

## From inside Ukraine



*Daria Rybalchenko*

*Community foundations across Ukraine have, despite the Russian invasion, continued to function, adapting and responding to extraordinary needs in the most difficult of circumstances. They have been supported by The National Network for the Development of Local Philanthropy which has taken on roles it could never have imagined. Daria Rybalchenko, Head of the Board of the Network, offers an insight into their work, addressing immediate and longer term needs.*

‘On February 24th, 2022, Ukrainian life changed forever when the Russian Federation started the full-scale attack on Ukraine. For more than two months, we have been fighting for our independence, with great support from around the world. But this war has a price: people's lives and destroyed cities.

We realized that Ukraine wasn't ready for such war in the first days. We face a humanitarian crisis: a deficit of essential medicines, destroyed supply networks, no prepared bomb shelters, not enough places for the living for internally displaced people (IDPs), and other problems.

As local leaders, already on the second day of the war, February 25th, community foundations mobilized their teams and adapted their work to help civilians, local defense groups, and the military. Depending on location, community foundations fundraise and help with:

- medicines, equipment and ammunition for the military;
- help with evacuation;
- support with humanitarian help, social cohesion, and moral support for those who stay in communities under fire;
- help for internally displaced people (IDPs);
- support volunteering groups.

All community foundations have remained active, despite very challenging operating situations, some even themselves displaced. They have been helped by both financial support and the provision of supplies by many local and international donors - foundations (including community foundations) and private companies. The Network regularly gathers and updates their needs and shares this in a live document [here](#).

Generally, most community foundations show their growth in budgets, teams, and partners. But at the same time, community foundations have challenges with costs for

administrative needs, renting of warehouses and offices, and additional office equipment. We are concerned now about how to adapt our work to help local people, how to satisfy norms of humanitarian rights by involving non-formal local volunteering groups, and where to find additional resources for our strategic programs.

As a part of Ukrainian civil society, community foundations play a role in this fight for independence and peace. They demonstrate key European values and are an excellent example of social mobilization in disaster situations. Most community foundations created a hub for accepting and distributing humanitarian aid, but they have also been leading a wide range of projects including:

- Save together - Special Fund

This program of Kherson Community Foundation, located on temporary occupied territory, provides financial support to families with children that stay under occupation. This is the only program in Ukraine that helps Ukrainian civilians with finance in occupied territories.

- Kharkiv MusicFest-2022

This took place in a bomb shelter at the metro station "Historical Museum" (view [here](#)). Rivne and Kharkiv Community Foundations focus on culture, which helps people stay alive and feel better under challenging times. Furthermore, these projects help in the maintenance of social cohesion and unity.

- Small grant program for local activists

This program of Ridnya Community Foundation (in Stryi, Lviv region) supports initiatives from local people which are relevant to the community, IDPs, and the military. It helps engage more people to volunteer and make a platform for the growth of the nonprofit sector.

- Gardens of Victory

Several Community Foundations joined this program which supports agriculture and organic food production and use all possible land plots for planting. Community foundations help people with seeds, equipment and petrol.

- #ShelterUkraine

Warm City Community Foundation (Ivano-Frankivsk city) and partners SILab Ukraine, Valores Foundation, VPLYV opened a grant opportunity for civil society to equip IDPs shelters, purchase medicines, and products for individuals' food kits and hygiene kits, and facilitate evacuation.

The National Network for the Development of Local Philanthropy contributes in three ways:

- Connections between community foundations (nationally and internationally) and other humanitarian hubs, donors, and businesses to cover the humanitarian needs of the community;



- Fundraising for network projects and administrative needs of community foundations. For example - we agreed with GFCF a special granting program for Ukrainian community foundations;
- Representation of Ukrainian community foundation movement in Ukraine and abroad. We are planning our PR strategy. We also got a Google ad grant, which we plan to use for promotion.

We have two network-wide projects:

#### 1. MedAid Special Fund

This project aims to equip hospitals, social institutions, and Ukrainian citizens with the necessary medical devices, medicines, and tools to maintain the work of medical institutions in an emergency. We have inquiries from Ukrainian community foundations about medicines (basic and special), hospital beds, hygiene products, dressings, baby food, consumables for various departments e.g. wheelchairs, crutches, etc. More information on MedAid can be found [here](#).

#### 2. Housing Ukrainians

Millions of Ukrainians have lost their homes due to the hostilities. We are working with the local government on programs to reconstruct destroyed houses and construct modular villages for internally displaced people. More details can be found [here](#).

None of this would be possible without international community support. We are so grateful to our partners for all the help they have given us in Ukraine and for Ukrainian refugees. Thank you for your solidarity and demonstrations in your cities. Your support is vital for us.

But the war is however continuing. Unfortunately, we will see more horrible pictures from Ukrainian cities and villages. For sure, we will see more people's unity and solidarity around the world. But only together we can be effective and stop the horror that Russian Federation brings in our world.'

Daria Rybalchenko

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**The National Network for the Development of Local Philanthropy in Ukraine is a network of charitable organizations, including 20 community foundations, united to promote local philanthropy and volunteerism in communities, revitalize residents and support community initiatives.**

**More information on the Network can be found [here](#).**