

# **Civil Society Organisations in the Field of Mediation and Dialogue in Ukraine:**

Changes, Challenges and Trends  
after 24 February 2022

**(February 2022 to February 2023)**

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# Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Summary	6
Development of Mediation and Dialogue Facilitation Communities before February 2022	8
Overview of Trends	10
1. More initiatives to combat the impact of the war by retargeting commercial organisations to the social sphere	10
2. Emergence of new activity types to combat the impact of the war	12
3. Integration of psychological approaches (MHPSS) into conflict management	13
4. Involvement in volunteering and humanitarian response	14
5. Shift of the geographical focus from the east to the west, entire territory of Ukraine and abroad	15
6. Extended circle of beneficiaries due to vulnerable groups impacted by the war	16
7. Diversified sources of funding and new approaches to work with donors	17
8. Organisational capacity as a factor in an organisation's ability to withstand the crisis	18
Recommendations to Donors and International Organisations	20
References	21

# Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine has resulted in the large-scale mobilisation of civil society and rapid growth of local initiatives in the country. As a response to the challenges caused by the war, official and unofficial organisations have been created and an unprecedented number of Ukrainians have become engaged in volunteering and public work.

In order to help build a resilient society and facilitate post-war recovery in Ukraine, it is important to understand these changes, monitor the major trends and have a clear vision of the challenges faced by the professional communities in this field. A thorough study of how dialogue and mediation practitioners are doing today, how they have dealt with the challenges of war, and the nature of their core activities will help such practitioners and representatives of the donor community and international organisations working in Ukraine to better plan their work.

The **purpose** of this study was to identify changes and trends in the work of mediators and dialogue facilitators, their projects, initiatives and volunteering campaigns implemented in response to the invasion of Ukraine. The research team set out to identify the actors who worked before 24 February 2022 and new actors that have emerged since the invasion began, to get an overview of the conflict-related initiatives and projects undertaken since 24 February 2022, to monitor changes in the conflict-related activities, and to study the best practices and lessons learned in peacebuilding and conflict response on the part of Ukrainian mediators and facilitators since the onset of Russia's aggression.

In terms of the **methodological approaches**, the focus on dialogue and mediation means a clear understanding of these and related terms is required.

For the purpose of this study, dialogue is understood as 'facilitated dialogue' based on the concept developed by the Ukrainian facilitators in the document "Dialogue Standards: Definition and Principles." Facilitated dialogue is "a specially prepared group process that occurs with the help of a facilitator, with the aim of improving the understanding/relationships between participants, and possibly making decisions about common actions or conflict resolution in a way that provides equal opportunities for the participants of the meeting to express their opinions."<sup>1</sup>

For the purpose of this study, mediation means the "non-judicial voluntary, confidential and structured procedure during which the parties attempt to prevent or resolve a conflict (dispute) through negotiation with a help of a mediator (mediators)."<sup>2</sup>

Mediators and dialogue facilitators are experts in the field of mediation and dialogue who work in Ukraine as independent experts or for organisations, companies, associations, etc. The impact of the war in Ukraine on dialogue facilitators and mediators in Ukraine is the principal subject of this study.

Humanitarian response in the context of the war in Ukraine is a series of actions and interventions aimed at satisfying the needs of conflict-affected people. Examples of a humanitarian response in the context of the war in Ukraine include the provision of food, water, accommodation, medical aid and other necessary services to the affected population. Humanitarian response tools can also include psychosocial support, protection services, and assistance related to education and work.<sup>3</sup>

To achieve the study objectives, the research team used the hybrid **research method**, which combined desk and field research methods. The mapping of new initiatives, projects, approaches, cases, and practices in the field of mediation and dialogue was based on primary qualitative data collected through interviews, which were triangulated with secondary qualitative data from the available literature on the topic.

Key informant interviews were chosen as the main **method of primary data collection**. This approach encourages respondents to talk about important aspects of the work of their organisations and enables working assumptions to be verified with the option to ask additional follow-up questions. Also, the semi-structured interview method enables things that may have been initially omitted.

At the field stage from December 2022 until January 2023, the research team conducted sixteen interviews with representatives of organisations and companies that operate in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation.

**The sample of respondents** was derived from the previous studies and mappings in this field, including the following documents: "Mapping of Dialogue and Peacebuilding Organisations and Initiatives in Ukraine"<sup>4</sup> that covered the time period

1 Dialogue Standards: Definition and Principles (IPCG, 2018), available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JN3QRE8EXU5D1FvY3Go1H19ZvRNHNxAo/view>

2 Law of Ukraine "On Mediation", Article 1, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1875-20#Text>

3 <https://web.archive.org/web/20171102215158/http://www.globalhumanitarianassistance.org/data-guides/defining-humanitarian-aid>

4 Mapping of Dialogue and Peacebuilding Organisations and Initiatives in Ukraine. Scientific and Practical Edition / Tetiana Kyselova, Andrii Moseiko. — Kyiv, 2021. — 57 p. [https://civilmplus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Dialogovi\\_aktori\\_en.pdf](https://civilmplus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Dialogovi_aktori_en.pdf)



before February 2022, and public statement “Seven Points on the War and Dialogue from Ukrainian Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators,”<sup>5</sup> which were signed by many (although not all) organisations working in this field after February 2022. While sampling respondents from the general population,

the authors of the study considered criteria such as the geographic location, year of establishment and size of the respondent’s organisation, as well as its key beneficiaries. To achieve maximum diversity of respondents, the snowball sampling method was used in some cases.



Figure 1. Respondents of the study

The **methodological limitations** of this study should be taken into account. Firstly, although the research team did its best to obtain the most diverse data in the field of mediation and dialogue in Ukraine after 24 February 2022 and tried to engage different respondent categories from the dialogue and mediation community, the study sample is not representative. The answers given by the respondents do not represent all actors engaged in dialogue facilitation and mediation in Ukraine, but they do enable the major trends and changes in the field that have occurred since 24 February 2022 to be identified. Secondly, the surge in activity since the beginning of the invasion makes the study of any aspect of civil society more difficult when it comes to

identifying new initiatives. This means that it is likely that a number of completely new actors who have not yet joined the communities may have fallen out of the focus of the study. Thirdly, the high level of volunteering and flexible voluntary initiatives in tandem with the dynamic context can quickly render the findings outdated and less practically applicable. Keep in mind that the field research was conducted in December 2022 and January 2023, while the primary data was analysed in February 2023. Any new changes that are highly likely to occur after these dates may have a strong impact on the landscape of the field under study and should be considered separately.

5 Public statement “Seven Points on the War and Dialogue from Ukrainian Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators”, — Kyiv, 2022. [https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Public\\_Statement\\_War\\_and\\_Dialogue\\_Ukraine\\_ENG.pdf](https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Public_Statement_War_and_Dialogue_Ukraine_ENG.pdf)

# Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine the changes and trends in the work of organisations in the field of mediation and dialogue in Ukraine at the central and local levels after 24 February 2022. The study considers the impact of the Russian aggression on the existing and planned activities of the organisations under study, the emergence of new activity types and actors in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation, and key changes in this field in general. The study was conducted via the qualitative approach, including semi-structured interviews and a desk review. The study sample included sixteen key informants work in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation in Ukraine.

The following trends regarding the work of mediators and dialogue facilitators after February 2022 were identified by the study:

## 1. More initiatives to combat the impact of the war by retargeting commercial organisations to the social sphere.

- Some convergence of the fields of dialogue and mediation, particularly in the political and international realms.
- Reduced scope of commercial training and education services and transition to pro bono services.
- Transition to pro bono mediation services, namely in the field of family mediation
- Reorientation of activities towards the social sphere.
- Expanded range of pro bono services by including legal and psychological expertise.
- Expanded range of commercial and pro bono services through work with individuals, including coaching, supervision and consulting services.

## 2. Emergence of new activity types to combat the impact of the war

- Work at the international level to promote new approaches to dialogue and peacebuilding in view of Russia's aggression against Ukraine.
- Work of mediator and psychologist mobile teams.
- Family crisis mediation during the war.
- Analysis of narratives on social media, and information campaigns to support unifying narratives.
- Enhancing public participation in decision-making on post-conflict justice and recovery (inclusive recovery).

- More work on conflict analysis with the engagement of professional mediators and dialogue facilitators.

## 3. Integration of psychological approaches (MHPSS) into conflict management

- Importance of a trauma-informed approach to work with people at the local level.
- Importance of supporting the development and introduction of new context-specific methodologies and approaches that combine MHPSS and conflict management.
- Importance of self-help and recovery skills for mediators and facilitators.

## 4. Involvement in volunteering and humanitarian response

- Personal participation in the evacuation of people from dangerous zones and provision of humanitarian assistance to people in the occupied territories associated with the risk to life.
- Individual financial assistance and assistance by “action” to people and the army.
- Restructuring of donor projects to provide humanitarian assistance to the public.
- Volunteer initiatives by individuals and organisations to provide professional services to the war-affected population.
- Gender-sensitive approach to the response.

## 5. Shift of the geographical focus from the east to the west, entire territory of Ukraine and abroad

- Inability to work in the occupied communities in the east and south of the country or in the area of active hostilities.
- New geographical focus of work — the west of Ukraine.
- New geographical focus — abroad. Importance of paying attention to the liberated territories.

## 6. Extended circle of beneficiaries due to vulnerable groups affected by the war

- Shift of the focus from communities to individuals.
- Authorities as a beneficiary in need of conflict management and other assistance.
- Emergence of new beneficiaries — certain groups of the population that have been most impacted by the invasion (IDPs,



residents of the newly liberated territories, persons with disabilities, military personnel, persons discharged from military service, persons released from captivity and families of captives, families separated as a result of displacement, volunteers, etc.).

#### **7. Diversified sources of funding and new approaches to work with donors**

- Since February 2022, the importance of donor flexibility and understanding of the situation has increased.
- Attempts of organisations that used to operate on a commercial basis to obtain grants or donor support for the first time.
- Entry of new donors and international organisations that had not worked in Ukraine before February 2022.
- Considerable increase in the scope of volunteering both at the individual level

and among organisations.

- Importance of quality assurance in dialogue processes and mediation services as well as the adoption of professional approaches to this field.

#### **8. Organisational capacity as a factor in an organisation's ability to withstand the crisis**

- Organisations with a strong and sustainable structure before the war were better prepared to deal with the new challenges and adapt their activities to the shifting environment.
- Organisations located in Kyiv were better placed to respond to the challenges.
- Organisations with a weak organisational structure and those located in the regions of their work were in the most difficult situation.



# Development of Mediation and Dialogue Facilitation Communities before February 2022

The work of the mediation community has been directed at the institutionalisation of mediation in Ukraine since the middle of the 1990s. It has included campaigns to raise awareness about mediation in the mass media; mediator professional training and certification programmes; awareness-raising events about mediation for the general public; the development and practical implementation of mediation programmes on a peer-to-peer basis in schools as well as mediation programmes in criminal cases (restorative justice), commercial, family, labour, tax and administrative disputes; the creation of strategic alliances with stakeholders in the field of mediation; the inclusion of mediation in academic programmes at universities; the standardisation and quality control of mediation training and practice in communities. Mediators have had great success in developing training programmes on basic mediation skills, family mediation, mediation competency for managers, interest-based negotiation, etc. As of the date of the report, there were several national mediator associations and around two dozen mediation training centres and providers in Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv, Vinnytsia, Mykolaiv, Poltava and other oblasts (regions). Ultimately, few civil society groups or even established experts can boast that they have adopted a law that regulates and legitimises their own activities. In 2021, Ukrainian mediators promoted the adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On Mediation” by the Verkhovna Rada. Ukrainian mediators have always been good at working together and regulating their profession. The National Association of Mediators of Ukraine introduced the Ethical Code of Mediators and the Principles of Basic Mediation Training, which have been jointly developed and supported by many mediators and mediation organisations in Ukraine and are the basis for a professional identity<sup>6</sup>.

According to one study, from the beginning of the 1990s until the start of the war in 2014, more than 3,000 Ukrainians completed professional educational courses with a duration between 24

and 220 hours and obtained certificates issued by mediator training centres<sup>7</sup>. According to our estimates, between 2014 and 2022 more than 10,000 people were professionally trained to practice mediation in accordance with the legislation.

Contrary to mediators, whose history as a professional community began at the end of the 1990s, dialogue facilitators emerged in Ukraine in response to the challenges thrown up by the war, although some experts have been practising dialogue facilitation in Ukraine since the beginning of the 1990s. By 2018, the professional facilitator community had laid down its understanding of dialogue in the document “Standards of Dialogue: Definition and Principles”<sup>8</sup>, which became a powerful driver of dialogue processes in Ukraine. A study of dialogues conducted by the Mediation and Dialogue Research Centre at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy identified 157 facilitated dialogues conducted by 66 organisations in Ukraine from 2014 to 2018, with ten organisations responsible for two thirds of all dialogues in Ukraine<sup>9</sup>. 90% of those dialogues were with Ukrainians living in the government-controlled areas of Ukraine. A small proportion of the dialogues were conducted over the contact line, but these created major safety risks and were mostly conducted “undercover”.

The political environment in terms of peacebuilding in the first phase of the war (2014 to 2021) was extremely complex. The terms “peace” and “peacebuilding” in Ukraine had controversial interpretations, from “peace through military victory” to “peace as treason”<sup>10</sup>.

From April to December 2021, Ukrainian mediators and dialogue facilitators initiated the process of inclusive dialogue with civil society to develop the first declarative statement and conceptual framework for peacebuilding in Ukraine. The conceptual framework introduced a red line for Ukrainian peacemakers — the purpose of the restoration of independence and territorial integrity

6 <http://namu.com.ua/>

7 Professional Peacemakers in Ukraine: Mediators and Facilitators before and after 2014”, Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal, vol. 3, 2017, pp. 117-136, <http://kmlpj.ukma.edu.ua/article/view/120119/115078>

8 Standards of Dialogue: Definition and Principles, IPCG, (2018), [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JN3QRE8EXU5D1FvY3Go1H19ZvRNH\\_NxAo/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1JN3QRE8EXU5D1FvY3Go1H19ZvRNH_NxAo/view)

9 Kyselova, «Understanding Dialogue: Survey-Based Study», p 22. <https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Understanding-Dialogue-Report-2018-eng.pdf>

10 Mapping Civil Society p 16-17, <https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ENG-Ukraine-Mapping-Civil-Society-Report-2019.pdf>





of Ukraine, and effectively defined peacebuilding in reference to social cohesion and resilience<sup>11</sup>. The conceptual framework was a basis for the mandate of the governmental institution Ukrainian National Centre for Peacebuilding<sup>12</sup>. However, Russia's invasion in February 2022 led to a suspension of all the above-mentioned peacebuilding efforts.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://uncp.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/konceptualni-zasady-polityky-rozbudovy-myr-u-ukrai%C8%8ni-ta-slovnyk-terminiv.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://uncp.gov.ua/>



# Overview of Trends

Russia's invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 impacted all areas of civil society, including peacebuilding, mediation and dialogue facilitation. All the study respondents said that the work of their organisations, as well as of their partners and donors, was materially affected, with either the partial suspension or cancellation of certain activities or total transformation of their work. The full-scale crisis and sudden emergence of needs that required an immediate response led to the creation of a range of new initiatives, which were often very different to those previously implemented by such organisations. Changes in operational formats also affected commercial organisations, which had to adapt to the new environment and change how they search for and interact with clients.

In addition to the impact on the work of organisations, the war has been a big test of the resilience of dialogue facilitators and mediators. Abrupt changes to priorities resulted in reduced funding in some areas or suddenly made it more difficult to provide financial support for existing or planned projects. Organisations with non-diversified funding sources faced hardship. The displacement of some employees and representatives to other regions of Ukraine or abroad tested the resilience of many actors in the field. Martial law and mobilisation also resulted in some organisations losing staff members, which significantly decreased their ability to operate efficiently.

Between 2014 and February 2022, many organisations working in the field of mediation and dialogue in Ukraine refocused their work on the communities in the eastern regions of the country (Donetsk, Luhansk and Kherson oblasts), which became inaccessible after the Russian invasion, thus preventing their further work or leading to the destruction of the results of many years of work.

At the same time, the study respondents noted that many organisations were able to promptly adapt to the new situation on the ground, transfer their work online and find the resources to quickly respond to the new challenges faced by Ukrainian society after the start of the war. Donor flexibility and the unprecedented level of volunteering among the general public were especially important. In addition to conflict and tension management in the communities, the humanitarian response became an integral part of the work of both individual actors and entire organisations who had previously been working in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation.

An analysis of the interviews with key actors and desk review of changes in the field enabled the research team to identify eight main trends in the work of dialogue facilitators and mediators in Ukraine. These trends show the main challenges faced by organisations in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation since the start of the invasion. Their order below is of no importance.

## 1. More initiatives to combat the impact of the war by retargeting commercial organisations to the social sphere

Before February 2022, most of the mediation organisations were providing commercial services to train people on mediation, negotiation, efficient communication skills, etc., as well as commercial mediation and negotiation services related to business, family, labour, finances and other conflicts. A separate area of focus included the development of school mediation and restorative justice in work with minors in the field of criminal justice.

Paid services in the field of dialogue were not common before February 2022; most work was funded by donor grants (training sessions on communication, dialogue, non-violent communication skills, etc., the design and facilitation of dialogue processes and post-dialogue support in the communities, central and local authorities, the institutionalisation of dialogue at the community or civil service level, etc.).

A separate activity type in the field of mediation and dialogue included the promotion of

the culture of dialogue and the advocacy of mediation and dialogue for the general public, professional communities and governmental authorities. The institutionalisation of services was underway in the field of mediation (adoption of the Law "On Mediation" and other regulations). Both communities — mediators and dialogue facilitators — created their identity by acquiring and disseminating professional context-specific knowledge and documents (standard practices and training, ethical codes, etc.), as well as new working techniques and tools.

The changes identified by this study after February 2022 can be grouped as follows.

### 1. Some convergence of the fields of dialogue and mediation, particularly in the political and international realms

Whilst from 2014 to 2021 some NGOs dealt with the impact of the conflict in the eastern part of the country and others worked without



material changes, the study demonstrates that professional communities in Ukraine can no longer work outside the context of war, and mediator communities have now transitioned to work associated with the impact of the war.

## 2. Reduced scope of commercial training and education services and transition to pro bono services

After February 2022, the respondents noted that it was difficult to find new clients both for training and mediation services. Although the main large mediation providers have managed to retain their market and have continued to offer commercial group training sessions, even major organisations have experienced a decrease in volumes, and medium-sized and small organisations are no longer providing commercial training services due to lack of demand. However, every single mediator and dialogue facilitator organisation has introduced pro bono events, courses and support groups for their colleagues and the public, thereby shifting the focus to the social sphere.

## 3. Transition to pro bono mediation services, namely in the field of family mediation

As for mediation, the reduced demand for business mediation and suspension of existing cases has forced organisations to revise their strategy and intensify their search for new clients and ultimately to provide pro bono mediation services. An example is a family mediation. After the invasion was launched, family mediators from different organisations joined their efforts as volunteers (around fifty mediators) and began to provide online family mediation services to resolve conflicts resulting from the impact of the war. Due to the displacement of millions of people abroad (most of them being women and children), mobilisation into the Armed Forces of Ukraine, which affected predominantly the male population, and internal displacement, families were physically separated, resulting in the start of an irreversible process of family collapse and societal degradation at the family level. Family mediators developed and began to practice a unique crisis mediation technique adapted to wartime. Such mediation cases have been gaining popularity, and are often held online.

## 4. Reorientation of activities to the social sphere

Many commercial organisations have started to work in the social sphere. The Russian invasion and general invigoration of the volunteer movement and activism in the country has

led to a growing need among the public for assistance and support, which has forced business organisations to change their strategy and work in the social sphere to meet the needs of the people.

“

The priorities changed considerably after the invasion. The social sphere has emerged.

## 5. Expanded range of pro bono services by including legal and psychological expertise

Many mediators are also lawyers (and attorneys) or psychologists. They are now combining these professional skills in their work with IDPs and hosting communities, advising IDPs on legal or social issues, and providing psychological or other consultations.

“

We provide legal aid to residents of the occupied and de-occupied territories. We have also joined the board of volunteers in Kharkiv Oblast.

## 6. Expanded range of commercial and pro bono services through work with individuals, including coaching, supervision and consulting services.

“

“We have introduced consulting, coaching, and negotiation... because there is no demand for mediation now.”

“

“Supervisory support has established itself as a separate fee-based commercial product.”

## 7. Introduction of recovery activities for the professional community, mostly on a free-of-charge basis

Due to the high level of permanent stress caused by the war and the fact that many mediators and dialogue facilitators were active volunteers, especially during the first days of the war, both in their professional capacity and as public activists, support for their community colleagues gained importance. Psychological support groups, empathy meetings to share experience, professional supervision and intervention events held by mediators/facilitators for their colleagues have become a common thing in the communities. Such events are generally free-of-charge, but donor support is raised in some cases.

## 2. Emergence of new activity types to combat the impact of the war

Since February 2022, mediators and dialogue facilitators have been looking for new work formats and approaches that would take into account the new reality of war in Ukraine. New approaches have emerged to professional work targeted at helping specific social groups impacted by the war — IDPs, families of refugees, children and youth, veterans, etc.

### 1. Work at the international level to promote new approaches to dialogue and peacebuilding in view of Russia's aggression against Ukraine

Whereas Ukrainian mediators and dialogue facilitators did not have separate agency and did not risk entering the field of political conflict management before February 2022, they took some steps in that direction after the invasion. Numerous communities of mediators and dialogue facilitators, which had existed “on their own” before February 2022, are now communicating with one another. There are some signs that Ukrainian mediators and facilitators are obtaining agency in the international arena in the first place, among international conflict management experts. The attempt to assert themselves and the challenges in the field of dialogue in public at the international level was notorious. For instance, the public statement “Seven Points on the War and Dialogue from Ukrainian Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators”<sup>13</sup> signed by mediators and dialogue facilitators was published in May 2022.

### 2. Work of mediator and psychologist mobile teams

In March 2022, soon after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Ukrainian mediators and dialogue facilitators noted the need to integrate the approaches of mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) into conflict management among IDPs, in hosting communities, and among activists and volunteers who provided humanitarian and other aid to IDPs. The combination of both approaches led to the generation of sustainable results and the shift from the emergency response targeted at individual needs to development strategies focused on community needs.

The mobile team methodology was developed to apply the integrated MHPSS/conflict management approach. The model can be

summarised as follows: mobile teams study the needs of IDPs for psychological and conflict management services, analyse conflicts on-site (in shelters, humanitarian centres, other locations where IDPs gather) and develop respective interventions, including individual and group psychological consultations, psychological first aid, support groups, mediation, dialogue, educational and cultural integration events, consultations on legal and social matters, etc. An experienced supervision team supports the mobile teams on-site with guidance, training, intervision and supervision.

From April to December 2022, there were nine mobile teams in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, Ternopil, Rivne, Stryi, Uzhhorod and Mukachevo. The mobile teams provided their services to more than 8,000 people, including IDPs, the administration of shelters, activists and volunteers. Most beneficiaries were women. This work was supported by various donors.<sup>14</sup>

### 3. Family crisis mediation during the war

Families and communities are experiencing aggression and hatred due to fear, anxiety and helplessness. Although anger can be a mechanism for overcoming the impact of war, it can also result in a collapse of relationships. It leads to conflict, more domestic violence, accompanied by estrangement, social withdrawal and loneliness. Many families are now separated (most people who have left the country are women and children), and experiencing significant stress. The volunteer initiative “Family Mediation in the Time of War” was launched in July 2022. Fifty expert mediators developed a unique crisis mediation technique and provided mediation services to 498 persons in 161 cases, including 125 children. Most conflicts were associated with divorce, including issues related to children, alimony, the maintenance of relationships after divorce; division of property between relatives, conflicts between generations of relatives, and conflicts within internally displaced families. Most importantly, volunteers are developing a public policy in partnership with the public authorities — the Social Service for Children's Affairs. As of now, this initiative is being implemented on a voluntary basis, and mediators are not paid for their work.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> [https://peacefulchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Public\\_Statement\\_War\\_and\\_Dialogue\\_Ukraine\\_UKR.pdf](https://peacefulchange.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Public_Statement_War_and_Dialogue_Ukraine_UKR.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Four teams were supported by the EU project National Platform for Resilience and Social Cohesion and implemented by the mediator and dialogue facilitator community <http://mg.national-platform.org/>; the other five teams were supported by the Ukraine Confidence-Building Initiative III (UCBI III) and implemented by the Ukrainian NGO Lviv Mediation Centre and Danish Refugee Council, [https://www.pro-drc.ngo/media/1udjbn3/june\\_drc-ukraine\\_newsletter.pdf](https://www.pro-drc.ngo/media/1udjbn3/june_drc-ukraine_newsletter.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> League of Mediators of Ukraine, <http://limu.org.ua/en/news/za-mizhnarodnoyi-pidtrimki-ligha-mediatoriv-ukrayini-rozpochala-robotu-v-proiekti-simieina-miediatsiia-v-period-viini>

#### 4. Analysis of narratives on social media, and information campaigns to support unifying narratives

This activity is new for mediators and dialogue facilitators: it was launched in February 2022 as the response of experts to the tendency towards conflict within Ukrainian society, which, along with the opposing trends of social cohesion and resilience, has intensified in Ukrainian society. The information campaign is focused on demonstrating compassion and cooperation during the war through the personal stories of people, creating unifying narratives society can get behind. The information campaign has been seen by around twenty million social media users.<sup>16</sup>

#### 5. Enhancing public participation in decision-making on post-conflict justice and recovery (inclusive recovery)

Before February 2022, dialogues in communities were common and supported by donors, particularly in east Ukraine. The use of dialogue to strengthen the people's voice in the communities and to engage them in decision-making processes was common practice, but it gained more relevance after February 2022 in respect of the restoration and development

of infrastructure in the communities affected by Russian shelling. Dialogue should also be used to develop country recovery policies at the level of central authorities. In the same way, the approaches of restorative justice, mediation and dialogue as well as other non-judicial transitional justice mechanisms should be a part of transitional justice in Ukraine. This will ensure that public policy takes into consideration the opinions of people most affected by the war. Such projects are now being launched, and whilst it is too early to talk about the results, this activity obviously requires support.

#### 6. More work on conflict analysis with the engagement of professional mediators and dialogue facilitators

Whilst before February 2022, mediators and dialogue facilitators commonly performed analytical activities such as surveys, conflict analyses, stakeholder and conflict analyses, etc., there was a big step up in these activities following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. There is a high demand in international humanitarian and peacebuilding organisations for context-specific expertise related to Ukrainian society, which is now offered by Ukrainian mediators and dialogue facilitators.

### 3. Integration of psychological approaches (MHPSS) into conflict management

The challenges of the war have resulted in a higher demand for mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS). The MHPSS approaches have been integrated at different levels of work in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation in Ukraine.

#### 1. Importance of a trauma-informed approach to work with people at the local level

According to the study respondents, trauma-focused work is the most in-demand activity type; every expert who provides person-to-person services must be trained up, have psychological first aid skills and possess the ability to identify acute psychological conditions requiring emergency aid. That is why the MHPSS approaches must be applied at all levels of work involving direct communication between people. The demand for such work will only grow, and experts need to be ready. Therefore, mediators and dialogue facilitators established contacts with their colleagues from other countries during the first days of the invasion and held training sessions on trauma-focused work. Such advanced training must be conducted on a regular basis and requires donor support.

#### 2. Importance of supporting the development and introduction of new context-specific methodologies and approaches that combine MHPSS and conflict management work

Over the course of the past year such methodologies have been developed by Ukrainian experts, such as the work of mobile mediator and psychologist teams with IDPs and hosting communities, the work of family mediators in the field of family crisis mediation in wartime. However, donors do not always understand the importance of this work, and they prioritise providing aid to the public over the development of methodologies in wartime. However, the quality of the services provided to the public in sensitive fields such as relations between people is directly dependent on the professional skills of mediators and facilitators and the quality of the methodological support they obtain from their colleagues.

#### 3. Importance of self-help and recovery skills for mediators and facilitators

The unprecedented pressure experienced by dialogue and mediation experts has resulted in burnout, secondary trauma and emotional fatigue. Most experts have therefore emphasised



the importance of self-care and the integration of preventive MHPSS into regular work. Group, and to a greater extent, individual consultations, training sessions, supervision and recovery practices play a key role in maintaining the resilience of experts.

“Our needs, supervision support is a must now. [This war is] a relatively new experience. Therapeutic support for mediators is vital. We need to take care of the community.”

“I can start helping others after I have helped myself.”

The respondents also mentioned the importance of a trauma-informed approach by the donor community. The high workload of experts and their desire “to help everyone” can have severe midterm effects, so more attention should be paid to recovery and healthy communication at this stage, and a more flexible approach taken to work.

#### 4. Involvement in volunteering and humanitarian response

The work of organisations working in the field of dialogue and mediation has changed as a result of the invasion of Ukraine. Every single respondent and all of their organisations have been and are still involved in the humanitarian response to the war.

“We have not officially started implementing humanitarian projects, but our colleagues have launched some of their own humanitarian initiatives.”

##### 1. Personal participation in the evacuation of people from dangerous zones and provision of humanitarian assistance to people in the occupied territories associated with a risk to life

During the first weeks and months of the invasion, some of the dialogue facilitators found themselves in close proximity to the hostilities and demonstrated courage and compassion by organising the evacuation of residents from communities in the east and north of Ukraine, including in and around Kyiv, consulting for Ukrainian activists, delivering humanitarian assistance to the communities despite the safety risks, and staying in bomb shelters together with elderly people and children.

##### 3. Restructuring of donor projects to provide humanitarian assistance to the public

Some of the surveyed mediators and dialogue facilitator organisations managed to promptly negotiate with donors and reallocate funds which were already on the organisations’ accounts for specific projects (education, dialogue, advocacy, etc.), earmarked for the provision of humanitarian assistance to people in the communities with which those organisations worked before February 2022.

##### 2. Individual financial assistance and assistance by “action” to people and the army

During the first months of the war, most study respondents provided humanitarian assistance, namely financial support to IDPs and the army, and made personal donations. A group of female dialogue facilitators organised a baking workshop for the military and a workshop for making uniforms and other important items for the Ukrainian army. However, this was not the principal activity of any of the surveyed organisations. Some organisations and individual experts are continuing to provide regular financial support to the Ukrainian Armed Forces or communities with which they have worked before or have personal connections.

##### 4. Individual and volunteer initiatives to provide professional services to the war-affected population related to organisational matters

Submission of grant applications, coordination and facilitation of volunteer group work, organisation of support groups, etc. Some experts performed this work in addition to their main workload, mostly upon request of their personal contacts or as a result of changed circumstances, such as moving to a new location.

“I personally help local IDP organisations from Avdiivka and Druzhkivka to implement recovery programmes.”

“I worked in Ukrainian House in Warsaw in addition to organisational projects. I facilitated the Club of Ukrainian Women and held offline workshops for the female community in Warsaw.”



## 5. Organisational volunteer initiatives to render professional services to the public

After February 2022, entire mediator and dialogue facilitator organisations began to launch volunteer initiatives such as “Family Mediation in the Time of War”, work with teenagers and children, etc.

## 6. Gender-sensitive approach to the response

The initiatives outlined in this report clearly fall within the scope of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda as outlined in the Ukrainian National Plan for WPS. All the target groups that are covered by the MHPSS and conflict resolution support programmes comprise vulnerable groups including elderly women and girls, young people, IDPs, female

volunteers and others. Most of the mediation and dialogue organisations that offer these initiatives are Women-led Organisations (WLO) or organisations that comprise mostly women. For example, out of the 27 NGOs who signed the public statement “Seven Points on the War and Dialogue”, all 27 are led by women; of the 20 persons working in 9 mobile teams of psychologists and mediators, there are only 2 men. 40% of the mediators and psychologists working in mobile teams are also IDPs themselves. The initiatives described in this report are also focused on the participation of people in the development and implementation of public policies, which is emphasised by the WPS agenda.

## 5. Shift of the geographical focus from the east to the west, entire territory of Ukraine and abroad

The shift of the geographical focus was expected. A number of representatives of facilitation and mediation organisations moved to other cities within Ukraine (mostly to western regions) or left Ukraine entirely. In many cases, this has had a negative impact on the capacity of their organisations, but at the same time has also created new opportunities.

### 1. Inability to work in the occupied communities in the east and north of the country or in the area of active hostilities

The changes caused by the outflow of people from the communities in the east and south of Ukraine have rendered it impossible to continue work in these regions.

“

The focus has shifted. A large number of interventions in the TOT [temporarily occupied territories – A.K.] were suspended. Many cases in Mariupol and Sievierodonetsk were suspended. Restorative justice was terminated, as the project is no longer relevant. We have suspended and changed the format of other projects, and are continuing our work.

“

We cannot continue our work at our previous locations, and we are retargeting our work in response to requests from individual communities.

One of the study respondents regretted that the invasion had not only hindered further work in some communities in the east and south, but

also led to the destruction of the results of many years of work.

“

The geographical focus of our work changed considerably. Earlier, I mostly worked in the east. Now I am working with religious communities in the west, where there is more work. Ternopil, Khmelnytskyi.

### 2. New geographical focus of work – the west of Ukraine

New and potential tensions in the west of Ukraine in connection with the internal displacement of a large number of people into those regions and the physical presence of experts in these regions have created a new large working field.

“

I evacuated to Chernivtsi and found work there.

Some experts note that while the geographic focus of the work of mediators and dialogue facilitators is shifting from the east to the west based on beneficiary needs and expert capacities, **attention has been drawn away from the centre of Ukraine and de-occupied northern territories**, which are characterised by a high demand for peacebuilding professional services.

### 3. New geographical focus – abroad

Along with the change of the geographical focus within the country, the study identified the trend of relocation and augmentation of the work of communities abroad, and namely



to EU countries. Experts who have left for other countries because of the war have found their vocation working with displaced Ukrainians and hosting communities.



Some of our colleagues abroad help refugees by supporting meetings and resolving conflicts between the locals and refugees.

Such work is of importance both for the experts and the communities that host Ukrainians. The opportunity to quickly resume their professional activity enables the experts to adapt to their new situation while conflict resolution between Ukrainians and work with tensions in hosting communities is important for the reputation of Ukrainians in the EU and their further support.



There is a lot of work abroad as well, including managing conflicts between IDPs. We must hold negotiations not only with people who have provided accommodation to Ukrainians, but also with the wider community; otherwise, our support abroad will weaken.

Another aspect of the foreign geographic focus is community care of its members. Many experts who have found themselves abroad need psychological support and assistance in finding a job, adapting and studying the language. Online support groups for those working in

the field of mediation, dialogue and conflict management have been established to meet these needs.



Our non-project work has expanded to the countries to which members of our association have moved. We are trying to support our colleagues there and help resolve conflict where Ukrainians are involved.

This speaks to the extraterritorial nature of Ukrainian civil society, which has maintained its momentum despite the geographical shift and is involved in on-site and online work, along with community care of its members.

#### 4. Importance of paying attention to the liberated territories

The respondents noted that, despite the numerous monitoring reports on the liberated territories, before starting comprehensive practical work with these territories, studies and conflict analyses are required to develop potential interventions aimed at supporting the resilience and cohesion of the public in these territories, taking into consideration sensitive matters such as culpability for collaborating with the enemy, different political views, etc. Due to the specific nature of work in the liberated territories, it is important to revise and adapt the available methodologies and approaches.

## 6. Extended circle of beneficiaries due to vulnerable groups impacted by the war

The invasion has impacted not only the geographical focus and work of mediation and dialogue facilitation organisations, but also the beneficiaries of projects and initiatives. As a result of the new circumstances, needs and demands, organisations and individual experts are shifting their focus to new beneficiaries.

### 1. Shift of the focus from communities to individuals

During the first months of the war, the considerable displacement of the population and loss of integrity of the communities with which civil society organisations could work led to a shift of focus from communities to individuals. Individual work became more relevant and sustainable.



We used to focus on the community, but now we are more connected to individuals. People move around. The community is very unstable now while people are experts.



If there is no demand formulated by the community, we can work with individuals to provide them with resources. There are more people with individual needs and fewer “activists” because they are busy now.

### 2. Authorities as a beneficiary in need of conflict management and other assistance

The nature of the work carried out by military civil administrations and extraordinary growth of engagement of local authorities during the first months of the war resulted in the cancellation of numerous projects in the field and reduced cooperation with the local authorities. This, however, was mostly related to projects implemented before 24 February 2022. Some respondents noted that when the geographical focus of their work was shifted to the west of Ukraine, they tried to liaise



with the local authorities, but formats were different, and local authorities became indirect beneficiaries of the experts' work.

After the first months of the war, there was high demand from local authorities for work in the conflict areas related to the war such as population displacement. This included integration, social tension and languages.

“We not only hold dialogues, but also implement educational initiatives. We have provided training to a large number of civil servants and local authorities, which provides a good entry point to the community. This is how we found out about language and identity-based conflicts, and we immediately set to work on their resolution.”

- 3. **Emergence of new beneficiaries – certain groups of the population that have been most impacted by the invasion (IDPs, residents of the liberated territories, persons**

**with disabilities, military personnel, persons discharged from military service, persons released from captivity and families of captives, families separated as a result of displacement, volunteers)**

Although dialogue facilitators had been working with war-affected groups of the population for more than eight years, such groups were new for mediators. The most common new beneficiaries of mediators were IDPs in the west of Ukraine, residents of the liberated territories, persons with disabilities, military personnel, persons discharged from military service, persons released from captivity and families of captives as well as families separated as a result of displacement. A new interesting category of beneficiaries was “active citizens” – participants of numerous new local civil society initiatives which emerged after the initial shock of the war, and those who developed a crisis of identity because of the war and grew interested in social and political issues.

## 7. Diversified sources of funding and new approaches to work with donors

- 1. **Since February 2022, the importance of donor flexibility and understanding of the situation has increased**

The study also found that some organisations had urged the donor community to be more flexible and understanding during the entire period of the war since compromises and flexibility during the first months of the war later turned into stricter reporting requirements.

“It would be good if donors were more accessible. Simplifying liaison will enable smaller organisations to also benefit from donor support. [It is necessary] to simplify how we liaise with donors.”

According to the study, no unified trend was identified with regard to the flexibility of donors and speed of project adaptation to the war time context. Some donors were flexible and quick, while others, according to the respondents,

“hid from their grantees and were not reachable, in anticipation that Ukraine would be captured by the Russian army.”

- 2. **Attempts of organisations that used to operate on a commercial basis to obtain grants or donor support for the first time**

This is based not only on the emergence of new activity types carried out on a voluntary basis in the social sphere, but also the need to maintain business resilience.

“I tried to fundraise [...]. Our current goal is to retain business, to support our staff and ensure they keep their jobs.”

- 3. **Entry of new donors and international organisations that had not worked in Ukraine before February 2022**

Some respondents pointed to the emergence of new sources of funding and new donors. On the one hand, this creates more opportunities to support important initiatives, but on the other, it creates additional factors for growing competition, which is already there. Many respondents were also concerned that the inflow of new funds would be beneficial only for better-known organisations and those located in the capital.





Donor funds change the entire landscape. For instance, there have been practically no [donors] in Poltava Oblast. There are lots of donors in the region now, and competition is growing. Donors cannot find qualified staff, which creates a number of risks. Knowledge of English is vital, which is a big barrier for many experts.

#### 4. Considerable increase in the scope of volunteering both at the individual level and among organisations

As many experts work free-of-charge, this can help to satisfy the needs of targeted communities quickly, with no time wasted on red-tape or long-term approvals. However, this can have negative mid-term effects, since financial resources have to be raised sooner or later while the risk of professional burnout is higher.



Donors do not see many things we do. Many things can be included in “project activities”. Many initiatives and activities are identified along the way, and they need to be supported. Such work is valuable, but hard to measure, so no resources are allocated to it.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has materially affected the financial stability of dialogue and mediation organisations. They have responded to these challenges in different ways, including by postponing the implementation of projects, looking for alternative sources of income and new sources of funding. The growth of volunteering is a positive phenomenon, but the

risk of professional burnout is of great concern. The donor community must remain flexible and understanding in order to ensure the long-term resilience of organisations in the field of dialogue and mediation.

#### 5. Importance of quality assurance in dialogue processes and mediation services as well as the adoption of professional approaches to this field

The growing number of new actors that have transitioned from related fields has resulted in greater competition for donor funding. The study obtained ambiguous data from the respondents on whether funding for mediation and dialogue was increasing or decreasing. On the one hand, as new funds enter Ukraine, funding of dialogue and conflict resolution is expected to go up. On the other hand, respondents opined that, due to the focus of international assistance on the humanitarian response, there was less funding for peacebuilding activities, while the demand for conflict management remained high, which resulted in greater competition among organisations in that field.



Competition has grown because there are fewer projects. There are people working in facilitation who were not part of the community, human rights defenders who have turned into facilitators.

Both statements mean that it is important to quality assure and take a professional approach to dialogue, mediation and any other means of conflict resolution, conflict management and peacebuilding.

### 8. Organisational capacity as a factor in an organisation’s ability to withstand the crisis

The war in Ukraine has thrown up major challenges in the field of mediation and dialogue by impacting the ability of organisations to implement their projects.



According to the respondents, organisations lost 0 to 58% (average of 19%) of their staff due to them moving abroad.

The research team studied how organisations had adapted to the challenges, and how organisational capacity had become a factor in an organisation’s ability to withstand the crisis.

#### 1. Organisations with a strong and sustainable structure before the conflict were better prepared to take on the new challenges and adapt their activities to the shifting environment

Such organisations benefited from the changes in the sector and even expanded their activities.



**2. Organisations located in Kyiv were better placed to respond to the challenges**

These organisations had better access to donors and were better able to liaise with them. As a result, they benefited more from the changes and adapted their projects.

**3. Organisations with a weak organisational structure and those located in the regions of their work were in the most difficult situation**

They had to considerably reduce, freeze or even terminate their activities due to a lack of resources and support.

In response to the invasion, organisations need to focus on their organisational structure if they are to withstand the crisis and continue working on projects. This is the key factor in terms of adapting to the shifting circumstances.



# Recommendations to Donors and International Organisations

## 1. Importance of covering the entire territory of Ukraine to increase the level of social cohesion and resilience

The purpose of mediation and dialogue is to increase social cohesion and resilience in Ukraine, meaning work should be performed over the entire territory of Ukraine. Conflict response analyses by Ukrainian mediators and dialogue facilitators have demonstrated the clear need for supporting their work in all the regions they deem necessary, including the western regions, de-occupied territories and other countries that have hosted Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, according to a recent SCORE/SHARP study, the main problems related to social cohesion and polarisation since February 2022 are concentrated in the west rather than east/south of the country (tension associated with criminal and anti-social conduct; tension on the grounds of political, cultural and language differences and stereotypes; tension caused by evasion of mobilisation).

## 2. Importance of supporting and maintaining the flexibility of the existing initiatives of mediators and dialogue facilitators in the long-term, instead of offering them new activity types as suggested by the international community

Needs must be assessed by local staff alongside response assessment. Given the huge scope of the problems and needs of people at the local level, it is almost impossible to determine their priority. We suggest prioritising support for activities that are already being implemented by Ukrainian civil society, often voluntarily. Ukrainian mediators and dialogue facilitators have responded to the war the best way they can whereas people at the local level have the greatest understanding of what needs to be done. If volunteers are already doing something without financial support, this is essential work that should be supported, without imposing new external structures, operating models or theories of change on them.

## 3. Importance of the development of public policy on social cohesion at the national level

There is a clear need to work with the public authorities during and after the war on

the strategy of civil society to combat the challenges of growing conflict in Ukrainian society. Ukrainian civil society can and must be proactive in the matter of social cohesion, resilience, mediation and dialogue in Ukrainian society. There is a clear need to develop public policy in the field of peacebuilding, resilience and social cohesion, with the focus on the liberated territories.

## 4. Importance of supporting the integration of psychological approaches and conflict management work

The war in Ukraine has significantly impacted the field of mediation and dialogue, forcing organisations to change how they work and prioritise the social sphere. The war has increased demand for mental health and psychosocial support services; experts emphasise the importance of trauma-focused work and introduction of preventive measures to combat their own burnout and emotional fatigue. The integration of psychological and trauma-informed approaches at all levels of mediation and dialogue facilitation work in Ukraine is of particular significance when it comes to increasing the social resilience of Ukrainians in response to the war, the work of experts and effective implementation of projects.

## 5. Importance of ensuring the quality assurance of dialogue work

As set out in this report, even now, during the war, there are individual initiatives to introduce dialogue processes at the community level and inclusive dialogue at the national level to discuss public policies. These initiatives can be accelerated with donor support. However, many of them are developed and implemented without a clear understanding of the principles and values of dialogue, that can harm the idea of inclusive dialogue which already happened during the previous eight years. The field is badly in need of professional guidelines, including methodologies of dialogue design, facilitation and impact assessment, methodologies of crisis mediation and others. Such recommendations can be developed by the Ukrainian professional mediator and dialogue facilitator community.



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