

## COVID-19

August 2020

# Community Foundations in Action

## Ukraine - A reliable and critical partner



*Olena Danilova  
Photo: Community Foundation  
Podilska Hromada*

If it was up to her, crisis mode would come to its end quickly. Olena Danilova wants the work of Podilska Hromada to go “back to pre-Covid times”. For the last months, the Chairwoman of the board led the foundation through the pandemic, being the reliable partner, the community expected it to be.

When the virus hit Ukraine, the community of Podilska Hromada, in the central part of the country, was hit hard: “There was already chaos in the healthcare system because we had medical reforms going on”, Olena explains. With the sudden heavy workload, the situation in the hospitals worsened, there was a huge lack of safety clothing. “We saw that we should be the ones helping, and more than

that - coordinating”, Olena recalls. So the team of Podilska Hromada created a special fund, the “Stop Virus Special Fund”, for the pandemic and at the same time coordinated the volunteers, helping out in the hospitals. “We started to write letters to businesses, asking for financial help”, Olena explains, “then we created a board of doctors and other specialists working in the healthcare sector who knew what was needed and could decide where the funds should go. “In the first meeting which took place in person, the team of Podilska Hromada and the new board of healthcare specialists decided that the priority clearly should be the supply of safety clothing. After that, they transformed their meetings from offline to online.”

Podilska Hromada created a platform with the information about the needs of hospitals, what was covered and what was not. They helped to coordinate the volunteers by redirecting volunteers to those hospitals in need. The task of coordinating volunteers was more challenging than the foundation of the new Stop Virus Special Fund: “On the one hand, there was a huge willingness in the community to help - for example to run errands for elderly people, to bring medical equipment to the hospitals. On the other hand we felt responsible for the volunteers’ lives and because we couldn’t always be sure if it was safe to help - for example because some medical staff didn’t use facemasks - we sometimes had to forgo the help because it was simply too risky.”

The work of the special fund also has also influenced the life of the community foundation in unexpected ways. During the crisis situation all other programs were put on pause. The 4 members of the team put all the efforts into the work for the special fund. For more than one month the team adjusted to the work of the crisis fund: search for necessary equipment, safety clothing; work with businesses, reports, packing, passing the help packages to hospitals, getting in contact with hospitals, volunteers and so much more. In the meantime they also consulted other community foundations in Ukraine about how to create a special fund, its work and options of how each can support their community. Only after approximately a month and a half Podilska Hromada slowly started to get back to their usual work.

In the meantime, the situation has improved: “Now, the crisis funds’ priorities are more in the field of medicine than of protective clothing”, Olena explains.

According to her, it should be time to close the fund. “But that won’t happen yet,” she regrets, “There are still little hospitals in the community that need our help.” The support is not only about materials anymore - it’s about communication. Because Podilska Hromada was already known and valued in the community, the foundation was the organisation people turned to in times of crisis. Also, the foundation was already skilled with something, the institutions of the healthcare system desperately needed: a strong network and the ability to get people together: “We became the heart of the crisis communication in our community”, Olena says, “We helped the healthcare institutions to provide information to the public. A lot of them couldn’t do that on their own. Our help was and is still needed.”



*Doctors with candies for them and their families donated by a business partner*

The [Podilska Hromada Community Foundation](#), Ukraine, started in 2008 in the city of Vinnytsia.



*The community foundation has four employees and was assisted during the implementation of the Stop Virus Fund by some 30 volunteers which raised 4,118,849 UAH (€137,300) in 100 days up to the end of June.*



*The Podilska Hromada Community Foundation is one of 33 Community Foundations in Ukraine. Ednannia, the Initiative Centre to Support Social Action, systematically trains community foundations and tries to establish new community foundations. For more information see on our [website](#).*