Informal Civic Activism in Ukraine: How to Foster Further Civic Engagement

I.   Introduction

This brief examines the phenomenon of informal civil actors (ICAs)[1] and their activism in Ukraine in the context of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022; it does this with a view to understanding what is happening and how ENGAGE and USAID could further support ICAs as part of democratic and civic development strategies for Ukraine. The brief starts by looking at the expanding definition of informality within civil society, followed by a look at the specific historical trajectory of informality in Ukraine's civil society. Zooming in on the ICA upsurge since 2022, the brief attempts a wide mapping of basic ICA characteristics and donor engagement efforts. The brief ends with a set of considerations for ENGAGE for developing more optimal onward ICA support.

II.   Background

The rise of informal civic actors and activism and the need to better understand it has been increasingly in the spotlight of civil society research. While international donors working in the democracy, rights and governance realm have traditionally focused on supporting formal civil society organizations (CSOs), over the last three decades, understanding of what constitutes civil society has evolved significantly.[2] Technology, markets, armed conflicts and closing civic space gave rise to new models of citizen self-organization and participation.

Often defining themselves as civil society "action" as opposed to civil society "organization,"[3] informal civic actors (ICAs) tend to be fluid and non-hierarchical[4] in their orientation, typically operating based on horizontal lines of accountability. They are defined as operating outside of formal institutional frameworks or normative understanding of civil society as a sum of incorporated civic institutions.[5] While lacking traditional bureaucratic features of an institution, ICAs are often more organic, better connected to their constituencies, more rapid and creative in addressing social issues and have a greater mobilization capacity as compared to formal CSOs.[6]

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[1] For the purposes of this brief, the definition includes: 1) individual actors/volunteers, 2) unregistered initiative groups and movements; and 3) CSOs registered since February 2022.
[2] https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_FutureRoleCivilSociety_Report_2013.pdf
[3] https://academic.oup.com/ips/article-abstract/16/1/olab021/6363885?redirectedFrom=fulltext
[4] https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2022/03/informal-civil-society-a-booster-for-european-democracy?lang=en
[5] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/08883254221081037
[6] https://carnegieeurope.eu/research/2017/03/global-civic-activism-in-flux?lang=en&center=europe

III. Ukraine Historical Informal Civic Action

In Ukraine, informal practices have permeated sociopolitical landscape and, along with pivotal historical events, have shaped the country's civil society. Deeply rooted in Ukrainians' pervasive distrust of formal institutions and the overall informality in socio-political life,[7] many civic actions occur informally, often through the so-called "volunteer sector"[8] or "volunteer movement," remaining largely below the radars of empirical research and official statistics. and can be traced back through pivotal historical events that have shaped the country's culture of **volunteerism**.

Since the Orange Revolution of 2004-2005, Ukrainians consistently partook in civil society outside of formal channels. In 2006, nearly 50% of Ukrainians provided active support to different causes unrelated to formal CSOs, while only slightly more than 8% reported volunteering for formal organizations.[9] The informal manifestations of civil society have been especially evident during the Euromaidan protests, which were characterized by broad participation from various segments of society, including students, professionals, and activists organized themselves into a "people's army"[10] to help the protesters – they would keep them warm, feed them, and take care of their wounds

The revolution led to the formation of numerous volunteer organizations and initiatives, such as "Maidan self-defense", "Automaidan" and "Euromaidan – SOS", many of which continued to operate after the protests ended and into Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and the subsequent occupation of the Donetsk and Luhansk territories. By 2016, tens of thousands of volunteers had contributed time, labor and financial resources to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces deployed to forestall further military activities in eastern Ukraine.[11] Many Ukrainians formed volunteer battalions to support the regular army. Often funded and supplied by fellow citizens and diaspora communities, volunteers organized to provide humanitarian aid, medical supplies, and logistical support to both soldiers and civilians affected by the conflict. Organizations like the "Come Back Alive" Foundation[12] emerged to coordinate these efforts. Volunteer groups helped veterans reintegrate into society and provided rehabilitation services for those injured in the conflict; they also played a critical role in advocating for and supporting these initiatives.

The COVID-19 pandemic further highlighted the flexibility and resilience of Ukraine's informal civil society. Networks of volunteers and civil society organizations that were active in 2014-2015 have remobilized to provide emergency services to those in need, and work at the grass-roots level to prevent existing tensions getting worse, and the marginalization of new vulnerable

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[7] https://nationalities.org/custom-content/uploads/2022/02/ASN19-U10-Krasynska.pdf
[8] https://ednannia.ua/en/199-research/12515-research-challenges-and-needs-of-the-volunteer-sector
[9] https://nationalities.org/custom-content/uploads/2022/02/ASN19-U10-Krasynska.pdf
[10] https://www.france24.com/en/focus/20140203-volunteer-army-protecting-kiev-independence-square-maidan-ukraine
[11] https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/17499755221127877#fn1-17499755221127877
[12] https://savelife.in.ua/en/about-foundation-en/

groups.[13] Volunteers mobilized to produce and distribute personal protective equipment, food and medicine to vulnerable populations. Crowdfunding campaigns were launched to raise funds for ventilators and other critical healthcare needs. Local community groups expanded their reach to support those affected by the pandemic, including organizing online education and mental health support services.

IV. ICAs in Ukraine since February 2022

Through a quick mapping through conversations with ENGAGE, select donors,[14] and ENGAGE and other research data, patterns of activity and dynamics are highlighted below

Levels of ICA Activity

Building on this culture of volunteering, mobilization of informal groups reached unprecedented level with Russia's full-scale war. By August 2022,[15] the number of Ukrainians who participated in the activities of civil society organizations (CSOs) surged to 47% compared to 20% in 2021, while the number of citizens engaged in the life of their communities more than doubled. 72% of Ukrainians donated funds to support the resistance and 59% volunteered to provide evacuation assistance and shelter to internally displaced citizens, procure goods for the army resist the aggressor on the information front. In the first two months of the war, Ukrainians registered nearly 1,700 new charities and CSOs[16] to deliver virtually all humanitarian aid inside the country[17]. Civil society, supported by international organizations[18] has effectively become Ukraine's "other army."[19]

There is also a common perception among civil society experts and development professionals that there has been a surge in self-organization of citizens to address societal exigencies through spontaneous issue-based initiatives, informal groups and networks described as "an unprecedented social movement."[20] A Civic Engagement Poll, commissioned by USAID/ENGAGE in spring 2024, suggests that nearly half of Ukrainians participated in the activities of informal citizen-led initiatives, which is nearly twice as much as in the activities of formally registered CSOs. According to the same survey, the majority of Ukrainians believe that informal civic initiatives are less corrupt than CSOs (62%) and that they are more effective than CSOs in addressing war-related needs of Ukraine (57%) and in dealing with pressing social issues (53%).

Who are ICAs and their Characteristics?

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[13] https://www.international-alert.org/blogs/civil-society-in-ukraine-mobilise-to-respond-to-covid-19-defuse-tensions/

[14] These include: the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF), the European Endowment for Democracy (EED), USAID Pro-Integrity, East Europe Foundation (EEF), National Democratic Institute (NDI), and Ednannia.

[15] https://engage.org.ua/eng/cep-2022-surge-in-civic-activism-overwhelming-support-to-resisting-the-enemy-and-fundamental-shift-in-perceiving-corruption/

[16] https://business.diia.gov.ua/en/cases/novini/vidrodzenna-ukrainskogo-biznesu-v-umovah-vijni-analitika-za-2-misaci

[17] https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/we-need-people-who-are-focused-mission-not-rules-and-procedures

[18] https://engage.org.ua/eng/wartime-pivots-and-adaptation-usaid-engage-mapping-of-support-to-and-needs-of-advocacy-focused-csos/

[19] https://www.rti.org/publication/ukraines-other-army/fulltext.pdf

[20] https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/08/ukraine-volunteer-army-russia-odesa/671088/

First it should be noted that the data on ICAs is spotty due to donor definitional and tracking practices. Donors interviewed do not necessarily have a definition for informal civic actors (if not registered), do not necessarily track them as part of their activities, or do not directly consider how to support them as a priority. Rather they see these informal actors as working in some way with registered CSOs and in this way being part of their larger civil society efforts.

The types of informal civic actors and their relative capacities are distinctive features of activities since February 2022. An (even) broader segment of society was activated than ever before including youth (15, 16 onward) who saw the opening/opportunity to be part of something bigger and needed to step into active roles in their communities, particularly in physical reconstruction. Also notable is the set of veterans who are self-organizing, some not as registered groups, but as fluid movements and initiatives.

The emergence of online new social movements is another characteristic noted, many with anti-imperialistic cultural attributes as self-supporting resistance and assistance communities. For example, in 2022, the electronic citizen petitions most supported in numbers demanded removal of Russian and Soviet memories from Ukrainian toponymics, cancellation of classes in Russian literature in school curricula or banning of Russian popular culture[21]. Others were focused on education and support such as the Yellow Ribbon non-violent resistance movement[22] that organizes, educates and otherwise supports Ukrainians in the temporarily occupied territories[23], and the IT Army of Ukraine[24] - a network of thousands of IT professionals who have been hacking Russia's vital government, financial and infrastructural services[25].

Donors and ENGAGE data[26] suggest that more ICAs are present on the regional and local levels than in earlier periods. Donors also suggest anecdotally that the ICAs are composed of a mixture of profiles, including a trend of more businesspeople activating or registering new organizations such as SpivDia[27]. In this mix, those that registered are seen as having a greater cross-sectoral approach (business, CSO, government) in their cooperation. Those with actors from the business community are also noted as somewhat progressing 'faster' in their development than "old school" groups as they have basic organizational skills from the start. Other ICAs in the business community do not register new entities but prefer to support and volunteer and link with other CSOs in a way described as effectively creating an 'extended civil society.'

Still other individual activists have less interest to register[28] or see this as an administrative burden that they do not want to take on and remain individual activists. In these cases, they cooperate with other local CSOs through different mechanisms – such as entrepreneurship

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[21] https://cejiss.org/ukraine-at-war-resilience-and-normative-agency
[22] https://www.zhovtastrichka.org/
[23] https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2024/03/12/7446163/
[24] https://itarmy.com.ua/?lang=en
[25] https://www.csis.org/blogs/strategic-technologies-blog/it-army-ukraine
[26] According to ENGAGE data, 92% of all ICA applications came from urban ICAs, and only 8% from rural. This is still a better balance compared to well-established CSOs, only 3% of whose applications were rural.
[27] https://spivdiia.org.ua/en/
[28] https://ednannia.ua/en/199-research/12515-research-challenges-and-needs-of-the-volunteer-sector

contracts – to carry out activities such as monitoring of local government reconstruction efforts or supporting local government to carry out work that they themselves do not have capacities to take on.

What are They Doing?

Donors suggest that much of the citizen participation through informal civic actions from February 2022 was particularly notable in support of military and emergency humanitarian efforts. Much of these efforts during early stages of the war were citizen -driven, while donors adjusted and supported citizen initiatives to play a follow-on role. According to Ednannia research,[29] the main areas of volunteer work in 2023 included helping the Armed Forces of Ukraine (46%), assisting the victims of Russia's aggression (26%), humanitarian aid to the population (20%), and assistance to vulnerable groups and people with disabilities (16%).

There is little data on thematic breakdown of ICA efforts (volunteers, movements, as well as newly registered CSOs) beyond broad categories, but ENGAGE grant applications provide some general directions; 40% of all grant applications received from ICAs since February 2022 were focused on civil society development and 24% of applications dealt with the theme of inclusion. Applications for activities in areas of national and local governance accounted for 11%, while 4% of applicants asked for funds to work on government transparency and accountability, and below 1% - to work in rule of law.

What is Their Level of Intensity?

One donor described initial February 2022 level of citizen energy and reaction to the crisis as a "self-igniting agent" that propelled citizens to volunteer and work together to provide basic support to their communities and country. However, two and a half years into the war, donors note a certain 'leveling off' of ICA energy and activity.[30] They note that non-lethal support for the military is still high, particularly for supporting family and friends' fighting units, but even in these cases there has been a bit less given overall war fatigue of the population. Volunteering levels have been stagnating[31] if not decreasing, particularly due to relative stabilization of the humanitarian situation and many activists now focusing on how to be engaged in more development support in affected communities which requires different dynamism and approaches. While the number of registered charitable organizations increased by 43%

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[29]https://ednannia.ua/images/Procurements/Civil_Society_in_Ukraine_in_the_Context_of_War_Report_on_a_Comprehensive_Sociological_Research.pdf

[30] According to the USAID/ENGAGE Spring 2024 Civic Engagement Poll, Citizen donations towards war-related needs dropped from 84% in 2023 to 75% in 2024; donations to traditional charities (sick kids, animal shelters, people with disabilities etc.) dropped from 40% to 27%; and donations to CSOs to hold the government accountable and promote reforms dropped from 5% in 2023 to 2% in 2024. The number of those who did not donate at all grew tenfold from 2% in 2023 to 20% in 2024.

[31] According to the USAID/ENGAGE Spring 2024 Civic Engagement Poll, the level of volunteering dropped from 62% in 2023 to 59% in 2024, thus returning to the 2022 levels. Donations to support resistance to the aggressor have been declining from 72% in 2022 to 67% in 2024, while the number of Ukrainians who did not donate at all increased from 2% in 2023 to 20% in 2024.

compared to 2021, the number of new registrations dropped from 6,000 in 2022 to 5,000 in 2023.[32]

ICA-Local Government Dynamics
ICAs are more present locally and their interaction with local government has tended to have two trends. On one level as noted above, ICAs fill in and take on some of the efforts of local governments that are stretched in capacities as informal groups particularly are seen as bridging this space between citizen priorities and government efforts.

In other areas, ICAs are fulfilling the 'watchdog' role in some cases more than established CSOs. As one donor explained, in some cases, initiatives groups or individuals tend to be more 'politically edgy' particularly in countering anti-democratic forces or dealing with social problems overshadowed by the war. This is partly due to the perception at least that some established CSOs are 'comfortable' with the local government in power and are less willing to be critical in carrying out their oversight role. For those ICAs focusing on anti-corruption and transparency issues, one donor described a certain type of activist that sees themselves as a leader, often with legitimacy of others behind him/her, and due to this and the fact that other CSOs are not so active at municipal and oblast levels willing to push and play this critical role. As another donor explained, they plan and anticipate much anti-corruption focused work in local areas to be developed with a role for ICAs.

At the same time, the space for ICAs to have critical voices varies greatly by local and regional political context. Local governments appear generally amenable to veteran's based ICAs for example. However, if it is not a conducive political environment, it is difficult for CSOs, much the less ICAs, to engage with the government as if you are too outspoken (and a man) you can be mobilized. Access to information locally is a key determinant of the ability of any civic actors to engage with and hold the government to account; and country-wide this is considered a key challenge, with Odesa region for example noted as still tough while Kharkiv region has having somewhat improved.

CSO-ICA Dynamics
Interaction between CSOs and ICAs is multifaceted, some of it organic and some of it more donor driven. National and regional CSOs have demonstrated more awareness and some degree of interest to cooperate with ICAs, particularly on local levels. Some of this is due to issues covered, some is due to donor guidance and incentives, and some is related to maturity and awareness of national CSOs of the need to tap into more organic and grassroots efforts; while competition might be present, there is a sense that they are recognizing the need to have this connection.

ICAs on their side, however, see less of a need for extensive networks with national CSOs, unless as part of a larger legislative policy or advocacy push or particularly with some personalities who they consider as the fighters and true representatives of civil society. Rather they have

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[32]https://ednannia.ua/images/Procurements/Civil_Society_in_Ukraine_in_the_Context_of_War_Report_on_a_Comprehensive_Sociological_Research.pdf

demonstrated a priority of self-linking and asking for support to link and share experiences with peers, region to region. For example, in Lutsk informal civic actors focused on illegal construction in their region only see the need for connections with other regions, not Kyiv groups. As one donor described, "We are sensing this hunger [[amongst ICAs] to do more and to travel and meet other people. It is interesting as on one hand you sense this exhaustion, but on the other, hunger and thirst to do something else more." Furthermore, due to movements during the war, both more established CSOs and ICAs are more likely to be based in secondary cities and localities which has created a more varied networking grid of civic actors across the country.

How are ICAs supported?
ICAs continue to attract a substantial level of non-donor support through direct business and community contributions and Diaspora support.[33] This is often based on social connections and trust of the ICAs, and community specific which donors hope can be a basis for more systemic philanthropy in the future.

Donor support for ICAs is generally a small part of their donor portfolios. Donor support for ICAs, if newly registered, follow several paths of financial and technical assistance (TA) support.

First if unregistered, only 2 of the 7 interviewed organizations had specific financial support mechanisms for ICAs, And if specific mechanisms, these were in the minority of their grant portfolios.[34] For all others, financial support of ICAs was either through UA CSOs 'distributing' to ICAs or individual

Donor Mechanisms for ICAs
o   Limited funding for Unregistered ICAs through specific funding mechanisms
o   UA CSO partnerships with informal initiatives/individual activists as entrepreneur contracts
o   UA CSOs get grants to work directly with ICAs
o   Direct technical assistance
o   Access to HUB and CSO related services
o   Invited to consultations policy

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[33] "According to Ednannia 2024 quantitative survey results, 2/3 of organizations indicated that the primary funding sources in 2023 are donations, membership fees, and charitable contributions. International grants rank second (22%), and 18% use income from their economic activities…The survey has shown that the funding sources for CSOs and volunteer initiatives are mostly the same. The only difference is that volunteers are more likely to receive contributions and donations from the public, local businesses, and civic activists than CSOs." https://ednannia.ua/images/Procurements/Civil_Society_in_Ukraine_in_the_Context_of_War_Report_on_a_Comprehensive_Sociological_Research.pdf

[34] The EED currently lists 15 of 110 grants for unregistered organizations. Before December 2023, EED had approximately 30% of its portfolio with unregistered groups. Some of these were part of the 'Champion of Change' mechanism which provided up to 20,000EUR to an individual activist or the person who was heading an informal group to distribute to the rest of the group. It should be noted that EED would be interested in supporting more unregistered actors, but banking regulations since December 2023 have hindered this.

The IRF considers a CSO 12 months or older already an 'established CSO, but for informal groups, they had one mechanism 'Hold the Line' which specifically worked with non-registered initiatives, but it had to have a counterpart (registered) to sign for the organization so it would be an organization that applies and shares with the others.

entrepreneurship contracts if possible. If registered and newly established, donors emphasized the flexible application process.

For nonfinancial support in the form of technical assistance, donors described several mechanisms. First donors would support established CSO partners to work with ICAs on any of a set of areas of TA with a view to building their capacity as well as networking ability with the wider civil society landscape. For example, ENGAGE supported Mezha[35] to educate activists and unregistered groups about transparency and fighting corruption at the grassroots level.

Donors also described how they directly offer technical assistance (TA) to informal civic actors. TA generally is provided with a view towards assisting ICAs to formalize and professionalize organizations and to be focused enough to be as effective as they can in what they are doing. This is done through providing access to ICAs to CSO service centers and resources,[36] direct mentoring services targeted at unregistered civic actors as well as other training venues, including online workshops.[37] Finally, donors also provide ICAs with some level of access to larger policy discussions and fora. This they argue reinforces the wider consultation process needed to build a broader civil society, At the same time

Donor Challenges in Providing ICA Support

In addition to the financial limitations of working with unregistered organizations, donors highlighted several challenges in providing relevant support to ICAs.

Communication and identification of ICAs tops the list. Donors highlight the challenge of engaging with ICAs given that many are doing multiple activities or one-off activities, or even being able to identify actors in a way to systematically begin working with them. Post invasion most donors described the challenge of having a local presence (if they had it before) and being able to engage directly with and nurture ICAs. Given this, donors often rely on established partners to engage with ICAs and bring forward initiatives, which only sometimes has worked. As one described, "The most important challenge is how to reach out to these people; they are freelance volunteers, and this is additional to their day jobs. We don't know how to reach them and what they need as we don't know them." Selecting the 'right' informal groups (who have legitimacy are not illiberal or local GONGOs) furthermore is seen as requiring significant consultation and relationship building efforts. For example, ENGAGE noted that their simplified application procedure after February 2022 combined with targeted communication and outreach efforts aligned with an upsurge in ICA applications, but this required significant staffing which they were hard pressed to maintain.

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[35] https://mezha.net/ua/

[36] For example, IRF restarted its Hubs approach in 2022 and through this provides ''Space of Opportunities' for sharing of skills including business and IT and marketing, with a variety of ICAs.

[37] One example of an online workshop course that attracted 300+ people is supported by EEF. See https://zrozumilo.in.ua/search-courses/

Donor understanding of what support is needed also appears to be a challenge. On one hand, donors mostly see ICAs through the prism of needing to become more effective in their ability to function as organizations and to be project; hence skill building is a traditional CSO support area. with institutional support and project development and management are emphasized. ICA support is also focused on more practical quick areas of skill building around operations, communications and marketing. Given the prevalence of local and regional ICAs, the role of networking support also is highlighted. Recent Ednannia research on the needs of the volunteer sectors echoes many of these themes with an added emphasis to enhance/ensure the administrative and practical space for volunteers to carry out their objectives.[38] Yet at the same time, several also acknowledged that the paradigm of CSO development may not be the path for all or that the needs of ICAs can be addressed through traditional CSO development approaches. For example, one donor cautioned that the TA support through local service centers or the hub model at least earlier did not result in ICA space for building energy and innovation, or demand driven trainings, rather donor anticipated interests and needs.

V. Opportunities to Enhance Onward Support

The unprecedented growth of citizen engagement since February 2022 signals a great mobilization potential of the Ukrainian civil society that extends well beyond the "civic sector" of formalized and well-established CSOs. This quick mapping of the ICA landscape highlights the potential as well as the gaps in understanding and donor responses to ICAs. To foster more targeted and supportive approaches, several recommendations are put forward for ENGAGE to consider. These include:

First, develop a shared definition of what constitutes informal civic activism in Ukraine and begin collecting and managing relevant data more systematically: A shared definition of what of constitutes civic informal actors (ICAs) with an emphasis on 'civic actions' could help shift the development paradigm and align focus more on civic practices and their patterns (i.e. substance) rather than on actors, institutions and numerical expressions of the value of their existence. Regardless of the exact definition, developing a shared definition within ENGAGE and across USAID (with suggestions to other donors to do the same), would provide a new basis from which to understand and address ICAs.

Second, based on an agreed upon definition, there is an urgent need to carry out research on Informal Civic Actions: The bulk of civil society research in Ukraine is still based on the normative understanding of civil society and focuses on formalized civic structures and associational behaviors of citizens. What if in addition to understanding what an ideal civil society should be in Ukraine based on standard indicators, research could help understand specific forms, shapes and themes of civic activism (with the entire variety of its goals) as well as why, when and how it occurs in Ukraine? The apparent vibrancy of online informal movements and activism might require a particular emphasis Together this would provide much needed data for a learning agenda and donor strategies in Ukraine and beyond.

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[38] https://ednannia.ua/en/199-research/12515-research-challenges-and-needs-of-the-volunteer-sector

Third, if focus is not (only) on Actors but Activism, then don't assume all ICAs want and need to become CSOs or professionalized, rather the space for their organic development/evolution needs to be widened: Many ICAs see registration and professionalization as their trajectory, but many others do not. The data available certainly suggests an interest in registration of new entities and efforts to apply through grant mechanisms, it is also clear that most ICAs have understood that this is one of the few ways to secure support.

Furthermore, many ICAs don't necessarily need funding, but want knowledge and peers. And here is where ENGAGE can experiment with partnered activism like the Mezha example or experimenting with how to (re-invent) use Hub type spaces/Intermediary Support Organizations to spur grassroot activism and cross-learning.

Fourth, related to this for recovery and reconstruction (and likely for the EU membership progress as well), the dichotomy of support for formal and informal civil society needs to be overcome or further intermixed: Institutional conditions/legislative and regulatory framework for the entire civil society as opposed to conditions for just "civic sector" to participate in the RR need to be nurtured. This means strong donor stances on access to information and civil local government engagement with citizens as baseline requirements. Ultimately, based on historical evidence, the Ukrainian government's responsiveness and inclusivity will be one of the determining factors for Ukrainians to choose between informal and more contentious participation or formalized and more compliant engagement. Finding appropriate mechanisms to support both types of civic actualization could help ensure that the entire civil society of Ukraine has agency and influence over the future of the country.

Fifth, ENGAGE and USAID need to expand their comfort zone of contact with citizens to better understand needs and possibilities: Donors highlighted the challenges of identifying and contact with ICAs and be able to engage more effectively with manifestations of informal civic activism, donors themselves need to be more directly engaged with citizens. With staff capacity and bandwidth limitations in mind, donors that have the mandate to support civic engagement should invest adequate resources to directly reach out to individual activists and groups beyond the "usual suspects" of well-established CSOs. That would require an approach different from the standard process of requesting proposals for grants or other types of support. It would mean as much as possible with war conditions a further emphasis on having representatives work present regionally and locally to talk to activists on the ground to understand their motivations, ambitions and assistance needs.

Six, region-to-region dynamism and cross-sector approaches to civic actions should be further encouraged and supported: The cross-sector approaches and region-region approaches initiated by citizens have garnered support, but even more should follow them as they identify and address the issues important to them. This points not only to flexible support mechanisms but also to the need to shift assumed networking targets and alliances away from a center to periphery approach and away from a primarily intra civic sector to intersectoral approach that will further build a broader set of engaged citizens around the country.

Finally, support a broad range of civic actions beyond traditional DG efforts, as strong civic structures of the future might be getting their base now: Data suggests little overt politically or DG focused ICA efforts but hints at the possibilities for more: Namely most ICAs appear to have been involved in 'apolitical' non-DG efforts even as donors also contend it is some of the very ICAs organizing for needs in their communities that may be the ones to 'push' local governments and political actors in the future. Hence activities that support the culture of citizen engagement and collective political or infra-political practices to attain a shared public good, particularly on the grassroots level, could help sustain the great mobilization potential of Ukrainian civil society. It would be strategic of donors to support such efforts to lay the foundations for people to be more political and take on active citizenship roles that deepen and expand civic actions and activism around the country.