



UNHCR SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY CENTRES

EVALUATION REPORT

Prepared by UNHCR Ukraine

UNHCR Ukraine supported 86 communities to establish sustainable Community Centres in an effort to promote protection and durable solutions for internally displaced persons from 2015 to 2017. This report contains a review of these Community Centres and compiles good practices, lessons learned and recommendations for **UNHCR**'s future engagement in sustainable Community Centre programmes in Ukraine.

[Acknowledgements]

The “**UNHCR** Support to Community Centres - Evaluation Report” was prepared by **UNHCR Ukraine**. The editorial team, led by Anita Rohner (Durable Solutions Officer), included Yurii Arnautov and, Igor Chantefort as reviewer.

The evaluation contained in this report only refers to Community Centres supported by **UNHCR Ukraine** during the period 2015 to 2017. The designations employed and the presentation of country or area names, including in maps and country listings, do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of **UNHCR** concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

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[COVER PHOTOGRAPH:]

["Windows for Kids" Community Centre in Mariupol. UNHCR Ukraine, 18.12.2015]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since 2014, the armed conflict has displaced 1.5 million people in Ukraine. Tensions between displaced and host communities, and perceptions of IDPs being a burden on the host community have emphasised the need for promotion of peaceful coexistence. **Communities have struggled to find safe spaces for gatherings, and often lacked information about their rights and available assistance, as well as recreational activities required for stress relief.** Such circumstances are particularly acute for persons with special needs.

UNHCR Ukraine has committed itself to community-based protection and, through participatory assessments, to identify communities' protection risks and develop prevention, mitigation and response plans. Having sustainable Community Centres is an important community-based protection tool to promote peaceful coexistence and social cohesion. **From 2015 to 2017, UNHCR Ukraine supported communities in establishing their community platforms that resulted in the creation of 86 Community Centres.**

UNHCR Ukraine mainly supported communities by procuring building materials and equipment to restore damaged infrastructure and create functional spaces. **Concerns addressed in the Community Centres are related to psychosocial, legal and educational needs.** As of mid-2018, a majority of the Community Centers with **UNHCR Ukraine** support have been able to expand their activities to an ever-growing number of community members.

UNHCR Ukraine identified good practices, which have been of benefit for the communities and resulted in more sustainable Community Centres. The Community Centres are mostly run by motivated and trained volunteers that welcome specialised organisations to work with community members on initiatives that address their specific needs. Communities, often unable to cover the Community Centres' recurrent costs, need financial support from the local authorities. Therefore, from an early stage, **UNHCR Ukraine** has fostered the engagement of local authorities.

This report provides lessons learned and recommendations on how **UNHCR Ukraine** could further develop its approach to support Community Centres. The **“One Stop Shop” model, that provides** a wide variety of services and partners in one location, has been the preference. Due to a **high prevalence of psychosocial, legal and economic needs** among affected populations, support in these areas should be the prioritised activities of Community Centres. In field locations, **UNHCR Ukraine** should prioritise support to existing Community Centres (as opposed to sponsoring new ones), especially those with existing government ties and community structures within the Community Centre. This is essential for **sustainability**. Similarly, making arrangements for the coverage of the Community Centre's recurrent costs has been deemed crucial and should be discussed and factored-in at an early stage.

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

From 2015 to 2017, **UNHCR Ukraine** implemented Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) as a tool to provide community-based protection. QIPs included access to basic services and, promotion of peaceful coexistence among displaced and, conflict-affected and host communities. They are relatively simple to implement and provide rapid results. They are strongly linked to the search for durable solutions¹. In 2018, Peaceful Coexistence Projects (PCPs) replaced the generic name QIPs. **UNHCR Ukraine** supported Community Centres through direct implementation and through partners. Community Centres have turned out to be critical institutions in making basic services accessible to communities.

In order to map and assess its work in this area, **UNHCR Ukraine** conducted a systematic review of all the supported Community Centres. The review included consultations with Protection staff, a desk review, field visits and teleconferences with community leaders using a structured questionnaire. Good practices leading to communities' benefit and sustainability have been identified. Moreover, lessons learned and recommendations on how **UNHCR Ukraine** could further develop its approach to support Community Centres have been compiled.

WHAT IS A COMMUNITY CENTRE?

According to **UNHCR**, Community Centres are:
“safe and public spaces where women, men, boys and girls of all backgrounds can meet for social events, recreation, education and self-reliance programmes, information exchange and other purposes. In the Ukrainian context, they are established with the main objective of bringing together displaced, conflict-affected and host communities as well as of providing them with a forum to promote their empowerment through participation in decisions that affect their lives. Community Centres play an important role in promoting self-resilience and in facilitating peaceful coexistence between displaced, conflict-affected and host communities.”









Community Centre in Peredilske, Luhansk oblast. @ Sviatoslav Savchuk, 2018

¹ Quick Impact Projects (QIP). A provisional guide. <http://www.unhcr.org/partners/guides/41174ce94/quick-impact-projects-qips-provisional-guide.html>

WHAT HAPPENS IN A COMMUNITY CENTRE?

Every Community Centre has its own combination of activities and services based on local needs and the community's financial situation. However, the following activities and services are commonly available in the majority of Community Centres supported by **UNHCR Ukraine**:

	Community platform	Meeting point for IDPs & host community Groups for youth, women, persons of age 60+
	Community Empowerment	Awareness sessions on gender awareness, SGBV prevention, child protection, mine awareness
	Skills Development	Language & computer courses Entrepreneurial trainings
	Individual & Group Consultations	Legal & psychosocial support
	Recreation	Sport activities & playground Video screening
	Other Support	Referral & access information Feedback & complaints opportunities



*A volunteer serves his community in Sievierodonetsk.
@Yurii Arnautov, 2018*

Community Centres are organised in various forms to meet local needs. For instance in Stanytsia-Luhanska, a community conducts regular computer classes for persons of age 60+. In Sloviansk, volunteers run psychological consultations for conflict-affected persons. In Lysychansk, a community distributes humanitarian aid to persons in need and conducts legal consultations, covering its recurrent costs through commercial hairdressing. Such a variety of activities should be maintained in the future.

KEY FINDINGS

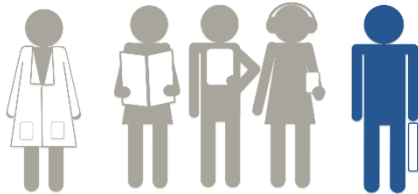
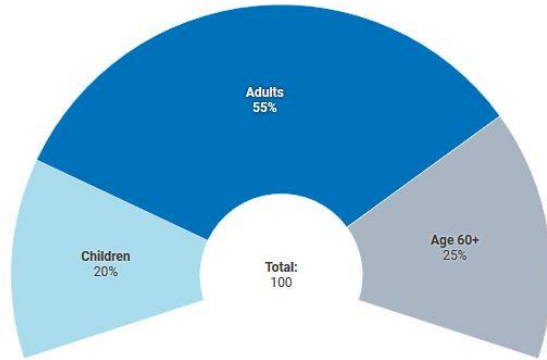
Community Centre Users



2/3



1/3



70% Host Communities

30% IDPs

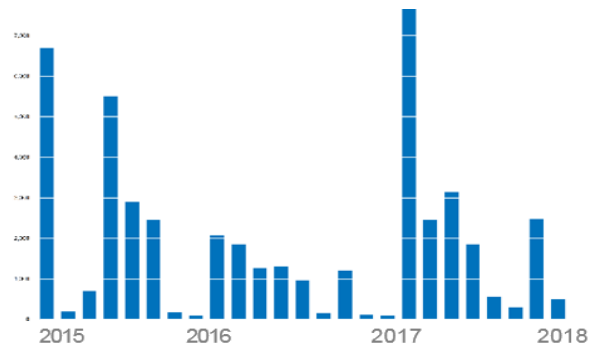


Figure 1. Number of direct Community Centre users at project beginning.

RESULTS: INCREASING ACTIVITIES AND USERS IN A MAJORITY OF COMMUNITY CENTRES

558

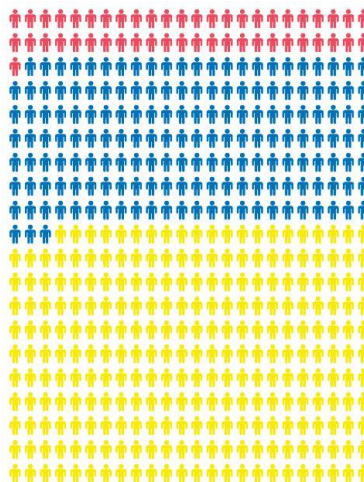
Direct Users
at opening month

52%

Increase of direct users by mid-2018

106,322 Direct Users

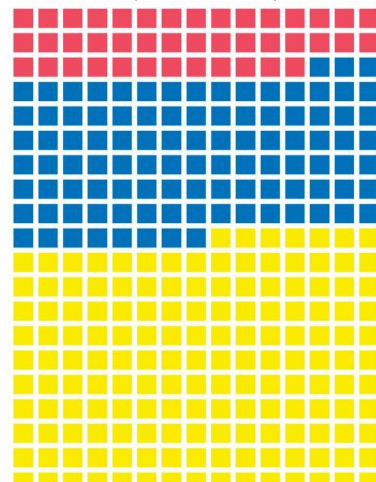
2015	2016	2017
10,896	37,632	57,794



● 2015 ● 2016 ● 2017

86 Community Centres

2015	2016	2017
12	29	45



● 2015 ● 2016 ● 2017

Main support provided by UNHCR Ukraine to Community Centres

Strategically, **UNHCR Ukraine** has directed its financial resources to the most essential inputs, which promoted favourable conditions for community platforms. The most essential support has been the rehabilitation of infrastructure and the provision of indoor equipment. The choice of support came out of participatory assessments and the proposals, which the communities submitted to **UNHCR Ukraine**. Apart from **UNHCR**, NGO partners and other organisations on the ground have been important actors in Community Centres to make sure that various population needs are

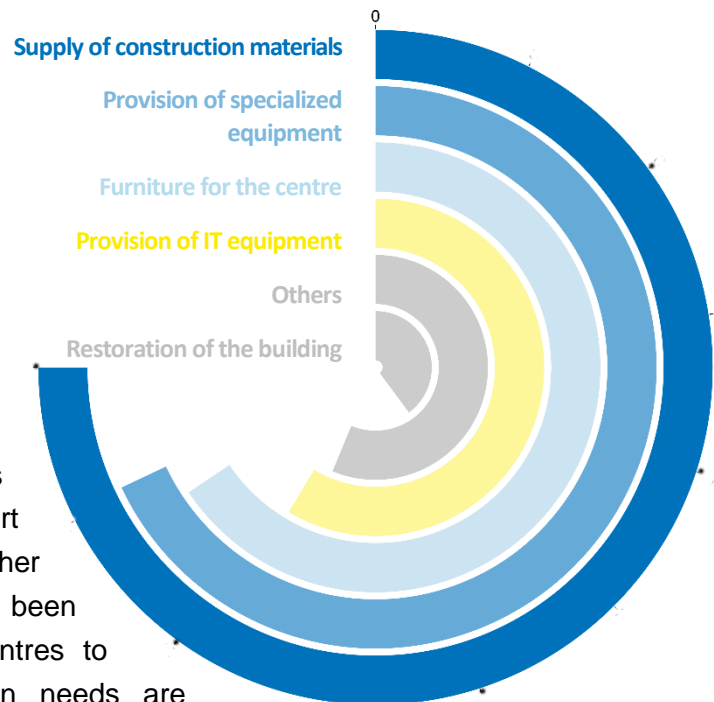


Figure 2. Support of UNHCR to Community Centres.

Most often, partners and other organisations provided specialised training and consultation sessions to communities. In 45% of all cases, the local government has been a critical partner in covering the Community Centres' operational and maintenance costs. Financial support from private entities and the community has been secondary.

Communities are very active in meeting their own needs. Empowered volunteers are critical in keeping the Community Centres operational. They have often been involved in the organisation of group gatherings, training events and workshops.

91% of all Community Centre representatives rate their **participation in decision-making processes as sufficient**. These processes include assessing needs and deciding on Community Centres' set-up. This high percentage illustrates that **UNHCR Ukraine** staff and its partners have paid sufficient attention to the needs and concerns of local communities in keeping with community-based protection principles.



Psychosocial consultations for persons of age +60 in Valuiske Community Centre, Luhansk oblast. @ Aleksandra Litvinenko, 2018

Objectives of Community Centres

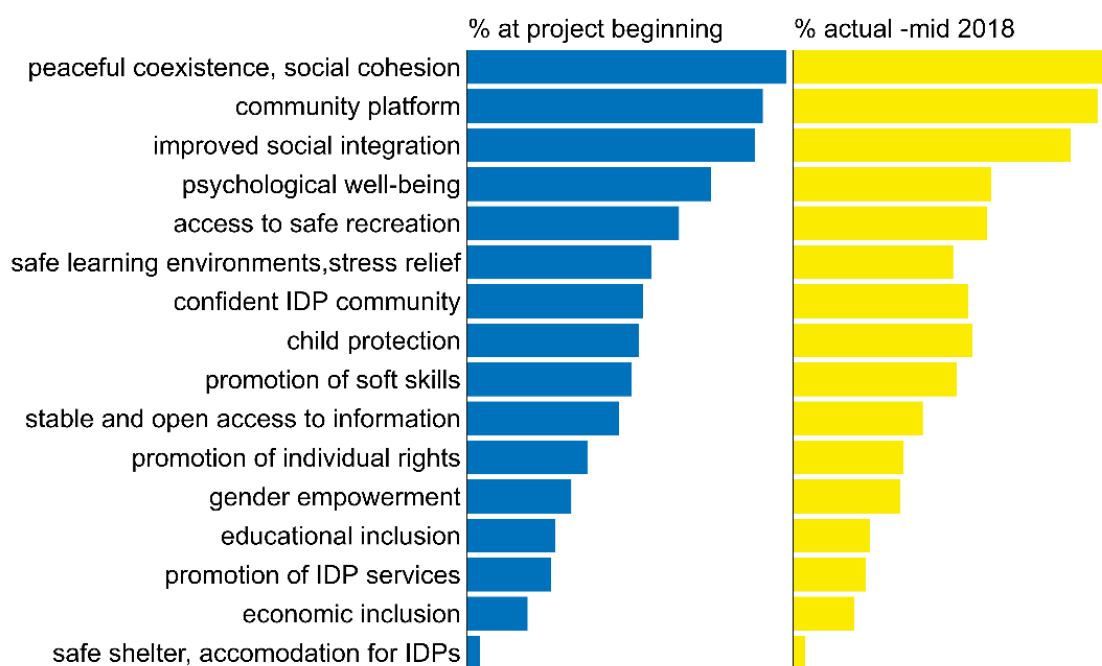


Figure 3. Objectives of Community Centres.

Most Community Centre leaders stated that when they opened their Community Centres with **UNHCR** support, they primarily aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence, by providing a community and social cohesion platform. In approximately half of the Community Centres, psychosocial well-being and access to safe recreation were also common objectives initially. As shown in the chart below, most objectives have remained static throughout the life of the project. Nevertheless, some Community Centres have evolved to remain relevant to the needs of the community.

Implemented		91% of all the community leaders rated their participation in the decision-making process on needs assessment sufficient .
35 through QIP	51 through partners	

Activities of Community Centres

The list of most frequent activities provided at Community Centres, illustrates the diverse needs of local populations. Community Centres often served as a meeting platform and as a venue for a community to get together and discuss their protection concerns. Many community members benefitted from training. NGO partners and other organisations

information centre for social services
 workshop for elderly
 training providing labour market skills
 cultural performances
 workshops for children
 safe shelter
 Other
 workshops for women
 legal assistance for IDPs
 psychosocial assistance
 food provision

on the ground and community members themselves have provided psychosocial and legal assistance in many Community Centres. Moreover, the Community Centres have oftentimes supported community members in obtaining information on their rights. The chart below illustrates how different outputs of Community Centres have evolved in comparison with mid-2018.

OUTPUTS. Comparison between the opening period versus mid-2018, in number of Community Centres & in percentage of variation

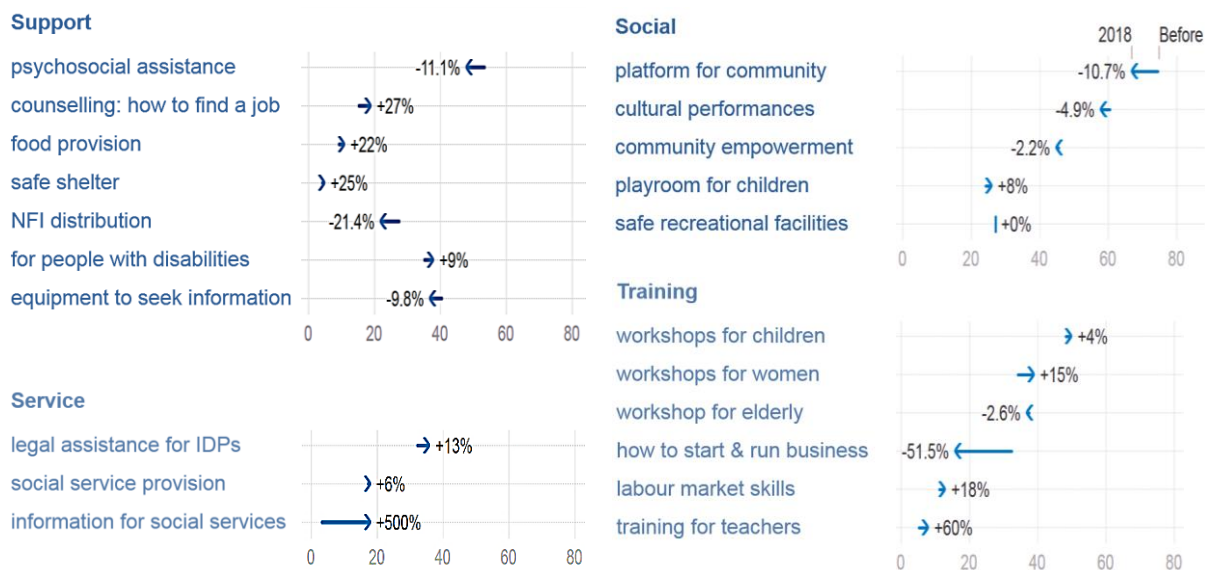


Figure 4. Activities of Community Centres aggregated per output: Support, Social, Service and Training.

LOCATIONS OF COMMUNITY CENTRES

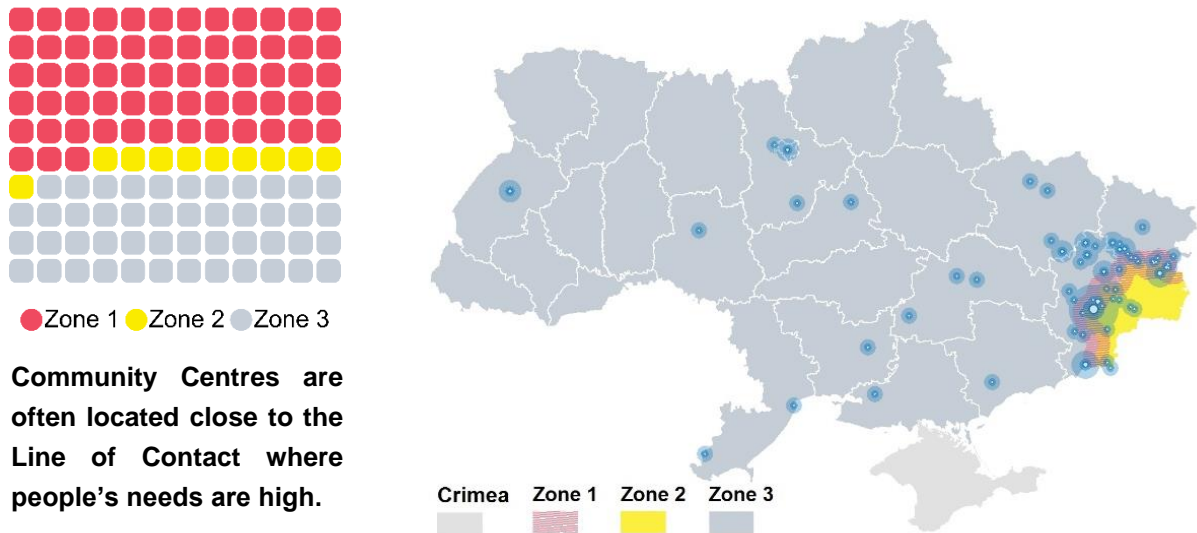


Figure 5. Map of Community Centres in Ukraine.

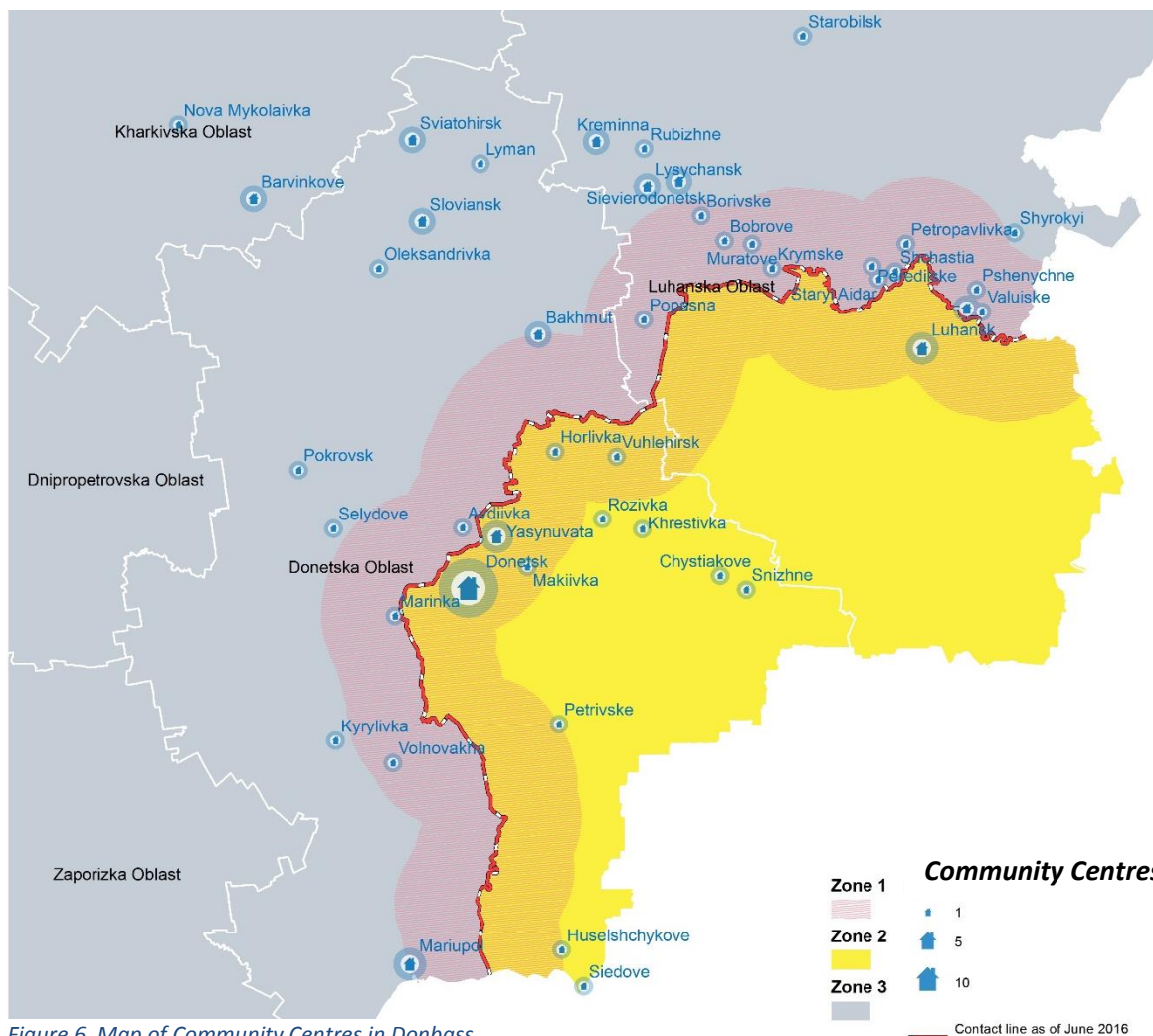
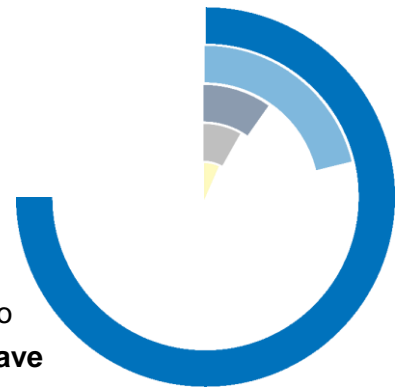


Figure 6. Map of Community Centres in Donbass.

KEY FINDINGS ON SUSTAINABILITY

In 2018, **80%** of all Community Centres are still regularly used. Community leaders are motivated and intend to continue operating in 2019. **75%** of all Community Centres have been able to grow or at least stabilise their field of activities and the number of users without further financial support of UNHCR Ukraine.

63% of all Community Centres face financial challenges, including the coverage of operational/activity costs and sometimes staff salaries. Financial support of third-party donors to Community Centres has decreased and it has become increasingly hard for Community Centres to obtain project grants.



- Increase of activities
- Same activities & users
- Shut down of the centre
- Same activities, less users
- Change in scope of activities

Figure 7. Development of UNHCR community centre activities.

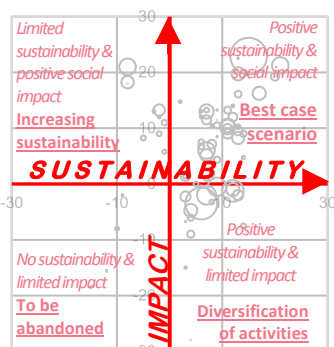
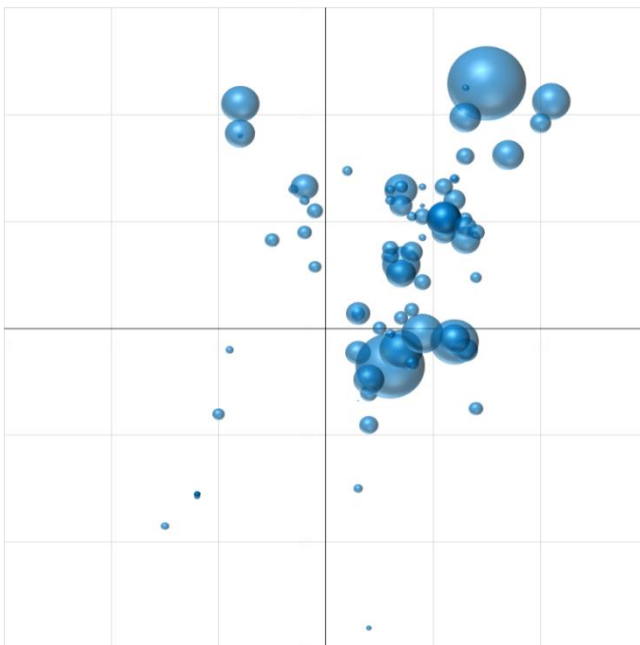


Figure 8. Overall sustainability and social impact. Composite Indicators.

Community Centres are within the protection framework to promote community-driven durable solutions. Financial sustainability is key to ensure long-term impact for communities. Only in **45% of all cases, local authorities have ensured financial sustainability** by providing premises and covering utility costs. However, this support is not carved in stone, putting sustainability at risk over the long-term. **Private entities and the community itself** remain important secondary financial contributors.

A majority of Community Centres have good sustainability prospects with a positive social impact for the community. For those with low sustainability, it will be critical to attract new donors and to consider income-generating activities. Those having demonstrated low social impact will have to diversify their activities. Community Centres with both low sustainability and social impact should no longer be supported by UNHCR Ukraine.

6 GOOD PRACTICES

The review revealed a number of **good practices**, which are critical to facilitate the establishment and maintenance of sustainable Community Centres in the Ukrainian context.

1 The community group is committed to use the premises for community meetings, provision of services and events focused on meeting local needs. Motivated volunteers are critical to running the Community Centres. Volunteers participate in the decision-making process and the Community Centre set-up.

2 During the project identification process, close monitoring of local activists is important to identify suitable local volunteers for the establishment and management of the Community Centres. Depending on the project context, local volunteers are trained by UNHCR Ukraine and/or its partners on topics such as community mobilisation, volunteer management, NGO accounting, psychosocial support and project management.

3 NGO partners and other organisations on the ground are essential to community members as they offer specific services and/or training on a regular basis.

4 The Community Centre includes activities for people with different needs. It is located at an easily accessed venue, preferably in the centre of the locality. As Community Centres often refer community members to government departments for specific services, it is helpful to set up the Community Centre close to government service centres.

5 UNHCR Ukraine strives to foster dialogue between local communities and local authorities (province and local council). The local authorities should be encouraged to support the community by providing premises free of charge and covering recurrent costs. For many Community Centres, this financial support is vitally important.

6 UNHCR Ukraine engages in evaluation, which is systematically included in the its project cycle. It allows UNHCR Ukraine to firstly keep track of the Community Centre's development, secondly to take over a facilitation role in case of major sustainability issues and thirdly to ensure financial accountability toward donors.



Children room in Community Centre of Kreminna. @ Yurii Arnautov, 2018.

BEST PRACTICES

Rehabilitation of a Community Centre in the “grey” zone

The Community Centre of Kyrylivka in Donetsk region used to be regularly visited for social events such as sports, handicraft master classes & cultural events. Due to the ongoing armed conflict, villages in the “grey” zone like Kyrylivka have been confronted with challenging social and living conditions. Many houses and social infrastructure are damaged. Due to a lack of resources, the community is forced to live under life-threatening conditions. The Community Centre was also damaged, which left the local government without a place for stress-relief and community gatherings. In 2017, **UNHCR Ukraine** provided construction materials and equipment to this Community Centre **to support the local community to conduct activities aimed at reducing psychosocial tensions and increasing community interaction.**



Cultural event at the opening ceremony of the village Community Centre in Kyrylivka. @ Lev Sandalov, 2018

Community Centre in conflict-torn Stanytsia Luhanska

Stanytsia Luhanska is a village situated along the Line of Contact with heavy military presence in close proximity. In 2016, **UNHCR Ukraine** supported the local community in establishing a Community Centre for elderly people, leading volunteers and social workers to create the NGO “Big Family”. In 2017, they decided to create a Community Centre inside the municipal Cultural Centre. For experience sharing, **UNHCR Ukraine** facilitated a meeting between community leaders of the Community Centre in Kreminna (Luhansk oblast), representatives of the NGO “Big Family” and the Stanytsia Luhanska district government. The Cultural Centre offers computer classes, dancing courses, a children’s playroom and activities for women. The premises are accessible to all inhabitants of Stanytsia Luhanska and adjacent villages.



Persons of age 60+ participate in handicraft courses in the Community Centre in Stanytsia Luhanska. @ Alexandra Litvinenko, 2018.

Youth club “Vatra – space for genuine communication”

The Vatra Community Centre provides hundreds of displaced students in Kryvyi Rih with a community platform. It was established in 2015 by volunteers of the NGO “Women’s Hundred of Kryvyi Rih” at the premises of a university dormitory. Since then, it has become a safe haven for young displaced persons and local youth in Kryvyi Rih. “Vatra feels like home”, says one student of the displaced Donetsk State University of



Active youth club “Vatra space for genuine communication” in Kryvyi Rih. @ Natalia Silteeva, 2018.

Economics and Trade named after Tugan-Baranovsky. Different activities take place on a weekly basis, including free English lessons, psychological support, handicraft master classes, movie screenings, table games’ sessions, playback theatre and yoga classes. **UNHCR Ukraine** supported this Community Centre in 2016 on the occasion of a youth forum with the active engagement of some IDP community members. This Community Centre also organised the Regional Forum “Best practices of IDP integration” where NGOs, IDPs and local authorities from several regions shared their experience on IDP integration. Vatra volunteers also hold charitable events focused on IDP assistance. As a result, IDP children with disabilities receive support.

Roma IDP Community Centre “Dialogue of generations”

UNHCR Ukraine supported community initiatives of a Roma IDP community in Zolotonosha. These initiatives served to arise awareness among the local population that the displaced Roma community is ready to contribute to the well-being of the host community and to breaking stereotypes linked to Roma populations. In early 2018, a Social Centre for Roma opened, and has contributed to a coordinated approach in responding to the special needs of Roma communities. In 2017, the community opened a women’s club with regular cooking events, allowing Roma women to participate in city events by providing traditional dishes. The Roma community set up a playground next to the Community Centre that is accessible to all. After a major storm, the Roma community organised a self-support group that repaired houses and cleaned yards of the most vulnerable Roma in Zolotonosha. **UNHCR Ukraine** supported with basic equipment.



Members of the Roma Community Social Centre “Dialogue of generations” in Zolotonosha clean up the forest. @ Volodymyr Bambula, 2018.

11 Key Recommendations

1 Community Centres have the potential – and community leaders often mention their wish – to **increase the number of male participants**. Hence, **UNHCR Ukraine** should sensitise and encourage communities to organise inclusive events for both male and female users.

2 There are significant **psychosocial, legal and economic needs** among the affected populations especially along the Line of Contact. These community needs should be the **focus areas of support for future Community Centres in eastern Ukraine**.

3 **UNHCR Ukraine** should **consider reaching out to development partners and the private sector to ensure the sustainability of financially challenged Community Centres**. Community leaders could be trained on private sector fundraising. Private companies could be approached – in the framework of their Corporate Social Responsibility programmes – to financially support Community Centres and thereby contribute to the development of Ukraine. **UNHCR Ukraine** should develop a related outreach strategy.

4 The concept “**One Stop Shop**” **Community Centre** is recommended because it **gathers a wide range of services, service providers and activities in one location**. This is convenient for people, whose mobility may be limited and especially in remote areas along the Line of Contact where government services are scarce².

5 **UNHCR Ukraine** staff involved in Community Centre support should **regularly share experience, contacts and best practices among each other**. Related capacity-building sessions would ensure a unified project implementation approach within **UNHCR Ukraine**.

6 **UNHCR Ukraine** should explore possibilities on how to **facilitate a network between Community Centre peers for cross-fertilisation and transfer of good practices**. Well-functioning “model Community Centres” could be brought together with challenged Community Centres to transfer knowledge and experience on how to successfully provide activities for the community, complete grant applications and establish other problem-solving strategies. Moreover, **UNHCR Ukraine** should establish a communication tool for Community Centres



² However, this does not indicate that UNHCR takes over a government role.

(e.g. a newsletter and/or a web-based channel) to showcase their activities, best practices and lessons learned on a regular basis. Such a tool could be helpful to promote future fundraising campaigns.

7 Support to existing Community Centres should be the preferred option, especially when there are existing government ties or community structures within the Community Centre. This is **essential to enhance the sustainability of Community Centres. Sustainability should remain a central selection criteria for the endorsement of future support to Community Centres.**



Community leaders in front of the Community Centre "KvARTal" in Bakhmut. @ Hugo Reichenberger, 2018

8 Arrangements for the coverage of recurrent costs are central to ensuring financial sustainability. Experience shows that Community Centres have often financially survived when the local government provided free-of-charge premises and covered utilities. When local authorities discontinue their financial support, **UNHCR Ukraine** should evaluate the reasons. This will help **UNHCR Ukraine** conduct its sustainability risk assessments based on previous experience.

9 Income-generating activities could be promoted in Community Centres to ensure self-sufficiency. Community members could attend entrepreneurship training, which empowers them to offer income-generating services to the population. Part of the income will be used to cover Community Centre recurrent expenses.

10 UNHCR Ukraine should strive toward cooperation agreements with partners who can ensure mid-term financing of Community Centres that would allow them to continue to support and empower the community's self-sufficiency. Regular monitoring and evaluation will allow **UNHCR Ukraine** to remain abreast of the Community Centres' physical and financial status.

11 UNHCR Ukraine should analyse the essential reasons that endanger the existence of Community Centres, and its possible financial exit strategies. Possible ways of reference to other organisations could be considered. If there are no financial exit strategies, **UNHCR Ukraine** could consider possible ways to ensure future follow-up with existentially endangered Community Centres.