Communities
of war

Effective and opportune

KYIV | 2023

Grassroots civil society of Ukraine
2022

Contents

In February-March 2022, practically every Ukrainian was looking for ways to be useful. Our organization was no exception. Like others, we understood that due to the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation into Ukraine, our country faced the hardest challenge in our recent history.

One of the projects we launched during the first months after the beginning of the invasion was The Hand in Hand podcast. In the framework of the project, we began traveling to rear communities and communicating with people who founded civic initiatives or were involved with them. These people were looking for or sewing uniforms for the military, providing housing for internally displaced persons, supporting relocated businesses, and collecting humanitarian aid for affected communities. Initially, we planned to gather and disseminate information about successful practices and cases so that people in other communities could reproduce them.

However, we quickly discovered that there was no great need to teach people about this: in all communities where we gathered information, civic initiatives solving similar problems already existed. They interacted in different ways and had different available resources at hand, but residents of all communities were already helping internally displaced persons, fundraising for the Armed Forces, and sending aid to temporarily occupied regions.

The grassroots civil movement was not pre-planned. Even on the eve of the full-scale war, people who later became its makers were busy with their own affairs and did not communicate with each other. On February 24, as if by a prearranged signal, residents of all regions of Ukraine started launching civic initiatives in response to a common challenge.

We asked ourselves a question: "How could people, many of whom did not even believe in the full-scale war, respond so quickly to its beginning?"

We decided to investigate the issue.

For this, we recorded 193 interviews in 14 oblasts of Ukraine with representatives of NGOs, local businesses, local governments, clergy, and citizens who are not a part of any of these groups. All these people were founders or participants of civic initiatives or received some help from them.

The answer we found, at first glance, is straightforward. Before the full-scale war in Ukraine, there already existed a powerful civil society, essential for any democratic state. And, as our recent history shows, it activates precisely during moments of crisis.

The beginning of the full-scale war became such a crisis. NGOs, volunteer communities, local authorities, and socially responsible businesses became active after the Russian attack began.

In this research, we analyzed data on 131 initiatives: what resources their participants engaged; who helped them and whom they helped; whether the initiatives still exist and what makes it possible for them to still operate. Based on this data, we identified the most effective initiative formats.

Regardless of whether the initiative lasted three months, half a year, or a year, its participants contributed to supporting the state at its most critical moment. When state institutions and authorities were finding ways to respond to new challenges and fulfill their duties during wartime, civil society lent them a shoulder.

Methodology

NGO Centre of United Actions (hereinafter — the Centre) developed this methodology to investigate grassroots civic initiatives that emerged at the level of amalgamated territorial communities to face the challenges presented by the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The goal of the research

NGO Centre of United Actions (hereinafter — the Centre) developed this methodology to investigate grassroots civic initiatives that emerged at the level of amalgamated territorial communities to face the challenges presented by the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine.

Research tasks

→ *Outline the key issues addressed by grassroots initiatives and the spheres where they emerged.*

→ *Investigate the formats of citizens' cooperation within these initiatives.*

→ *Find out how initiatives have transformed (e.g., dissolved, merged with other initiatives, founded new organizations, changed their primary focus, etc.) and the reasons for their transformation (conflict, lack of financial or human resources, successful resolution or mitigation of the problem the initiative worked on, etc.).*

→ *Classify citizens who were at the core of their initiatives into categories.*

→ *Clarify the roles of various stakeholders, including local self-government bodies, in the initiatives' work.*

→ *Classify the ways of engaging citizens of rear communities into initiatives at the grassroots level.*

→ *Classify financial, infrastructural, personnel, administrative, and other resources available to stakeholders (how they boosted up what was at hand and looked for additional resources).*

→ *Analyze factors determining the effectiveness of local civic initiatives, categorize and evaluate their impact.*

→ *Determine the most effective formats of citizens' cooperation at the level of territorial communities.*

Given the variety of civic initiatives that were founded or changed their primary focus after February 24, 2022, and the absence of comprehensive and systematized information about them, it was appropriate to use qualitative methods for data collection. They allowed us to get a deeper understanding of the processes on the ground from the perspective of civic initiatives' participants.

Research approach

Comparative case study[1]. This approach is applied to social research of practices and politics. By practices, we mean the ways in which social actors with different motives, intentions, and influence work together with social forces and/or in response to them to shape the social and cultural worlds they live in.

Research methods

The Centre searched for its respondents using several approaches:

➜ through contacts with community representatives with whom the Centre worked before;

➜ by snowball sampling at the local level (contact information of new respondents is collected from previous respondents, such strategy makes it possible to get samples using organic networks);

➜ through mentions of initiatives in local media and social networks.

Data collection method:
semi-structured face-to-face interviews and semi-structured phone interviews.

Data analysis methods:

➜ case-study[3] — for analyzing processes within initiatives and communities, ways of interaction between groups and people. Cases for this analysis are particular civic initiatives at the level of territorial communities;

➜ comparative — for finding similarities and differences between initiatives and the ways they operate.

From March 20 to November 10, 2022, the Centre conducted 193 semi-structured interviews with representatives of volunteer initiatives, local self-government bodies, businesses, and other groups. They are the primary data for this research. The gender distribution among respondents with whom the Centre conducted interviews is 105 women and 88 men, i.e., 54% and 46% of all respondents, respectively.

Research instrument:
a comparative table allowing to analyze research indicators and fulfill the research tasks. Research indicators include location, the focus of the initiative, the problem the initiative aims to solve, the sphere where the problem is relevant, the format of the initiative, the source of the initiative, the size of the initiative, the composition of the initiative's core, the transformation of the initiative, the reason for the transformation, ways of engagement used by the initiative, resources and their sources, lifespan of the initiative, quantitative and qualitative results, and respondents' quotes.

Research scope

14 oblasts of Ukraine

Vinnytsia
Volyn
Zhytomyr
Zakarpattia
Ivano-Frankivsk
Kyiv
Lviv
Rivne
Ternopil
Khmelnytskyi
Cherkasy
Chernivtsi
Chernihiv
Sumy
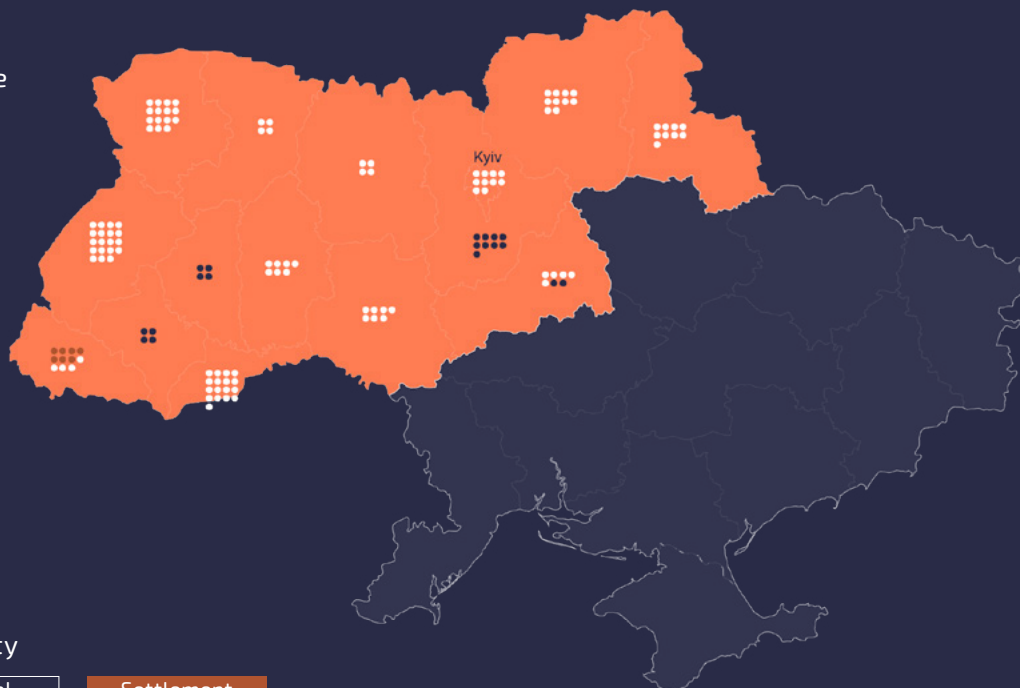
● — *1 initiative*

Territorial community

Urban	Rural	Settlement

After analyzing interviews with representatives of volunteer initiatives, local self-government bodies, businesses, and other groups, we identified

131 civic initiatives

The research covers:

➔ 18 urban territorial communities (Ostroh, Chernivtsi, Khotyn, Shepetivka, Lviv, Uzhhorod, Zolochiv, Khmelnytskyi, Cherkasy, Lutsk, Rozhyshche, Pustomyty, Zviagel, Nizhyn, Ichnia, Okhtyrka, Trostianets, and Kyiv). Five of the urban communities are oblast centers.

➔ 5 settlement territorial communities (Vyshnivets, Zabolotiv, Buky, Velyka Dymerka, and Dymer)

➔ 1 rural territorial community (Kolochava)

The timeline of the research

This research covers the period from February 24, 2022, to November 10, 2022. In February 2023, we updated the information on the transformation of initiatives since the time when the initial interviews were conducted.

Wave of new initiatives: spheres, formats, and goals

"Of course, for the first three days, none of us, citizens, even knew what these events, these explosions, and the scale of this war would bring. But when we came to our senses, everyone — both the authorities and the public, activists — understood how we should work, and that we should get to work immediately"

Roksolana Vakaliuk, representative of the Patriotic Zabolotivshchyna charitable foundation
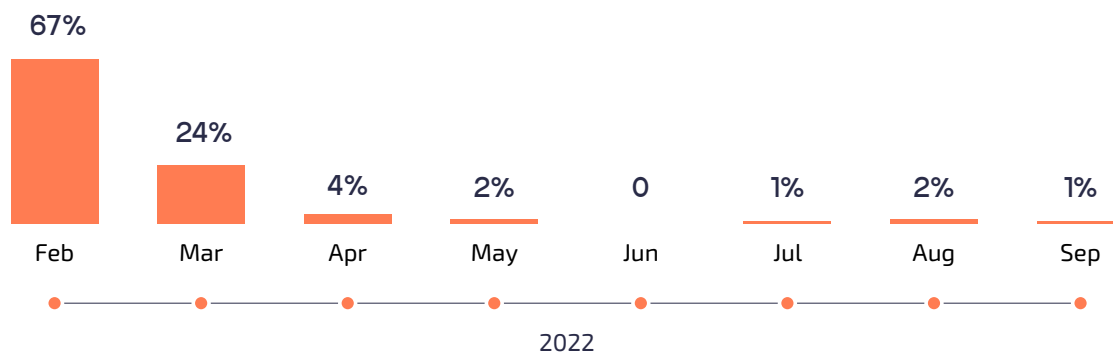Zabolotiv village community, Ivano-Frankivsk oblast

Many volunteers, representatives of local councils, local entrepreneurs, and other social groups repeatedly mentioned the first days after the beginning of the full-scale invasion during interviews. Some talked about doing everything at once and being ready to dig trenches, some stopped their European business contracts to switch to the production of uniforms and other clothing for the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and some moved as internally displaced persons (IDPs) to other parts of the country and started helping other forced migrants.
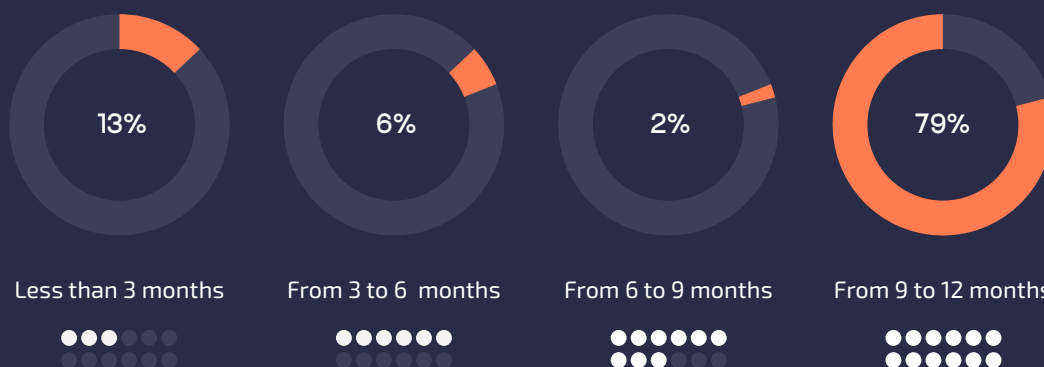
The majority of the initiatives covered by this research emerged during the first months after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion: 67% in late February and another 29% during the spring of 2022. Only 5 out of 131 initiatives started their work in the summer and early autumn of 2022. The problems caused by Russia's large-scale invasion affected the majority of Ukraine's population. These problems were urgent and required crisis decision-making. Civic initiatives became the solution to these problems.

The vast majority of initiatives (79%) were long-lasting and operated for more than 9 months. As of February 2023, more than 80% of initiatives launched in 2022 continue their work. The problems they were created to solve still exist, and the participants of these initiatives are motivated to help their target audiences.

Time when initiatives were launched

Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
67%	24%	4%	2%	0	1%	2%	1%

2022

Lifespan of the initiatives

Less than 3 months	From 3 to 6 months	From 6 to 9 months	From 9 to 12 months
13%	6%	2%	79%

○ share of all initiatives

Russia's full-scale invasion caused many problems in various spheres of life. As of 2021, due to military hostilities and occupation of Ukrainian territories, 1.5 million Ukrainians[4]. had the status of IDPs. By mid-March 2022, this number increased by more than four times: 6.5 million citizens left their homes since the beginning of the invasion[5]. In 2022, the number of service members of the Ukrainian Army tripled compared to 2014-2021, reaching 700,000 people[6]. In this regard, the expenses for the maintenance of army personnel have also increased significantly.
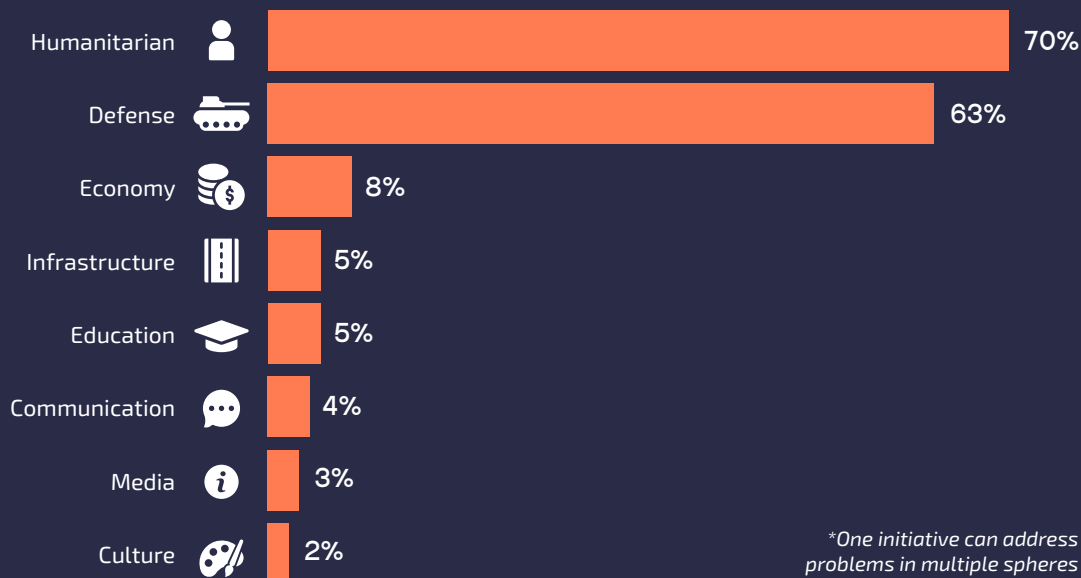
The Russian invasion deprived many citizens of their income sources, destroyed enterprises, infrastructure, and entire localities. This presented a challenge not only for state institutions but also for civil society, which had been developing gradually since Ukraine gained its independence.

"Volunteering is about solving social problems. If there were no social problems, there would be no volunteering as such. Also, any crisis positively affects volunteering, the number of volunteers, the percentage of people involved and their motivation to help, as they feel the danger and believe they should unite"

Anastasiia Shkurdoda, representative of the Ukrainian Volunteer Service Cherkasy city community, Cherkasy oblast

Spheres

Sphere	Value
Humanitarian	70%
Defense	63%
Economy	8%
Infrastructure	5%
Education	5%
Communication	4%
Media	3%
Culture	2%

*One initiative can address problems in multiple spheres

70%

70% of the analyzed initiatives were launched in response to social problems. The biggest problem was the forced relocation of Ukrainian citizens to new communities from occupied localities and territories under shelling by Russian troops. At their new home, IDPs faced difficult living conditions and the inability to improve them since they had lost their jobs. Some initiatives supported not only newcomers but also those who remained on occupied (and later deoccupied) and frontline communities affected by the humanitarian crisis.

63%

The second most widespread (63%) class of problems was, predictably, defense. The primary focus of civic initiatives addressing it was to satisfy the needs of the military. The mass mobilization of the population and the establishment of territorial defense forces in many localities at the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion led to the emergence of local groups that organized the production and delivery of food, as well as the production of uniforms, clothing, and boots.

There were significantly fewer initiatives addressing problems in other spheres (economy, infrastructure, education, communication, media, and culture). In almost all oblasts, humanitarian and defense prevailed. Among the communities covered by the research, Chernivtsi was the only exception, where education was the second main focus after the humanitarian sphere. In Lviv and Kyiv, the third most popular spheres were media and infrastructure, respectively.

Проблеми по сферах ⚠️

One initiative can address multiple problems

🔽 Percentage of initiatives that addressed problems in this sphere

More than 20%

Humanitarian 👤

→ Forced relocation of citizens to other localities

→ Difficult living conditions and material insecurity of IDPs

→ Humanitarian crisis in occupied, deoccupied, and frontline communities

Up to 10%

→ Psychological damage done to IDPs/local residents/ volunteers

→ Forced relocation of citizens abroad

→ Loss of social connections

→ Critical living conditions of vulnerable groups

→ Departure of citizens from other countries from Ukraine

Up to 10%

Humanitarian/Infrastructure 👤 🏢

→ Large-scale destruction caused by the Russia's attack

Up to 5%

Culture 🎨

→ Limited opportunities for realization of IDPs of creative professions

→ Destruction of Ukraine's cultural heritage

Up to 5%

Education/Culture 🎓 🎨

→ Lack of knowledge and skills regarding business development

More than 55%

Defense 🪖

→ Shortage of uniforms, equipment, and food for the military

Up to 5%

→ Movement of Russian military equipment through communities' territory

→ Difficult living conditions of military personnel on duty

→ Psychological damage done to military personnel and medics

→ Continued operations of international companies on the Russian market that provides funding for the aggressor country's military actions

→ Threat of mobilization of Belarusians for participation in the Russian-Ukrainian war

Defense/Humanitarian

→ Absence of logistics for humanitarian and military transportation

Up to 5%

Economy

→ Loss of income sources caused by the war
→ Loss or threat of loss of enterprises located in areas of active hostilities
→ Shortage of new orders, markets, and funds affecting small and medium businesses
→ Deficit of agricultural products caused by the occupation
→ Complicated logistics for enterprises caused by the blockade of seaports

Up to 5%

Economy/Education

→ Lack of knowledge and skills regarding business development

Up to 5%

Economy/Humanitarian/Defense

→ Decrease in the intensity and volume of financial assistance for the needs of the Armed Forces

Up to 5%

Media

→ Inadequate information available to foreigners about the Russian-Ukrainian war
→ Absence of impartial information about the Russian-Ukrainian war available to Russians
→ Inability to efficiently meet requests for assistance due to high information load

Up to 5%

Communication

→ Poor communication between volunteer communities
→ Poor communication between volunteers and international donors
→ Poor communication between authorities and volunteers

Up to 5%

Initiative formats ⚙

One initiative can work in multiple formats

More than 50%

→ Volunteer/
   humanitarian
   center

Up to 20%

→ Public event
→ Housing (for IDPs or
   local residents)
→ Workshop
→ Social business
→ Information platform/
   Information campaign
→ Education

Up to 5%

→ Logistics
→ Kitchen
→ Communal work
→ Consultation
→ IDPs employment
→ Resistance during
   occupation
→ Book collection
→ Book sale
→ Partnerships
→ Patrolling
→ Financial assistance

○ *Share of all initiatives*

"Immediately on the second day, we organized a volunteer center. Calls from service members started coming in, they needed help because mobilization had begun. Mattresses, bedclothes, uniforms, food, and other humanitarian aid were sent. Then people from other cities started arriving. They also needed clothing and footwear."

Tetiana Vasylyk, head of the Volunteer center
Shepetivka city community, Khmelnytskyi oblast

Slightly more than half of all initiatives (53%) addressed problems in two or more spheres. This was the result of how their activities were organized. Half of the initiatives were volunteer and humanitarian centers. They usually covered both the needs of the military and IDPs simultaneously: they kept records of newcomers to the community, distributed food packages, clothing, and also collected items and prepared field meal kits for the military.

The second most popular initiative format was public events. They were quite different in their content and target audiences. There were concerts to raise funds for the military, leisure activities for IDPs, guided tours, speaking clubs, camps for children, and art therapy for locals and newcomers.

Some organizers of charity stand-ups and house shows confided that they had doubts about whether it was a good idea to choose entertainment, whether it was an appropriate thing at the beginning of the full-scale war. However, openings of cultural venues throughout Ukraine inspired citizens to initiate such events in their communities too.

The third most popular initiative format was housing. Shelters for IDPs were established at special camps in community-owned facilities, private houses, volunteer apartments, and dormitories. In addition, modular homes were used to shelter residents of deoccupied communities who lost their homes during the fighting.

"As for concerts, I had no doubts. But regarding stand-up during the war, I was a little skeptical. I was wondering whether it would be appropriate. After watching several streams, though, I realized that we now have many new sources for jokes: hatred for rusnia, jokes about volunteering. We had to joke about it. And when people are switching to Ukrainian-speaking content en masse, not only music but other spheres should be popularized too."

Denys Haida, co-organizer of association Varti
Cherkasy city community, Cherkasy oblast
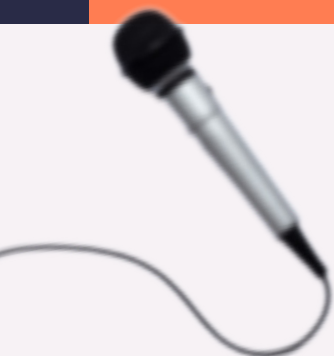
"People donate, and they should receive something in return. Giving money to the Armed Forces and getting positive emotions — there should be this balance… At first, I was afraid that no one would come to our house show, and then, at the beginning of the event, I was afraid that there would be not enough places for people to sit."

Anna Petrovska, co-organizer of association Varti
Cherkasy city community, Cherkasy region

Another popular format was workshops and social businesses. Entrepreneurs who had experience in producing canned food, footwear, or clothing, sewed military uniforms, boots, other clothing, and cooked stew for free. Some businesses provided free dental or hairdressing services to IDPs and service members.

One of the formats had a target audience not usually addressed by the majority of initiatives covered by this research: information platforms and campaigns. Volunteers created information products for Ukrainians who moved abroad, for Russians with calls to sabotage mobilization, as well as for foreigners with explanations of the war context from within and the activities

of foreign companies working in Russia. Information platforms and campaigns required teams with particular qualifications and skills, so they were launched either by already prepared communication teams or those formed by representatives of the communications, media, and IT sectors after the beginning of the full-scale invasion. Such initiatives were mostly found in large communities, where the majority of these professionals reside and where they were more active.

Less common formats were training courses (Ukrainian language, tactical combat casualty care), kitchens (as separate initiatives, not just kitchens at humanitarian centers), logistics (organization of humanitarian aid delivery and assistance to relocated businesses), and communal work (mostly in deoccupied communities that needed renovation).

Initiative formats can be grouped by how they solved the problems they chose to work with.

Humanitarian and volunteer centers, for example, as well as social businesses, focused on providing material assistance. There were two components: humanitarian (providing a wide range of items for civilians: clothing, food, essential household items) and military (providing uniforms, equipment, footwear, first aid kits, etc.).

Focuses of the initiatives 🎯

One initiative can work in multiple formats

More than 50%	Up to 20%	Up to 10%	До 5%
→ Material assistance	→ Fundraising	→ Evacuation	→ Aid in community restoration
	→ Housing	→ Manufacturing uniforms/shoes/ equipment	→ Legal assistance
	→ Integration of IDPs	→ Information support/ information resistance	→ Medical assistance
	→ Cooking/Food delivery	→ Setting up communication channels	→ Drone manufacturing
		→ Psychological assistance	→ Security measures

⭕ *Share of all initiatives*

Initially, material assistance often went hand in hand with fundraising for military needs and finding accommodation for IDPs, but later volunteer centers and organizations focused on more specific activities and occupied their particular niches. Continuing to do everything at once was inefficient, as it caused inefficient use of human and time resources which put too much pressure on the participants of the initiatives.

One more focus for civic initiatives was the integration of IDPs. It was addressed through various formats, often public events (guided tours, Ukrainian language courses, speaking clubs), as well as logistical assistance to relocated businesses. Preparing/delivering food and evacuating people from the frontline territories were also often the responsibility of volunteer and humanitarian centers, who looked for drivers and planned humanitarian transportation logistics.

"When Kyiv oblast was liberated, we started thinking about what should our main focus be. There was no need to distribute humanitarian aid to that many people anymore. There were organizations that had been doing this longer than us and doing it more professionally. We focused on what we did best among all other funds: Tactical Combat Casualty Care training"

Kseniia Semenova, co-founder of the charitable foundation Solomianski Kotyky
Kyiv, Kyiv oblast

Private entrepreneurs reoriented their workshops to sew clothes for the military, and kitchens to prepare MRE meals.

Creative agencies and local media provided information support to charity fundraising in Ukraine and abroad, disseminated materials about the crimes of the Russian Federation, thus contributing to information resistance.

Half of the initiatives were founded on the basis of an existing organization, enterprise, or educational establishment. This made it significantly easier to find resources and establish communication channels. Twenty initiatives (15% of the total number) were launched by civic organizations, charitable foundations, and youth centers that already existed. For them, it was somewhat easier, as they already had experience in volunteering, working with vulnerable social groups (for example, people with disabilities and Roma) and networking with other organizations to hold public events.

"We have a man with a disability who makes stoves at home. He made a stove and really wanted to send it to the 93rd brigade, which liberated Trostianets. We had contacts. We passed it on to them, and the man was very happy that his stove went exactly where he wanted. Then he made two more stoves and allowed us to send them to other brigades."

Tetiana Babenko, representative of the Sumy office of the charitable organization Liudyna Olha
Trostianets city community, Sumy oblast

The wave of civic initiatives was diverse. Most of the problems were addressed by local humanitarian and volunteer centers, as this was the simplest format that did not require special qualifications from its participants. The main goal of the initiatives was to fulfill the needs of the military and IDPs.
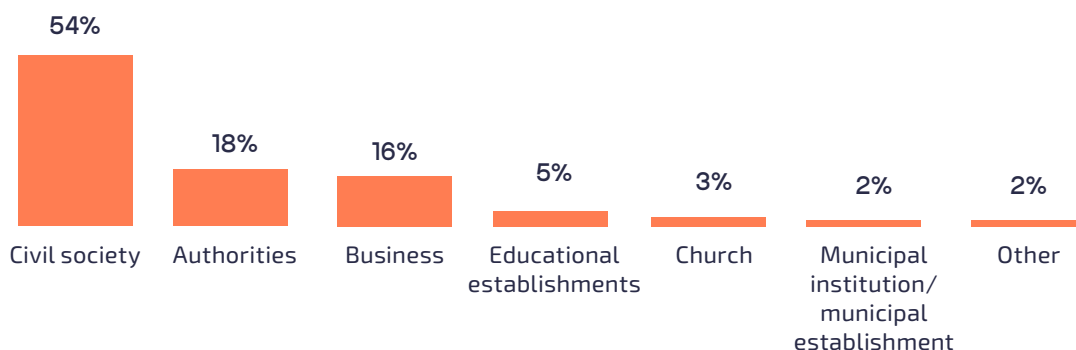
The majority of the initiatives were created spontaneously by citizens, but four out of five still exist today. This confirms that these initiatives are important for addressing the problems, especially problems with humanitarian help and defense. Half of the initiatives addressed not only these problems but problems from other spheres too.

The fact that the majority of the initiatives covered by this research did not disappear within the first months of their existence also confirms that their participants are highly motivated.

Founders and teams of civic initiatives

Sources of initiatives

54% Civil society
18% Authorities
16% Business
5% Educational establishments
3% Church
2% Municipal institution/ municipal establishment
2% Other

> **Most often, the founders of civic initiatives were representatives of civil society, authorities (usually local authorities), or businesses.**
>
> As a rule, these groups started their work focusing on problems with humanitarian help and defense.

In this research, we consider civic organizations (NGOs), charitable foundations (CFs), local activists, IDP volunteers, youth centers, etc., to be a part of civil society. We include these non-profit organizations and volunteer movements into one category because they most often were a joint source of initiatives. For example, the core of a civic initiative consisted of representatives of NGOs and IDPs, who together held events for internally displaced persons, or local activists from different NGOs, who later formed a separate organization. It was impossible to distinguish or divide them into separate groups.
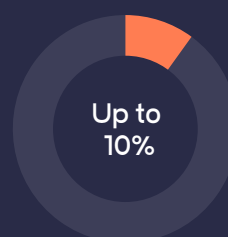
Target audiences of civic initiatives

One initiative can have several target audiences

More than 55%
→ Service members
→ IDPs

Up to 30%
→ Residents of frontline/ deoccupied localities
→ Local residents

Up to 10%
→ Volunteers
→ Foreigners
→ Medical establishments
→ Elderly people
→ Entrepreneurs
→ People with disabilities
→ Ukrainians abroad
→ Local self-governments
→ Military medics
→ Jews
→ Roma
→ National Police

○ *Share of all initiatives*

"Our first large-scale "operation" was launched after the liberation of Chernihiv. We set ourselves a goal of helping this community. It seemed easier for us, because they lived under harsh occupation. A week had passed since the occupiers left, and we decided to send them food. The goal was to collect a full bus, which is about 2.5 tons of food. We were very worried about whether we could collect it. In the end, we got 10 tons."

Lina Martynenko, representative of a volunteer group
Ichnia city community, Chernihiv region

The main target audiences of the initiatives were the military and IDPs since a significant part of the problems affected primarily these two groups. Next were the residents of frontline and deoccupied settlements, who received assistance from other communities, and local residents (both on territories with no active military hostilities and on the occupied territories, where people needed to self-organize to help fellow citizens).

Some initiatives made volunteers their target audience. The primary focus of these initiatives was to improve communication between volunteer communities or interaction between volunteers and local authorities.

As for foreigners, the target audience included potential donors, municipalities, and a wide foreign audience for which materials about the war in Ukraine were prepared, as well as Russians and Belarusians.

"Many civic organizations could reformat their work, making their priority to help the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and somehow establish more partnerships, understand that they are not alone. Before the invasion, I noticed a trend in Cherkasy: each civic organization was focused strictly on doing its job, on its field. And sometimes it was important to look around and understand that someone is doing the same thing, and together you can do more."
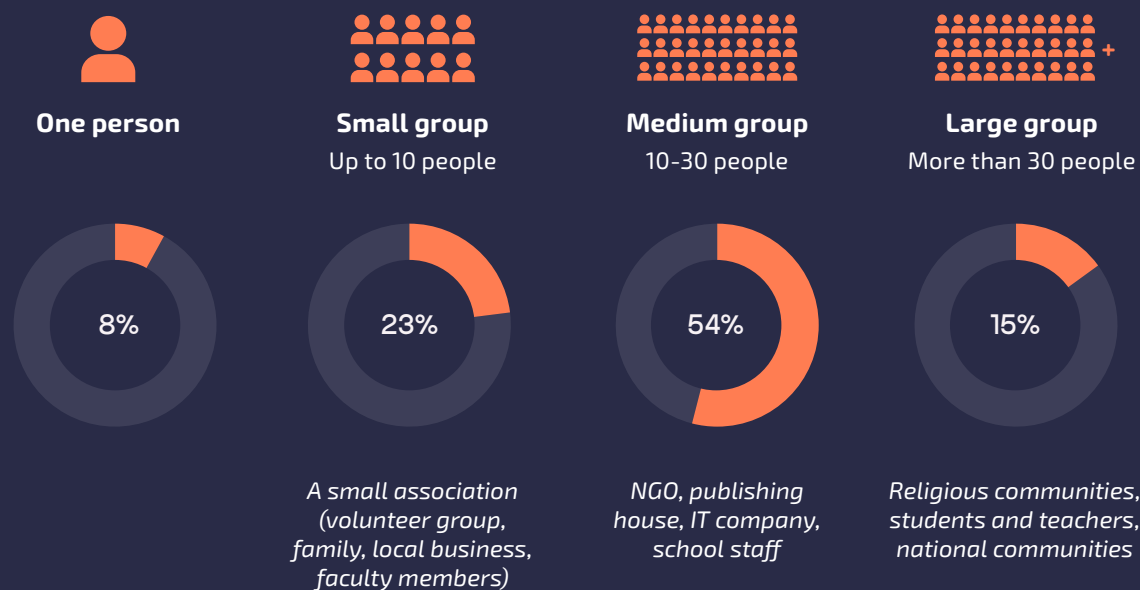
Anastasiia Shkurdoda, representative of the Ukrainian Volunteer Service
Cherkasy city community, Cherkasy region

LELEKA was inspired by Visit Ukraine In Future campaign when foreigners booked apartments and rooms from Ukrainians without planning to come to Ukraine. Just as an act of support. I thought if they were ready to book housing without plans to come, then maybe they would be ready to buy something and get some goods. And thus help Ukrainian businesses, which have lost almost the entire domestic market and all clients."

Anastasiia Nochvina, co-founder of the LELEKA platform
Kyiv

Although the initiatives are quite different, they can be divided into four categories by size:

One person

Small group
Up to 10 people

Medium group
10-30 people

Large group
More than 30 people

8%

23%

54%

15%

A small association (volunteer group, family, local business, faculty members)

NGO, publishing house, IT company, school staff

Religious communities, students and teachers, national communities

Medium and small groups were the most common.
This can be explained by the fact that many initiatives were launched on the basis of existing teams or by people working in the same professional field for some time before.

Most often, initiatives founded by one person were founded by local residents or IDPs who solved some problem on their own. For example, they provided psychological consultations, organized charity guided tours or fundraisers, or sewed tactical gloves for the military. These activities did not require that many resources and required primarily the knowledge and skills of one person. Several initiatives were also founded by entrepreneurs working on their own.

Local authorities need a collective vote to make a decision, so any initiative must be agreed upon with the head of the community or a department of the local council. It is quite logical that local self-government bodies were the only one of the largest initiative sources that did not launch private civic initiatives.

Small groups were the most common size among entrepreneurial initiatives. Local businesses, usually consisting of owners and several employees, produced canned food for the military, sewed uniforms and other clothing. They either switched their whole production to this end or put in some extra work.
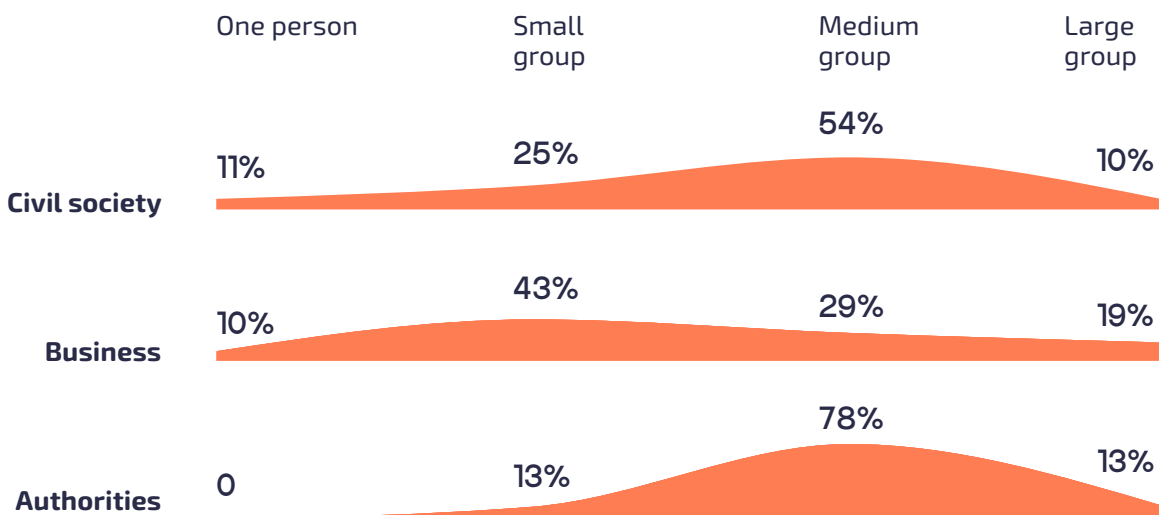
Volunteers and local NGOs also gathered in small groups. The formats of their initiatives varied greatly. For example, these were Ukrainian language courses for IDPs, a shelter for IDPs in a private house, a charitable sale of a poetry collection, etc.

"It should be noted that people self-organize very quickly under such conditions. Two girls volunteered to be responsible for the kitchen. They sketched a preliminary menu for the day from the products that volunteers brought in and cooked three meals a day for everyone living in the camp. One woman expressed a desire to manage the planting of greenery in the outdoor area. Our residents did not want to spend their time just sitting indoors."

Yevhen, initiator of the IDP residence camp
Ostroh city community, Rivne region

Size of initiatives depending on the group that was the source of the initiative

	One person	Small group	Medium group	Large group
Civil society	11%	25%	54%	10%
Business	10%	43%	29%	19%
Authorities	0	13%	78%	13%

Many volunteer and humanitarian centers had a medium or large number of participants. Their founders were mainly from civil society or local authorities. A larger number of participants were needed to cover various areas of work and needs.

For example, humanitarian centers could have several departments, which required the involvement of various resources and people with different skills. Logistics departments required the availability of drivers and vehicles, weaving camouflage nets and distributing humanitarian kits required many people, and first aid courses could only be conducted by people with medical education.

Initiatives with a medium and large number of participants turned out to be the most long-lasting. About 90% of projects, centers, and organizations of this size still exist. Small groups, which were mainly characteristic of business initiatives, have almost halved. Owners of small businesses had no capacity to provide free services and goods for long since their employees need wages to survive.

Participants' engagement ⚛

Participants' engagement

Up to 25%

→ Social media
→ Volunteer community
→ Local self-government body

Up to 15%

→ NGO
→ Businesses
→ Professional community

Up to 10%

→ Personal connections
→ Religious community
→ Self-organized IDPs
→ University community
→ Charitable foundation
→ Individual initiative
→ School/kindergarten initiative

◯ *Share of all initiatives*

If we talk about ways to involve citizens in the initiative, it is quite difficult to single out the best or worst practices. Many people were involved through social networks and volunteer communities. Most often, these types of engagement were combined: sometimes there were communities of activists who had previously known each other or local networks for informing about events in the community/locality.

Many people were engaged via local self-government bodies, NGOs, businesses, and professional communities because it was the way directly connected to their jobs. Such groups have strong social connections and a high level of trust among their participants. As a result, it is easier for them to engage people and resources. This helped them to quickly react to problems.

"

"When we found out that we would work as a SpivDiia Hub, we published an announcement on social networks to gather and rally the volunteer community so that we could later work on the humanitarian front. 250 participants of different ages submitted their applications, ages from 12 to 60+. We united everyone in a Telegram chat, and the first thing people texted was, "Why are we sitting and not going anywhere?""

Anzhela Tymchenko, representative of the NGO Initiative Youth Laboratory
Nizhyn city community, Chernihiv region

Half of the founders of all civic initiatives belonged to the civil society and gathered into medium-sized groups. This size was optimal for covering several areas of assistance to the military and IDPs, which were the main target audiences, as it allowed dividing participants into subgroups.

However, founders from local authorities and businesses were no less important than founders from civil society. They covered areas that civil society could not cover in full: providing housing and producing food and goods. Thus, each initiative solved problems in its own way and in a format that was appropriate for its size, knowledge, and resources.

However, the majority of the initiatives were effective in their work because different groups exchanged resources with each other.

Resource exchange: who helped whom the most

Each initiative had its specific set of resources. Types of resources depended on the problem the initiative was addressing, but people were the most important resource in all cases. For many tasks, "free hands" were enough, but some required specialists with specific knowledge.

People were the carriers of all other derivative resources. These include:

Material
car owners who evacuated residents of frontline territories

Infrastructural
homeowners who provided accommodation for internally displaced persons

Informational
charity fundraisers' announcements in their media

Financial
donations to the Armed Forces of Ukraine during public events

Administrative
assistance with grant applications

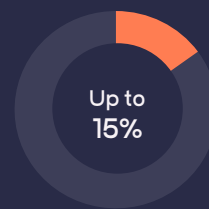**Other resources**

Distribution of resources

Share of all initiatives

More than 80%
→ Human

Up to 70%
→ Material
→ Financial
→ Infrastructural

Up to 55%
→ Administrative
→ Informational

Up to 15%
→ Other

It was easy to classify resources used by the initiatives covered in this research since they addressed similar problems. For example, for the relocation of citizens to other localities, infrastructural (housing) and human resources (volunteer staff dealing with finding accommodation for IDPs) were primarily needed. If the problem was a shortage of uniforms, equipment, or food for the military, such initiatives required infrastructural (commercial premises with equipment for production or storage), administrative (communication with partners to obtain materials or goods), and personnel (manufacturing specialists and other staff) resources.

After the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukrainian society was ready to join any volunteer activity, so 86% of initiatives recruited primarily regular citizens. To a greater extent, these were local residents and internally displaced persons who came to volunteer and humanitarian centers to weave camouflage nets for the military, unload and distribute humanitarian aid. Civil servants were involved in 15% of initiatives. These were primarily humanitarian centers established by local authorities. 10% were recruited from Ukrainian NGOs, which often served as personnel sources for their own initiatives.

Types of human resources:

→ personnel (83% of initiatives*): volunteers or employees of social businesses

→ specialists (fields: culture, psychology, communications, education, sewing, etc.)

→ religious figures

*Here and henceforth only those initiatives that used a particular type of resource are considered. Percentages are given only for those resource types that constituted the most significant shares.

The largest amount of material resources, the same as human resources, was provided by citizens (73% of initiatives). Local residents provided displaced persons with clothing and essential goods necessary to improve their living conditions. Ukrainians abroad purchased military equipment that was scarce in Ukraine. Businesses (36%) provided their food and non-food products free of charge. Local authorities (24%), Ukrainian NGOs (22%), Ukrainian (16%), and foreign (15%) charitable foundations purchased hygiene products for IDPs, drugs, uniforms, and footwear for service members.

Types of material (humanitarian and military) resources:

→ material assistance (83% of initiatives);

→ food (46% of initiatives)

→ clothing/uniforms

→ drugs

→ equipment

→ hygiene products

→ fuel

→ vehicles

→ construction materials

The distribution of financial resources by the source is similar to the distribution of the material resources. 65% of initiatives received voluntary donations from citizens, via charity fundraisers during public events mostly. 44% of initiatives were financially supported by businesses. Ukrainian and foreign NGOs and foundations provided funds to approximately 10% of initiatives.

Types of financial resources:

→ voluntary donations (57% of initiatives)

→ financial assistance (43% of initiatives)

→ grants

→ personal savings of initiative participants

Types of infrastructural resources:

→ housing (39% of initiatives)

→ commercial premises (25% of initiatives)

→ municipal property (22% of initiatives)

→ production premises

→ storage premises

→ equipment

Local authorities provided infrastructural resources for 44% of initiatives. As a rule, municipal property and land were lent for free to volunteer and humanitarian centers. Citizens and businesses provided infrastructural assistance to an equal number of initiatives: 27%. Educational establishments, including universities and schools, helped 14% of initiatives. Humanitarian centers were set up in the corridors and sports halls of schools. IDPs were accommodated in student dormitories.

Types of administrative resources:

→ public communication (35% of initiatives)

→ communication with partners (32% of initiatives)

→ document processing (28% of initiatives)

→ management (26% of initiatives)

→ organizing training courses/ events (24% of initiatives)

→ coordination

→ logistics

→ data collection

→ consulting

→ inding premises

→ website development

Ukrainian NGOs provided administrative assistance to 43% of initiatives. They had experience in setting up communications and organizing public events, which they shared with the founders of initiatives who did not have such skills. Local authorities provided their support to 38% of initiatives, which mainly consisted of processing various documents (permits for humanitarian aid, IDP certificates, and applications for cash assistance). Citizens provided assistance to 24% of initiatives by helping with process management.

Information resources were limited to social networks, which we have already mentioned as a way to involve citizens in the initiatives. Other resources were mainly related to communications through volunteer networks.

Resource exchanges between different groups were quite active.

Initiatives founded by civil society used resources from the largest variety of other groups. Businesses funded civil society and provided material assistance, and authorities provided premises.

Regarding civil society, ordinary citizens (local residents and IDPs) often received resources through the representatives of NGOs and charitable foundations, establishing partnerships with them. By working for the public good and getting no profit from this work these organizations established their authority at the local level. Large networks of contacts that NGOs and charitable foundations built through public activities inside and outside civil society helped them accumulate the largest amount of resources.

Initiatives launched by authorities received the most support from civil society, charitable foundations, and businesses. Businesses, in turn, were the most autonomous and received the most resources from civil society. Neither authorities nor businesses sought information support from other groups.

Groups providing resources to initiatives created by

Number of initiatives

		Material	Human	Financial	Infrastructural	Administrative	Informational
Civil society	Citizens	37	53	32	11	10	2
	Businesses	15	1	22	10	2	0
	Authorities	9	1	5	14	8	0
	NGOs	21	11	14	3	22	1
	Charitable foundations	11	2	7	1	7	0
	Church	0	1	1	1	1	0
	Educational establishments	0	2	0	1	1	1
Local self-government	Citizens	14	17	8	5	1	0
	Businesses	8	0	6	1	0	0
	Authorities	8	14	11	16	14	0
	NGOs	11	0	6	1	4	0
	Charitable foundations	7	0	3	0	0	0
	Church	0	0	0	1	0	0
	Educational establishments	0	1	0	3	0	0
Business	Citizens	9	13	9	3	5	0
	Businesses	7	4	6	9	4	0
	Authorities	0	1	1	1	3	0
	NGOs	3	0	3	0	0	0
	Charitable foundations	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Church	1	0	0	0	0	0
	Educational establishments	0	0	0	1	0	0

🍴 *Material*   👤 *Human*   💰 *Financial*   🛣 *Infrastructural*   ⚙ *Administrative*   ℹ *Informational*

"Mostly, we cooperate with volunteer organizations. Many people come and offer help. For example, volunteers came and offered to install modular houses for private homes. Or, for example, 627 families received assistance with building materials for repairing their partially damaged houses. And we have already restored many social objects, that is, schools, kindergartens, and first-aid posts: windows have been installed, roofs covered. That is, there is a connection and understanding in these matters."

Anatolii Bochkariov, head of the deoccupied Velyka Dymerka Village Council
Velyka Dymerka Village community, Kyiv region

"We are like a super sports car. It has a limited fuel tank. It will go very fast, but it will still stop after two hundred kilometers. The state, on the other hand, is like a train. It may be not that comfortable, large, and massive, it does not go fast, but it goes long-term. When the supercar stops, the train will still go on for 10, 20, 30 years. The same is here. Volunteer power is much more flexible, capable, and faster in helping, but sooner or later, this resource will run out."

Rostyslav Smirnov, co-founder of the Dobrobat project

Despite the active exchange of resources between different organizations and groups, the intensity and scope of assistance eventually decline. Some businesses return to profit-making and cannot provide their resources for free, and some NGOs return to their statutory activities.

It is important that the majority of the initiatives received resources from different groups: they exchanged services and goods, and these interactions helped them to establish permanent connections.

For the initiatives launched by ordinary citizens who worked as volunteers, resources were exhaustible and unstable. Some of them abandoned the attempts to work on every possible issue and found their niche instead. Following the example of other organizations, they registered NGOs and charitable foundations. Such initiatives have earned the trust and authority among local residents and their target audiences, which allowed them to transform and institutionalize. However, even those who did not do this and over time dissolved, still provided invaluable assistance to other groups with whom they cooperated.

Most effective initiative formats

Although 81% of initiatives that were founded last year are still operating, their effectiveness varied depending on their areas of focus. Half of all initiatives transformed over time, and almost 20% dissolved.

Termination of an initiative does not mean it was ineffective. For example, some camps for IDPs that existed only during the spring of 2022 fulfilled their purpose and resolved the issue of finding housing for citizens. People who found temporary shelter there returned to their homes in deoccupied localities, so there was simply no more need for such initiatives.

There is a correlation between the type of group that founded an initiative and the initiative's lifespan. Of the initiatives started by the authorities, only about 10% dissolved. Nearly 20% of initiatives launched by civil society ceased to operate, while for the business sector, this rate is slightly higher, at just over 30%. Businesses usually terminated their initiatives due to the return to their usual business activities.

Out of the 7 initiatives started by IDPs, 4 are still active. However, one of them now operates online only, as its founder, an IDP, returned home. Also, only 2 out of 20 civil society organizations that existed before February 24 returned to their previous activities and terminated their initiatives. All other NGOs successfully continue their initiatives.

The most common initiative formats that still work

○ *Share of initiatives of this format*

100%

→ Information platform/ Information campaigns

Up to 95%

→ Workshops
→ Volunteer/humanitarian centers
→ Training courses
→ Housing (for IDPs, local residents)

Up to 70%

→ Public events
→ Social businesses

The most long-lasting initiatives, as it turned out, are information platforms and campaigns, volunteer centers, workshops, and training courses. Housing initiatives for IDPs decreased by almost 20%, and public events — by more than 30%. The dissolution of housing initiatives was the result of IDPs returning home and finding alternative housing. Charitable events were held either to raise funds for specific needs or as events for IDPs who now returned home or had already become part of the community. The number of social businesses decreased by nearly half, as some entrepreneurs returned to their businesses and generating profit.

Other initiatives have formalized their activities and have become civic and charitable organizations. In this way, they now have an easier time managing their activities, especially when it comes to material assistance and charitable financial contributions.

In 2022, amendments[7] were made to the Law on Volunteering[8], and the Tax Code of Ukraine. These amendments were supposed to empower volunteers and non-profit institutions and organizations under the conditions of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine[9]. These amendments helped to boost volunteering and simplified tax procedures for those helping the state. Volunteers can register in the Volunteer Register quickly and easily by submitting an online application form. The tax exemption was introduced for charitable foundations, and all money is spent on the needs of the groups (military, IDPs, residents of frontline territories, etc.) who need it[10].

Reasons for initiative transformation

◯ *share of transformed initiatives*

More than 45%

Ceased activities

→ *no longer relevant*
→ *return to business*
→ *short-term action*
→ *return to NGO activities*
→ *relocation*
→ *premises returned for educational needs*
→ *target audience no longer interested*
→ *business was closed*

Up to 20%

→ Established charity fund/ charity organization/NGO
→ Initiative expanded: new target audiences/focuses

Up to 10%

→ Changed focus to meet current requests and needs
→ Narrowing of focus
→ Dissolution
→ Relocation, online format

In the course of this research, we identified several factors that had a positive impact on the quantitative and qualitative results of initiatives regardless of their format. These factors include:

01 The prior existence of a stable social group and connections

As we have already mentioned, initiatives launched by an already existing organization, business, or municipal institution were able to choose the format of their work and distribute the responsibilities among participants faster than others. Also, such initiatives were more likely to have extensive inter-organizational connections, which made it significantly easier for them to get resources.

"Someone from our acquaintances called and asked: "Can you make boots?" In principle, we could, but we didn't have the materials. However, some of our acquaintances found the materials. Everyone was accommodating, no one refused to help us. We gathered people. We knew who to involve because our Vyshnivets has always made shoes."

Liudmyla and Myroslav Byts
Vyshnivets settlement community, Ternopil oblast

"We launched an initiative to organize events for internally displaced persons. They addressed various issues: self-defense, cooperation with medics (whom to contact), including psychologists, and stress-relief exercises (relaxation through drawing, physical activities). At first, the events were held only by the members of our civic organization. But people started asking, "So, you are doing these things for us. Can we do something for you as well?"

Inna Dovhaliuk, head of NGO Tsvit
Vyshnivets settlement community, Ternopil oblast

02 Involvement of the target audience

The best example is the involvement of IDPs as human resources. In 24 initiatives, forced migrants either worked at humanitarian centers or organized events for local residents or assisted their communities that were still either under occupation or under constant shelling.

Also, IDPs launched initiatives at their new places of residence (5% of all initiatives), including psychological counseling and establishing camps for residence. In some communities, integration of this group proceeded not only as passive (through the distribution of humanitarian aid) integration but also through active involvement (guided tours, recreational camps for children). This created a stronger connection with the new place of residence and a desire to join initiatives themselves.

03 Interaction between different groups and resource exchange

Grassroots initiatives will always be limited in resources, so to meet their needs, it is beneficial for them to seek external resources. Not necessarily some aid from international foundations or foreign businesses. The example of many initiatives demonstrates that at first it is enough to communicate the problem to other local organizations. It is very likely that they also need resources, and joining forces will help to find the best solution.

> "We have created a volunteer council — a kind of advisory body that coordinates the efforts of all volunteer communities and is supported by the government. However, the government is not the institution that, let's say, has a direct impact on all issues. The government is there to facilitate communication, so that all the good that we do is aimed at the right goals. To ensure that assistance is targeted, that all issues are resolved in a planned, focused manner. That is, to make sure that everything goes where it is most needed. We will all benefit from this: the government, the community, the volunteers, the businesses, the entire community, and foremost those who need this help."

Nataliia Mazur, the head of the information and PR department of Khmilnyk city council
Khmilnyk city community, Vinnytsia oblast

Each initiative addressed its specific issue. If the issue lost its relevance, the initiative ceased its work too. If the problem became more complicated due to some circumstances, the members of the initiative adapted to these new challenges. Initiatives expanded their target audiences and formats, split into different movements, or joined their efforts. Some of them registered civic organizations to facilitate financial activities and receive support from donors.

This demonstrates that the effectiveness of initiatives sometimes depended not on specific formats, but on their response to changes in the issues they were working on. If they started their activities with limited resources, especially without a stable social group and connections, they succeeded by involving the target audience and establishing connections with other groups.

Conclusions

Ukraine successfully withstood the first year of the full-scale war, despite the fears of both foreign experts and Ukrainians themselves. This probably would not have happened if the country had no developed civil society network.

Usually, when we talk about civil society, we mean non-governmental organizations and several dozens of local activists. However, the full-scale invasion demonstrated that civil society in Ukraine also includes progressive local councilors, socially responsible entrepreneurs, and just regular people of various professions.

On February 24, 2022, representatives of these groups in all regions of Ukraine began to launch important civic initiatives. Initiatives of many formats emerged: from providing housing for IDPs and charity fundraisers for the Armed Forces to psychological consultations for military medics and community work in deoccupied communities. Over time, some initiatives shifted their focus to more pressing issues and became non-governmental organizations or charitable foundations.

Civic initiatives did not exist in a vacuum. Different groups of citizens came together to exchange resources and mutually reinforce each other. Thanks to this cooperation, they achieved their goals more efficiently and effectively. The interaction between civil society, local businesses, and local authorities was of particular importance.

Overall, civil society became the driving force of the volunteer movement in all regions of Ukraine. The majority of civic initiatives were created by regular citizens.

The importance of these initiatives cannot be measured by quantitative indicators only. Their value lay not only in the number of IDPs whom they helped to find accommodation or the number of drones they handed over to the Armed Forces. The significance of the civic initiatives we analyzed is the fact that, thanks to them, Ukraine was able to withstand the most difficult weeks and months of the full-scale war.

No state can be fully prepared for a large-scale armed attack from various directions. Any state needs time to adjust to the new reality and learn how to work in it. And it was civil society that provided the state with this time, partially taking over its responsibilities.

If state institutions had to find housing for internally displaced persons, relocate businesses, and meet all the needs of the military, which began to grow significantly, from the first days of the full-scale war, it would have been much more difficult for them to focus on the primary task of repelling the enemy. This scenario was prevented thanks to the activation of civil society that at the moment of crisis started working on these tasks. Thus, it gave state institutions time to reorient themselves.

Now state institutions are gradually taking over the functions they are supposed to perform. It is essential for the proper work of the state mechanism:

citizens cannot support institutions forever. Teachers had not only to preserve pickles for the Armed Forces but also provide quality education for future generations. More and more local entrepreneurs are returning to their full-time business schedule, thus supporting the local budgets of their communities.

On February 24, civil society became active and changed its focus to helping the state to withstand the beginning of a full-scale war. Now many groups of citizens are switching to less pressing issues in various spheres. This is the way in which civil society supports and develops the state. And this contribution will be valuable not only during the war but also after its end.

Each successful civic initiative not only solved a problem at the grassroots level but also forever changed its participants. People from different spheres and of different professions gained invaluable experience in crisis management, teamwork, fundraising, cooperation with various stakeholders, and building partnerships. Most importantly, they understood that they are capable of creating successful projects even during the most serious crisis.

This experience has brought grassroots civil society to a new level. By solving social problems, new public associations and their participants gained not only authority in their communities but also the experience of effectively responding to problems that need to be urgently addressed and which local or national authorities are not addressing. This experience can be decisive for the integration of these communities into social and political processes. Moreover, if local political, economic, and cultural elites in the process of rebuilding the state try to ignore this experience, they will undoubtedly provoke significant resistance from citizens. Current government and governments that will be elected in the future at different levels will have to involve the new leaders in the development of local and national policies and decisions, in the post-war reconstruction.

Participants of civic initiatives have mastered tools with which they will be able to influence policy at both local and national levels. Some of them are likely to try to run for office in local governments and influence the life of their community having new opportunities and powers. Some will run for the Verkhovna Rada. Others will work in their fields but effectively control government bodies because they will be much more aware of their responsibility for their community and state and the ability to fulfill their civic duties.

People understood that they are capable of finding housing for hundreds of evacuated families at short notice, preparing tons of hot food, fundraising hundreds of thousands of hryvnias for military equipment, finding this equipment, and delivering it to the front. With such experience, they will undoubtedly become community leaders and transform not only their communities but also the state as a whole.

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