOPLE.

Individual legal consultations

How we provide aid: during personal meetings with lawyers, trips of mobile legal clinics to communities or districts of the city of Zaporizhzhia, phone consultations, as well as through the DRC digital platform.

During individual consultations, citizens receive spoken advice and step-by-step instructions for resolving their legal issues.

After communicating with specialists, most beneficiaries are ready to resolve their legal issues independently.

Most common legal issues:

- access to pensions and social benefits;
- housing and property issues;
- applying for IDP status and restoring civil registry documents;
- crossing the border;
- family and children's rights;
- employment and labor rights;
- healthcare and education;
- military conscription, freedom of movement.

Number of beneficiaries: 2,320

Group information sessions

To increase citizens' legal awareness regarding the most common and pressing issues, the STEP's legal team conducts group consultations.

How we provide aid: during information sessions for the population, in particular in offices (hubs) of territorial communities or at municipal institutions working with IDPs and other vulnerable groups.

Topics of information sessions:

- access to social, administrative and medical services;
- registration of disability and a social status, receiving pensions and benefits;
- restoration of civil documentation;
- military conscription;
- employment;
- prevention of discrimination;
- gender-based violence prevention;
- basic digital and legal literacy.

Number of beneficiaries: 1,280

“WE NOT ONLY PROVIDE ASSISTANCE THROUGH STEP-BY-STEP GUIDANCE FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS, BUT ALSO FOCUS ON EDUCATION — BOTH LEGAL EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE ON WHEN TO SEEK PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT”

— ANTON STASIK, LAWYER

Secondary legal aid

Secondary legal aid provided within DRC projects includes comprehensive assistance by lawyers aimed at restoration of citizens' rights being violated, such as access to public services and social protection.

The work of the STEP's legal team in this area also includes the preparation of necessary documents, support for legal cases, and support in state bodies (administrative support), taking into account the vulnerability and needs of affected persons in protecting their fundamental rights and freedoms.





— The following success stories were published on the website of the Legal Development Network and on the Facebook page of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC).

LEGAL AID PROJECTS AND PROTECTING CITIZENS' RIGHTS: SUCCESS STORIES

No trial: the IDP's work experience at the collective farm, which remained in the temporarily occupied territory, was taken into account

Mykhailo*, an IDP from Kherson oblast, approached the lawyers of the NGO STEP with a question about transferring his pension. Because of the war, the man left his native village, which russians occupied, and now he could not confirm the years of his work experience.

The pensioner wondered how to include the time he worked on the collective farm in his work experience. After all, his work record book remained in the temporarily occupied territory, and the lack of recorded work experience affected the amount of his pension.

Lawyer Anton Stasik explained to Mykhailo the algorithm of further actions, helped him obtain an archive certificate confirming that he had indeed worked on one of the collective farms in Kherson oblast, and drafted an application to the Pension Fund asking for a recalculation of his benefits.

At the same time, Mykhailo managed to find photocopies of his work record book, which had been left at home.

"Pensions may be recalculated based on a claim or a court decision. In this case, a claim for

"THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP IN PREPARING DOCUMENTS FOR THE COURT. I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE UNDERSTANDING AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION FROM THE LAWYERS OF THE NGO 'STEP,' ESPECIALLY DANYLO UCHKIN."

— from reviews of the lawyers' work, December 2024

recalculation should be filed with the administrative court of the plaintiff's place of residence or with the administrative court of the competent pension fund body that refused to recalculate the pension within six months from the date of receipt of the refusal," the lawyer explains.

Within the next two weeks, Mykhailo was given credit for his work experience on the collective farm and received an increased pension.

An IDP received assistance in being dismissed from a company that remained in the temporarily occupied territory

Iryna* was forced to move from the Melitopol district to Zaporizhzhia and could not register at the local employment center. She has not been officially fired from a job that is currently occupied.

Iryna turned to the lawyers of the NGO STEP with her problem. She said she could not even find her former employers alone. The management of the enterprise, located on the territory of the Yakymivka village council, which the russians temporarily occupy, did not get in touch with her. Iryna was still waiting to get her documents from Yakymivka.

"We prepared a request to the Employment Center addressed to the employer to terminate the employment contract. Thus, following the procedure established by the Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons", Iryna's employment contract was terminated. The date of its termination was the day following the day of submission of the application," the lawyer Anton Stasik said.

After her dismissal was formalized, the woman could register at the employment center and find a new job.

Internally displaced mother was helped to promptly recover unpaid alimony

Kateryna* received a mother of many children status and issued social assistance for large families. However, after the funds were credited, she could not use them. A private executor imposed an arrest on Kateryna's account, which complicated access to financing.

In order to resolve this situation Kateryna applied for help to the NGO "STEP," which provides free legal support in partnership with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The Lawyer Mariia prepared an application to designate the bank account as an expense account, which allowed the restriction on the amount of two minimum wages to be lifted.

This enabled Ms. Kateryna to freely use the funds, which became an important step towards the financial stability of her family.



"A WONDERFUL TEAM OF PROFESSIONALS AND RESPONSIVE INDIVIDUALS. THEY UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION, HANDLED THE CASE EFFICIENTLY, FILED THE CLAIM WITH THE COURT PROMPTLY, AND PROVIDED ONGOING SUPPORT. THERE WERE NO ISSUES IN COURT, AND THE CLAIM WAS GRANTED. WE ARE PERSONALLY GRATEFUL TO ANNA BABENKO AND THE ENTIRE TEAM FOR THEIR HELP!"

— from reviews of the lawyers' work, November 2024



СОЦІАЛЬНЕ
ПІДПРИЄМНИЦТВО
У ВІДПОВІДЬ НА
ВИКЛИКИ В УКРАЇНІ



FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2024

— Lecture on social entrepreneurship for teams of relocated communities during a study visit to Ivano-Frankivsk (November 2024)

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

income & expenses



PLANS AND PRIORITIES 2025

INCOME:

Grants and subgrants received through open competitions for own projects and implementing projects of international organizations in target regions of Ukraine.

€ 22 503 300

IOM Ukraine.....	9%
UNDP Ukraine.....	3%
UNICEF Ukraine.....	38%
Embassy of Japan in Ukraine.....	13%
Danish Refugee Council.....	24%
Street Child Ukraine.....	13%

Empowering youth in Zaporizhzhia: Continuing joint efforts

Together with UNICEF and other partners we support the newly established Youth Center in transforming the landscape of youth policy.

This year, the first city competition of youth initiatives will take place in Zaporizhzhia, allowing youth NGOs and initiative groups to receive funding ranging from 30,000 to 150,000 hryvnias for their own projects. This component is being administered by our colleagues from the NGO "Molod Online."

We also look forward to new events, services, and exciting opportunities for youth, led by the Youth Center team.

Monitoring the transparency of reconstruction in communities

As part of the LDN's project "Right to Recovery: Protection of Property Rights and Transparency of Reconstruction", our lawyers Anton Stasik and Andrii Aleksandrovych provide legal aid to persons who lost their homes. In particular, they help restoring documents for those who cannot confirm ownership of their homes.

Additionally, our experts monitor the transparency of reconstruction works in Posad-Pokrovske village of the Kherson region.

Enhancing the organization's financial and management policies

During the first half of 2025, we aim to develop or update the following internal policies:

- Human resources management and training
- Procurement and banking operations
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Anti-fraud and anti-corruption
- Risk management
- Development of new programs and projects
- Social and environmental standards of work

New projects: Legal aid, support for children and youth, and strengthening local democracy

Legal aid, children and youth, and support for communities and local democracy remain our priorities. In 2025, STEP will continue to strengthen its expertise in these areas, expand its networks, and implement new projects.

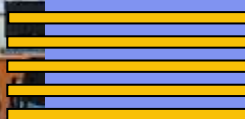
We anticipate that this year will be challenging, but we are ready to seek new opportunities and solutions. Our organizational development priorities include preserving and strengthening the team, attracting non-grant funding, and building effective partnerships.

EXPENSES:

Implementation of grant projects in accordance with approved budgets and donor requirements.

€ 22 503 300

- Purchase and transfer of goods and/or services to partner organizations and communities participating in projects.
- Organization and hosting of events.
- Contractual services of experts, legal team.
- Administrative expenses.
- Other expenses according to project budgets and statutory activities.



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The report includes photos of events organized by NGO STEP, as well as images from the Zaporizhzhia City Council and other partners of our projects.

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