



UKRAINE NGO FORUM STRATEGY

2018-2019

Advocacy, Information Sharing, Coordination and Capacity
Building to Enhance Impact and Effectiveness



INTRODUCTION

In 2018-2019, the Ukraine NGO Forum¹ will continue to provide and develop activities based on the comprehensive understanding of its members of needs arising in relation to the response to the crisis in Ukraine.

While existing as a platform since 2014, the Ukraine NGO Forum was established as a legal organisation in June 2016, and has worked to coordinate activities of its membership, facilitate information sharing, advocate, and build capacity. This has been with the aim to enhance the overall impact and effectiveness of its members, and civil society more broadly, in Ukraine.

The Forum has a member base of international and national NGOs engaged in humanitarian, recovery, and more long-term development and peace-building activities. Through its membership, the NGO Forum will promote collective efforts based on deeper understanding, consolidated knowledge, advocacy and technical resources to achieve greater impact and facilitate the creation of solutions that are more credible and sustainable.

The Ukraine NGO Forum will, in 2018-2019, build its programming intervention around five strategic directions:

1. Advocacy
2. Information Sharing (both externally and internally)
3. Coordination
4. Capacity Building
5. Organisational Capacity and Sustainability

These specifically address key issues, and are designed to achieve sustainable positive changes within the Ukrainian context for an improved response to needs arising from the conflict in Ukraine. The selection of these strategic directions relates directly to the evidence of substantial needs assessments, and to past and present operations. The synergy between these strategic directions, and projects implemented under each, facilitates more effective coordinated planning, and a higher level of cost-effectiveness.

¹ The 'Ukraine NGO Forum' comprises three elements: its Membership Base of national and international NGOs, a Steering Committee, and a Core Implementation Team. Within this strategy, 'Ukraine NGO Forum' refers to the organisation Ukraine NGO Forum, which comprises all three elements, and which is formally registered as a national NGO. Where clarity is needed between the three elements, they are referred to as 'Forum Membership', 'Steering Committee', or 'Core Implementation Team' separately. 'Ukraine NGO Forum member' refers to a member organisation of the Ukraine NGO Forum.

The Ukraine NGO Forum activities serve to strengthen the existing platform and assist the establishment of sustainable humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding platforms in line with best practice and based on a review of lessons-learned and good practices of existing platforms and stakeholders. These stakeholders include affected populations, multilateral and bilateral partners, peace and security actors, and humanitarian and civil society organisations.

Strengthening greater coherence and coordination between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors to achieve results in support of collective outcomes – from delivering aid to changing people’s lives through sustainable development – is key to the Ukraine NGO Forum achieving its mission.

Furthermore, the Ukraine NGO Forum will, in accordance with the Sphere Project Minimum Standards, and as the Sphere focal point in Ukraine, specifically strive to ensure that ‘humanitarian response is planned and implemented with the relevant authorities, humanitarian agencies, and civil society organisations engaged in impartial humanitarian action, working together for maximum efficiency, coverage, and effectiveness.’²

VALUES

The Ukraine NGO Forum shares the following values:

- **TRUST**
Mutual trust as a fundamental value upon which the membership is built.
- **COMMITMENT**
Commitment to engagement for a common vision for the future, driven by shared mission and a higher purpose. It reflects a sense of “us” as a platform, where member organizations are drawn to innovation and change as part of a collective with a strong sense of ownership.
- **SYNERGY**
Coordinating and cooperating together in a consistent and complimentary manner.
- **PROACTIVITY**
Member organizations are anticipatory and change-oriented. The level of energy, showing or involving vitality, that membership brings to the Ukraine NGO Forum is shaped by connection, content, context, and climate.

FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Every Ukraine NGO Forum member organization joins the platform because it ascribes to the below-mentioned fundamental principles and shares a common vision and mission of the NGO Forum:

- Fundamental to the very character of each NGO is that it be not-for-profit, nongovernmental, organized and independent.
- Members believe that respect, cooperation and common action with other civil society organizations is beneficial for advancing their individual and mutual mission-related objectives.

² Core standard 2

- Members operate in a transparent, honest, and non-corrupt manner and are accountable for their actions and decisions, not only to funding agencies and the government, but to the people they serve, staff and members, partner organizations, and the public at large.
- Members recognize that their activities affect the perception of the NGO Forum and its members. Members shall not exploit or misrepresent their membership for personal or organizational gain.

UKRAINE NGO FORUM VISION 2022

A Ukraine where a consolidated and capable NGO community substantially participates in, and contributes to, the sustainable development of the country, and is fully acknowledged nationally and internationally.

UKRAINE NGO FORUM MISSION

To empower the NGO community in Ukraine for the primary benefit of the crisis-affected population and ultimately for a peaceful and equitable society.

THE PLATFORM'S STRENGTHS

PEOPLE

- Valuing and investing in the unique skills and experience of members for the greater good of the Forum.

DYNAMISM

- Being proactive and flexible in collective problem-solving.

INNOVATION

- Leading new and creative solutions in response to issues and needs within the context of the Ukrainian crisis.

KNOWLEDGE

- Promoting active learning and the sharing of knowledge between all stakeholders.

CONNECTION

- Promoting, finding, and facilitating cooperation and synergies between people, organisations, and institutions for the sake of improving the situation of members' beneficiaries.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

“The impact of protracted armed conflict and violence today is systematic and all-encompassing in many countries: from the implosion of essential public services like health, electricity, water, and sanitation to the eradication of what keeps a society going – education for its children, jobs for its adults, security for its most vulnerable. The longer wars last, the deeper the crippling effects of war. Within just a few years, decades’ worth of progress and development are wiped out.”³

The Ukraine NGO Forum within the Ukrainian environment is a unique platform for coordination, information sharing, advocacy, and capacity building, to enhance the impact and effectiveness of civil

³ President of the ICRC, Peter Maurer, Speech to the 31st session of the Human Rights Council, 1 March 2016, Geneva

society activities, and build relationships between national and international organisations. With a diverse membership of organisations engaged in humanitarian, development, and peace-building activities, the Ukraine NGO Forum also works closely with Government, the international donor community, UN agencies, and other key Ukrainian organisations and coalitions, to address the various challenges within the Ukrainian context.

While humanitarian assistance in Ukraine, as in other conflict zones, is designed to be stopgap and short-term, humanitarian activities have, sometimes by default, expanded into recovery and basic service provision in what now is a protracted crisis involving ongoing conflict and long-term displacement. Widespread and unpredictable humanitarian needs exist, due to the simmering nature of the Ukrainian conflict, alongside long-term structural vulnerabilities. Development funding for a sufficient scale-up is still lacking in Ukraine to address current needs sufficiently.

Humanitarian needs are therefore still significant in Ukraine, and the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) estimates that no less than 3.4 million Ukrainians are in need of humanitarian assistance. Along the 'contact line', an average of 40 armed clashes are recorded every day. Up to 200,000 people living in the five-kilometer zone along the 'contact line' in the government controlled area (GCA) regularly experience the injury or loss of loved ones or their neighbours, damage to property, and systematic barriers to accessing basic services.⁴ Within the 2018 HRP, it is emphasised that the principal goal of humanitarian action will remain focused on alleviating human suffering by meeting the needs of the most vulnerable across all sectors, in all areas of concern. Wherever feasible, humanitarian action will also serve as a springboard for recovery and development to scale up.

The situation in Ukraine can now be described as a protracted conflict situation. Correspondingly, organisations working within this overall environment face a number of new challenges including how best to mix humanitarian aid delivery with longer-term development work. With no clear prospects of conflict resolution, internal displacement and conflict in Ukraine are likely to continue. Furthermore, the conflict has put additional stress on urban structures, and aggravated systemic and structural weaknesses. The humanitarian consequences of protracted conflict are severe and can be immediate and cumulative. People's experience of a protracted conflict typically involves immediate direct suffering as a result of attacks, deprivation, and displacement, and more indirect suffering due to the cumulative deterioration of basic services, life opportunities, and livelihoods. People's needs cut across many different sectors and extend over many years.⁵

Correspondingly, within the protracted conflict and crisis scenario there is a need for humanitarian and development actors to work side-by-side to implement a range of well-aligned short-, medium-, and longer-term activities to effectively reduce humanitarian needs, risks, and vulnerability, and build community resilience.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

For the coming two-year period, the NGO Forum's strategic priorities will focus on strengthening the platform, developing activities and services for members, and using outreach and communications capacities to raise awareness about the Ukraine NGO Forum's mandate, accomplishments, and key competencies.

In addition, the Ukraine NGO Forum will focus on actions and initiatives that address, recognise, and promote respect for gender and diversity.

⁴ HRP 2018

⁵ Protracted Conflict and Humanitarian Action, ICRC, 2016

The Ukraine NGO Forum membership has identified five main strategic objectives, divided into strategic sub-objectives.

ADVOCACY

- To develop a strong, evidence-based advocacy voice for its membership and the NGO community working on behalf of IDPs and those affected by conflict, at both the national and international level.
 - Advocate relevant needs of IDPs and conflict-affected populations on behalf of the NGO Forum members towards regional, national, and international stakeholders.
 - Build advocacy capacity and mentor Ukrainian NGOs especially in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts close to the contact line.
 - Organise and participate in expert meetings with international and Ukrainian organisations and Government of Ukraine to elaborate legislative changes on urgent issues.
 - Promote international engagement in Ukraine to raise the ability of the Forum membership and other Ukrainian NGOs to respond effectively to humanitarian, recovery, and development needs.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INFORMATION SHARING

- To develop and enhance an accessible structure and encourage Ukraine NGO Forum members to share relevant information on a regular basis. To maintain a communication strategy highlighting the work of Ukraine NGO Forum members to increase the influence of and respect for the NGO community.
 - Provide a complex set of effective tools to Ukraine NGO Forum members for sharing relevant information and developing their own communications functions.
 - Communicate to target audiences about Ukraine NGO Forum and members' needs, activities, and achievements.

COORDINATION

- To develop and strengthen effective mechanisms for active membership participation, cooperation, and NGO community representation.
 - Enhance synergies, effectiveness, and quality of the membership's collective work through inclusive coordination and sustainable coordination.
 - Promote NGO coordination at the regional level.
 - Increase the representation of the Forum membership in decision-making processes through broader coordination with government.

The Ukraine NGO Forum exists to complement existing coordination mechanisms and does not seek to either compete with or replace them.

CAPACITY BUILDING

- To build the capacity of the members and NGO community to sustain and develop their activities in the future, and make them more trusted, effective, accountable, and result-oriented by distinguishing, assessing, and monitoring capacity needs for the NGO community.
 - Enhance and develop organisational capacity, including sustainability and good governance of the membership and NGO community.
 - Identify and meet the needs of member NGOs, and link capacity-building needs and resources among the NGO communities.
 - Support NGO capacity-building for a better humanitarian, development and peacebuilding responses.
 - Facilitate the sharing of funding opportunities for national NGOs to increase their organisational capacity.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

- To strengthen the capacity of Ukraine NGO Forum and the sustainability of the Ukraine NGO Forum as an institution.
 - Increase the knowledge, skills, and expertise of Ukraine NGO Forum core staff.
 - Diversify and sustain long-term sources of financing and other resources.
 - Develop Service Provision by the Ukraine NGO Forum to its membership, and beyond if possible.
 - Enhance internal organisation management, communication, and decision-making culture.
 - Maintain and build staff work satisfaction within the NGO Forum Core Team.
 - Develop a more effective membership management system.

ACTIVITY AREAS

For the period of 2018-2019, the Ukraine NGO Forum will remain committed to enhancing and strengthening current efforts. Considering the fluid context in Ukraine, it will strive to continuously adjust its efforts to maintain relevance. Special efforts will be made in recognition that humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts are complementary and need to reinforce each other to best respond to the crisis in Ukraine, including to enhance cooperation amongst response agencies.

To be effective, the Ukraine NGO Forum must focus on activities which are based on priority needs and gaps in the operating context. The Ukraine NGO Forum will focus on the five aforementioned activity areas: advocacy, internal and external information sharing, coordination, capacity building, and organisational capacity and sustainability. These correspond with the objectives outlined above as well as the Forum's mission and vision.

ADVOCACY

Analysis of organisations and the environment in Ukraine informs that, while there are organisations effectively and efficiently advocating on a broad national and international level within the Ukrainian context, the Ukraine NGO Forum can nevertheless fill a highly important role, through its multi-faceted

membership base (i.e. national-international, humanitarian-development-peacebuilding organisations). Advocacy strategies will be developed responding to the contextual challenges, target institutions, policy problems, and actors as defined by Forum members. The Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to engage with authorities on the international, national, and regional levels.

The Ukraine NGO Forum will, for example, advocate for improving the operating environment for NGOs in Ukraine. This may be done through legislative reform to protect civil society and improve conditions for all Ukrainians, especially those who are crisis-affected. The Forum will also advocate for raised international support for development, reform, and peace building, and will continue to protect the NGO space within the highly politicised context of Ukraine.

Furthermore, as the Ukrainian Sphere Focal Point, the NGO Forum will continue to encourage the interaction between development and humanitarian stakeholders. Sphere should be used as an advocacy tool with stakeholders in protracted crises. The coordination and collaboration between development and humanitarian organisations can be enhanced by ensuring the dissemination of knowledge of Sphere standards to development workers, local/national authorities, and the community. The Ukraine NGO Forum will support an effective process of advocacy among its members, authorities as well as the wider NGO community to develop national standards for emergency response at the country level. With donors, the Ukraine NGO Forum can advocate for the inclusion of protection principles and objective-funding criteria, to ensure enforceability of process standards, and to provide the scope for fulfilment of technical standards.

Having endorsed the Charter for Change, the NGO Forum is committed through advocacy activities to influence donors (including institutional donors, foundations, and the private sector) to encourage them to increase the year-on-year percentage of their humanitarian funding to national NGOs. The NGO Forum will also undertake to advocate that donors make working through national actors part of their criteria for assessing framework partners and calls for project proposals.

The Ukraine NGO Forum platform will encourage and support Ukrainian authorities' responsibilities to assist and protect their own citizens in times of crisis in line with best international practice

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL INFORMATION SHARING

Information sharing will remain a significant activity area. The Ukraine NGO Forum keeps members informed of meetings-of-interest, facilitates topical discussions, and organises regular and ad-hoc meetings. To do this, the Ukraine NGO Forum maintains a number of topical mailing lists, which are not only used to organise meetings, but also to maintain a consistent and up-to-date flow of critical information to its members. Ukraine NGO Forum is increasing the use of information technologies, such as its website, to ensure that information is widely shared and easily accessible. The Ukraine NGO Forum is currently one of the NGOs in Ukraine with the widest social media outreach. This will be maintained and strengthened.

The Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to collect, store, and disseminate relevant information pertaining to humanitarian action, recovery, and development activities and policies (i.e. press releases, reports, assessments, evaluations); collect, store, and disseminate relevant publications, announcements, and circulars following up with the appropriate line ministries to ensure that they are understandable to the NGO audience; disseminate job vacancies for its membership NGOs; disseminate minutes/meeting notes; publish the Ukraine NGO Forum newsletter; maintain and expand the online map of NGOs in Ukraine (www.ngomap.org.ua); maintain a contact directory of different stakeholders for NGOs, as well as contact directory of Forum members; and organise ad hoc meetings on urgent issues with different stakeholders when necessary, or on request from the Forum members, Steering Committee, or external stakeholders (i.e. workshops/seminars by donors, partners, and fora).

In addition, the Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to support common services and technical support for its members. Common services, such as legal analysis, translations, and assessments, will be supported not only because of the expressed need but also as it makes financial sense, enhance quality control, as well as broad information sharing among members and the wider NGO community. Furthermore, the Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to provide technical support to members or individuals within member organisations, as well as prospective members utilizing its internal capacities and knowledge on issues as far reaching as anti-corruption, donors, strategy advice, and organisational registration in Ukraine.

COORDINATION

The Ukraine NGO Forum exists only to complement existing coordination mechanisms and does not seek to compete with or replace them. Moreover, the Ukraine NGO Forum will support and promote national and nationally-owned coordination mechanisms whenever feasible and relevant, as well as those implemented by international organisations such as the UN.

Coordination between members will focus on areas where such has been specifically requested by the members themselves. To be effective, the Ukraine NGO Forum will focus on coordination activities which are based on priority needs and gaps in the operating context as well as common priorities, objectives, and relevance. These coordination activities will be clearly linked to the capacity of the Forum members, staff, funding, and other resources.

As the Sphere focal point in Ukraine, the NGO Forum will promote and work to facilitate the ‘importance that is increasingly given to long-term impact beyond saving lives of affected populations, (as) it becomes paramount that humanitarian and development effort are integrated in all stages of crisis intervention. This can be achieved by facilitating the interaction between agents from both worlds.’⁶

The Ukraine NGO Forum will continue as an active member of the HCT and ICG, and as co-chair HCSG through the period covered by this strategy, and will continue to lead the NGO election process for the HCT.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Building capacity involves skills transfer, training, human resource management, organisational development, and the strengthening of communities and social networks.

Capacity-building support to members and other national NGOs will be extended and additionally resourced to support critical training and needs. Particular emphasis will be placed on trainings related to integration of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts, good governance, international best practices, sustainability, and transition-related efforts. The annual and extensive need and capacity mapping will serve as an important tool to determine specific interventions of the Ukraine NGO Forum’s members. Currently, members regularly request specific trainings focused on specific needs for the organisation in question, which the Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to address. As the Ukrainian Sphere focal point, the Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to provide trainings related to Sphere standards as needed and requested, as well as Sphere standards utilisation within HRP, as funding permits. As aid effectiveness principles make clear, Ukrainian ownership of development will entail new roles and responsibilities.

The Ukraine NGO Forum will continue to develop activities to build a strong pool of capable and reliable NGOs which are able to deliver the required support to all stakeholders within the humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding fields. Capacity-building for local organisations is a critical component of

⁶ Sphere Standards in Protracted Crisis

a broader set of enabling requirements for meaningful country ownership of development. It supports the engagement of non-state actors as a critical complement to government leadership.⁷

ORGANISATIONAL CAPACITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Ukraine NGO Forum remains firmly committed to continuous learning, evidence-based practice, and quality improvement, to the benefit of the Forum membership, and the wider NGO community in Ukraine.

Internal capacity-building will significantly increase organisational capabilities, such as specialised skills and competencies, especially when such are transferable. The core team staff within the Forum serve the two-year strategy, as the staff members work closely with the NGO Forum members to realise the common goals set by the collective. The NGO Forum plans to continue to deploy practical measures to maintain, develop, and improve management culture, and continuously strive to improve the overall well-being at the workplace, including a non-discriminatory and gender-balanced environment.

The process will help the core staff understand their strengths better, identify areas for improvement, and provide more efficient assistance. In this way, they will be able to contribute best to an efficient, transparent, accountable, and sustainable platform organisation, and a culture of excellence.

FUNDRAISING AND SUSTAINABILITY

Key components that will influence the sustainability of the Ukraine NGO Forum are the availability of funds, quality material resources, quality leadership and staff, and programme development based on and driven by needs and demand.

The Ukraine NGO Forum will look at four primary strategies for funding, which will be combined to achieve organisational sustainability. The most important aspect of sustainability for Ukraine NGO Forum will be to continue to diversify the donor base and to develop long-term partnerships with donors to support the platform organisation. It is strategically important for Ukraine NGO Forum to strive for long-term funding, whenever possible, which can improve programme quality, effectiveness, efficiency, value-for-funding of interventions, relations with communities, staff management, and partnerships.

Traditional donor support will be sought for direct implementation of current actions, such as advocacy, coordination, information sharing and capacity building. First, some funding may be channelled through member organisations, as some donors have requirements of general framework agreements or other technical requirements which cannot be met by the Ukraine NGO Forum. Second, bilateral or cluster project partnerships will be sought with member organisations and other partners in cases where the capabilities and competencies have added value and synergies can be found. Third, the Ukraine NGO Forum will seek direct project funding from donors. Fourth, there is a nominal annual membership fee paid by member organizations as a demonstration of their commitment to the Forum.

Membership fees for 2018-2019 are estimated to cover roughly 1-2 percent of actual costs. The Ukraine NGO Forum increased its membership base during 2017, with more than 90 percent of all new applications coming from national NGOs.

The Ukraine NGO Forum's sustainability as a strong and effective platform organisation, providing effective assistance to members and the wider NGO community in Ukraine, depends on:

- a solid, committed, and active membership base;
- capable and committed representation, with solid skills derived from experience;

⁷ Ibid

- transparent and accountable management;
- secure donor funding from known organisations with which partnerships have been developed;
- donors who are committed to coordination mechanisms amongst implementing NGOs;
- development of forward-thinking organisational coordination and cooperation strategies.

EVALUATION AND MONITORING

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) activities will engage member organisations and donors with better means to evaluate and learn from the work carried out by the Ukraine NGO Forum. M&E efforts will focus on overall results through improving programme delivery, planning, and allocation of resources, and will demonstrate results and accountability to members and key stakeholders. The Ukraine NGO Forum will be able to document what it does, why it does it, follow up on successes, and enable learning and informed decision-making. Regular, structured member feedback will be a key tool for further improvement. The Ukraine NGO Forum will adopt a systemic approach of regular evaluation of all activities to ensure services are relevant and high quality.

The M&E plan will serve as a long-term Results Based Management toolkit for Ukraine NGO Forum platform development, projects, and organisational development. If strategic priorities change, the M&E plan will be revised accordingly.