



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS: RESOURCES FOR PROTECTING REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN UKRAINE

MAPPING AND ANALYSIS

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ACRONYMS

Asylum seeker	AS
Commonwealth of Independent States	CIS
Community-Based Protection	CBP
Complementary Protection	CP
Internally Displaced Person	IDP
Information Office	IO
Non-governmental organization	NGO
International Foundation for Health and Environmental Protection Region Karpat	Neeka
Public organization	PO
Political party	PP
Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine	RAMU
Charitable Organization	
Charitable Foundation Rokada	Rokada
Charitable Organization	
Charitable Foundation Right to Protection	R2P
Sexual and gender-based violence	SGBV
The State Migration Service of Ukraine	SMS
NGO The Tenth of April	TTA
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR

SUMMARY

Community mapping is an important step in engaging with refugees and asylum seekers. It lays the groundwork for creating a communication plan, providing information, and gathering feedback. The objective of the mapping is to gain a better understanding of the community's trusted structures and community leadership.

Right to Protection, with the support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its partners NEEKA, Rokada, and Tenth of April conducted the first mapping of community organizations of refugees, complementary protection holders, and asylum seekers in Ukraine. It is based mostly on the information and analysis shared by refugees and asylum seekers living in major Ukrainian cities such as Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa after February 2022 and who agreed to participate in the survey.

The mapping focuses on groups or other forms of collective structures that bring together refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine. The survey does not focus only on community organizations with formal legal status, such as registered NGOs, charitable organizations, or religious organizations or institutions. It also covered alternative forms of community life, including informal groups or groups on social media. Therefore, the term "community organizations" in this report refers to any type of structures or groups mentioned above. The mapping also focused on community organizations which are not necessarily led by refugees and asylum seekers, but which offer spaces and support to them and other people sharing the same origins or backgrounds.

The mapping identified a total of 20 community organizations comprising asylum seekers, refugees, and complementary protection holders, of which 14 were still active.

This report presents key findings from the mapping:

- More than half of the refugee community organizations are based in the Odesa and Kyiv oblasts, reflecting the geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine.
- **None of the community organizations are created exclusively for refugees and asylum seekers.** Rather, they are open to all foreigners sharing a common feature such as a country of origin, religion, or other shared features. Many community organizations also include Ukrainians among their members, including people who obtained Ukrainian citizenship through naturalization or spouses.
- Refugee community groups in Ukraine can be classified based on the basis for their creation as communities organized on political background, religious groups, communities united based on ethnicity or nationality, and women's and youth communities.
- **Community organizations lost an average of 70 percent of their members in 2022.** Only a few community groups have expanded in 2022 and 2023, particularly those bringing together nationals from the Russian Federation and Belarus.
- **Half of the community groups surveyed are registered as organizations. The rest have no legal status.**

Cultural events, legal assistance, activities for women and youth, and language classes are the most common activities run by community organizations. Community organizations that are officially registered engage in a wider range of activities than unregistered community groups.

Activities that appear to be the least developed include support to business and employment, vocational training, financial and material assistance, raising awareness in host communities, and evacuating from unsafe areas. These activities may require more significant funding and may depend on external support.

Women are often in charge of particular activities including activities for children, education, and women's support. However, the participation in the management of community organizations is unequal.

Refugee community groups use various communication channels such as messaging apps like Viber, Telegram, and WhatsApp, as well as social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Zoom. Communication through social media can be the main activity for some community organizations.

Refugee community groups registered as legal entities include highly qualified professionals and people with higher educational

backgrounds among their members or staff. Community organizations maintaining strong virtual communication groups involve social media specialists and IT experts.

As a result of Russia's war on Ukraine, community organizations have faced several challenges. **In response to the war, several organizations expressed their support for Ukraine and expanded their activities beyond their membership.** At the same time, communities lost the support they received from members who fled abroad. Discrimination and the precarious legal situation faced by particular groups also hamper their ability to engage in community activities.

Although weakened by the war, community organizations for refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine continue operating. While the Government of Ukraine continues to rely largely on humanitarian organizations for the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers, the capacity of community organizations remains a critical support, although underexploited.

The recommendations below should be read in light of these considerations and adapted to the context, the profile of community organizations, and their potential.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To state authorities

- Ensure that refugee community organizations can participate in decision-making regarding system of protection and integration. The forum for annual consultation with civil society organizations including community organizations of asylum seekers and refugees could be considered an opportunity to hear their concerns and recommendations and share information on key developments relating to asylum policy.
- Develop a plan for the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in cooperation with refugee community organizations.
- Sponsor access to free Ukrainian language courses for refugees and asylum seekers.

To refugee community organizations

- Initiate opportunities for exchange with other refugee community organizations in Ukraine and create networks for information sharing and consultation on advocacy or other possible joint or coordinated initiatives.
- Ensure the equal participation of women in their leadership and management structures
- Ensure the explicit inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in their mission statement and designate contact persons to focus on their protection.
- Reach out to refugees and asylum seekers to ensure their access to the assistance provided, for instance through social media or other networks, to extend support to refugees and asylum seekers living in isolation or outside main urban centers.
- Approach and maintain a regular dialogue with local authorities at the hromada (local) or oblast level to establish constructive connections and strengthen access to relevant public services or other opportunities.
- Liaise with other civil society networks at a local or national level and create connections with humanitarian or development non-governmental organizations which may support organizational development, advocacy, or protection services.

To NGOs and International organizations

- Ensure regular consultations and exchanges with refugee community organizations, including through annual meetings.
- Support the exchange of experiences among community organizations, through the creation of a network among these organizations, or workshops.
- Develop a plan for the development of community organizations, including capacity strengthening, and support for their visibility and acceptance in Ukrainian society.
- Support the capacity of refugee community structures to provide essential protection services, including access to information, psychosocial counseling, and referral.
- Facilitate communication between refugee community organizations national/local authorities, and public services.
- Support the creation or maintenance of community centers that can host the activities of the refugee community in major urban centers.

INTRODUCTION

Community mapping is an important step in engaging with refugees and asylum seekers. It lays the groundwork for creating a communication plan, providing information, and gathering feedback. The objective of the mapping is to gain a better understanding of the community's trusted structures and community leadership.

This report reviews the findings from the first mapping of community organizations of refugees, complementary protection holders, and asylum seekers in Ukraine.¹ It is based mostly on information and analysis shared by refugees and asylum seekers living in major Ukrainian cities such as Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv, and Odesa after February 2022 and volunteering to participate in the survey.

The mapping of community organizations became more urgent as the war in Ukraine affected communication with a significant number of refugees and asylum seekers, due to their departure from the country, their displacement within Ukraine itself, or other circumstances.

With the support and guidance of UNHCR, and in collaboration with other NGOs working with refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine, Right to Protection led the mapping of community organizations among refugees and asylum seekers from May 2023. This report presents the mapping findings and shares an annotated list of identified community organizations (Annex 1).



Meeting of partners and Ikhsan-Shchyrist community. Mukachevo, November 2023. Photo by Neeka

¹ In this report, the term “refugees” will be used to refer both to individuals granted refugee status or complementary protection in Ukraine, unless otherwise indicated.

BACKGROUND — REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS IN UKRAINE

Until 2022, Ukraine was a transit and destination country for people fleeing persecution and violence in other parts of the world. As of the end of 2021, 5,101 asylum seekers and refugees were reported in Ukraine, including 2,382 granted refugee status or granted complementary protection in Ukraine, and 2,719 asylum seekers. 54 percent of the refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine were women and girls. The prevailing country of origin was Afghanistan.

The invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on the 24th of February 2022 has caused massive civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian infrastructure, forcing people to flee their homes and seek safety, protection, and assistance. As a result, thousands of people have left their usual place of residence to find protection abroad (with more than 5.6 million individual refugees from Ukraine recorded across Europe by July 2023) or elsewhere inside the country (5.08 million people estimated to be internally displaced in Ukraine as of June 2023).

As of the end of 2022, the Government of Ukraine reported a total of 2,520 persons granted refugee

status or complementary protection, while the number of asylum seekers in Ukraine decreased significantly to a total of 502 persons. 58 percent of the refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine were women and girls. There is no accurate information available regarding the number of refugees who left the country after 24 February 2022. The SMS did not conduct any verification of whether refugees or people with complementary protection status have remained in Ukraine since the beginning of the military conflict.

However, the number of people provided with legal assistance by UNHCR decreased radically after the start of the war. At the end of 2021, a total of 2,557 individuals were assisted by UNHCR and its partners. However, at the end of 2022, only 595 people were still in contact with UNHCR and its partners for legal assistance. The most prevalent countries of origin among refugees and asylum seekers assisted by UNHCR also changed radically after 24 February 2022, with a more prominent share of nationals from the Russian Federation and Belarus (see table below).

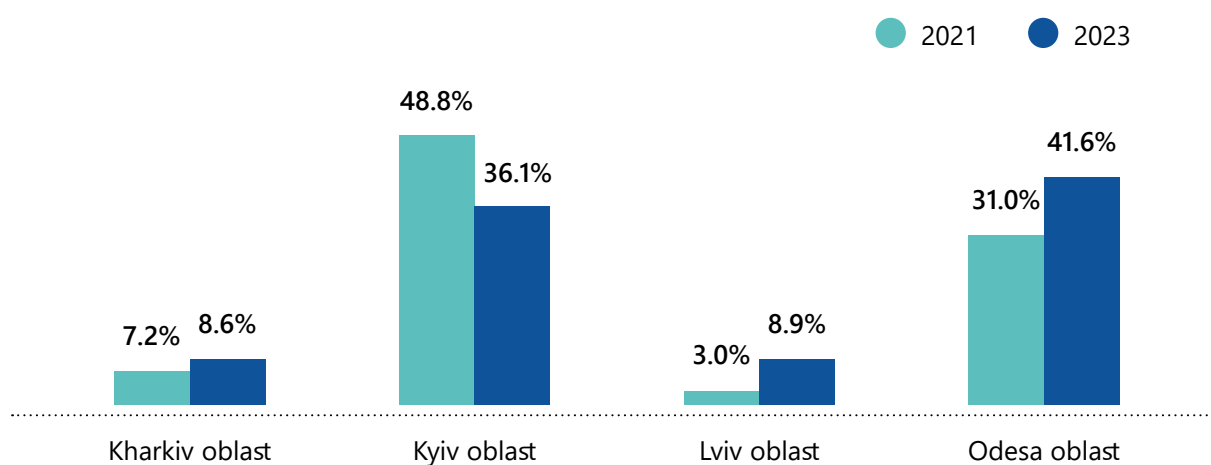
Refugees and asylum seekers receiving legal assistance from UNHCR. Five top countries of origin, percentage in the total number of people receiving legal assistance

December 2021		August 2023	
Afghanistan	43.4 %	Russian Federation	38.4 %
Syrian Arab Republic	9.9 %	Syrian Arab Republic	13.0 %
Russian Federation	7.5 %	Tajikistan	11.2 %
Tajikistan	7.2 %	Belarus	8.8 %
Uzbekistan	3.0 %	Afghanistan	6.0 %

The geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers also seemed to have changed after the start of the war, with the Odesa oblast

hosting the highest share of refugees and asylum seekers assisted by UNHCR in 2023 (see graph below).

Geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine (main oblasts), percentage from the total number of refugees and asylum seekers assisted by UNHCR



ENGAGEMENT WITH REFUGEE COMMUNITIES — THE WORK OF UNHCR AND ITS PARTNERS

Community-Based Protection (CBP) is a process whereby UNHCR supports communities to mobilize their knowledge and capacity to identify their concerns and address them. UNHCR in Ukraine has engaged with refugee communities through different activities². Members of refugee communities participated in training events organized by UNHCR on various topics, such as community mobilization and empowerment, NGO management, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) response, access to asylum procedures, access to administrative services and documents, psychological first aid, etc. UNHCR trained refugees on asylum and migration issues, forming a network of paralegals within their communities. Since the start of its Community Support Initiatives program in 2018, UNHCR has assisted 26 refugee community initiatives and funded 18 projects to promote peaceful coexistence between refugees and their host communities. In 2020, UNHCR established a Community-based Protection (CBP) working group to engage NGO partners and government counterparts at the central and regional levels.³

All UNHCR partners supporting refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine — Neeka, R2P, Rokada and Tenth of April (TTA) — have been interacting with the refugee community members residing in the cities and oblasts of Kharkiv, Kherson, Kyiv, Lviv, Mukachevo, Mykolaiiv, and

Odesa to implement different community support initiatives (see Annex 2 for examples of community-based protection activities and engagement with community groups).

Before February 2022, R2P conducted a Capacity Building Project to, among other goals, train informal leaders of refugee communities in Kyiv city and region, and also in Kharkiv as grassroots paralegals and legal first aid responders by conducting a series of Paralegal Training events. To that effect, active members of the five main refugee communities in Kyiv (Somali nationals, Afghan nationals, Arabic speakers, French speakers, nationals from countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and two refugee communities in Kharkiv (Syrian and Afghan nationals) were identified. They were further mobilized and trained as grassroots paralegals and legal first aid responders to serve their compatriots in the area of legal protection. R2P also conducted several resilience-building counseling events for women from communities of nationals from Afghanistan, various Arabic countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Cameroon. In 2023, R2P continued developing the capacity of refugee communities still present in Lviv oblast, mostly from central Asian countries (through computer courses and provision of laptops).

² See UNHCR Issue Brief: Promising Practices From Working with Refugee-led Organizations in Europe, September 2021. <https://www.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/legacy-pdf/6155893a4.pdf>

³ UNHCR. Thematic Update | March 2021 Refugees Asylum-Seekers. https://www.unhcr.org/ua/wp-content/uploads/sites/38/2021/03/2021-03-UNHCR-UKRAINE-Refugee-and-Asylum-Seekers-Update_FINAL-1.pdf

TTA also supported the capacity of refugee communities in southern oblasts. In 2021, TTA supported the creation of the Coordinating Council of Refugee Communities in the Odesa oblast, which brought together representatives of various refugee communities present in the oblast. The State Migration Service, Odesa City, and Oblast administration representatives also attended the Council meetings. Sessions raised the foremost issues of concern regarding the integration of refugees in the host community. One initiative of the Coordinating Council was the signature of a general appeal of refugee communities to the Ukraine Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights regarding the access of asylum-seekers in Ukraine to free medical care. These initiatives were the first in Ukraine to ensure community-owned advocacy for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers.

In 2018, TTA, in cooperation with refugee communities and organizations, supported five community initiatives, and three more in 2019. With the COVID-19 quarantine, TTA supported the purchase of sewing machines used by refugees and asylum seekers to produce protective masks, which were then donated to city institutions and community members. In 2021, TTA supported three projects initiated by community organizations of refugees and asylum seekers: Sunday School Afghan Riana (an initiative from the NCU — Afghan Community), and the Youth Integration Club. In early 2022, TTA started supporting the development of the

Integrational Social Centre initiated by NGO Al-Masar. Before the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, TTA was also supporting the creation of an effective communication platform between representatives of different refugee communities and IDPs called “Zoo for children affected by the conflict”. This project was initiated by the PO Friendship Foundation to promote peaceful coexistence between the host society, refugee communities, and IDPs.

In the Zakarpattia oblast, NEEKA cooperated with the women’s community Aigul founded in 2016. Within two years, the community grew into two separate organizations: Jasmin and NGO Atiaf. Currently, these two community organizations ceased to exist after most of their members left the country following the invasion of Ukraine.

Before the 24th of February 2022, Rokada supported various refugee communities, including youth and women’s groups, which ceased to exist after their members fled abroad. In 2023, Rokada held meetings with two focus groups of Russian and Belarusian citizens (about 20 people in each group) residing in Kyiv. Rokada has remained in contact with each group and communicates online with them via TG chat. Rokada also continued to support community activities such as IT courses, language classes, and handicraft activities. Rokada keeps in touch with participants and communicates with them online through TG chat.

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE MAPPING

The mapping focuses on groups or other forms of collective structures that bring together refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine. **The survey does not focus only on community organizations with formal legal status, such as registered NGOs, charitable organizations, or religious organizations or institutions. It also covered alternative forms of community life, including informal groups or groups on social media.** Therefore, the term “community organizations” in this report refers to any structures or groups mentioned above. The mapping also focused on community organizations which are not necessarily led by refugees and asylum

seekers, but which offer spaces and support to them and other people sharing the same origins or backgrounds.

The first step of the mapping was the identification of all community organizations with which refugees and asylum seekers have been interacting as of 2023. For this purpose, UNHCR and its partners established a list of all relevant community organizations known to them through their network or based on indications from refugees and asylum seekers. Each community organization group was approached and invited to fill in a questionnaire to document their profile, gather data for an



Friendship Foundation during the distribution of traditional Afghan cuisine during the festival. Odesa, July 2023. Photo by TTA

analytical survey, and consolidate a directory. The questionnaire was structured into seven sections focusing on the following topics: general information, composition, status, communication among its members, activities, and skills of community members. Finally, the questionnaire also reviews current challenges faced by community organizations following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

R2P also reached out to translators who have been working with UNHCR partners in assisting refugees and asylum seekers and asked them for additional valuable information on potential

respondents for the research. Visits were made to places that are instrumental in providing community support, including Mosques in Kyiv. Various Ukrainian Universities were contacted to inquire about possible groups providing mutual aid to international students and youth.

The mapping identified a total of 20 community organizations comprising asylum seekers, refugees, and complementary protection holders, of which 14 were still active. The list of the community organizations identified in the mapping could be classified according to their main distinctive feature.

A classification of community organizations based on their primary distinctive feature

Community organizations with a political background

- **Azerbaijani Popular Front Party** (Kharkiv)
- **Free Belarus Center** (Kyiv)
- **Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine** (Drohobych, Lviv oblast)

Religious community organizations

- **Ar-Rakhma Mosque on Lukyanivska Street** (Kyiv)
- **Cultural Centre and Mosque on Dehtiarivska Street** (Kyiv)
- **Liberating Word** (Kyiv)

Community organizations based on nationality or geographic origin

- **African Council in Ukraine** (Kyiv)
- **National-cultural Union — Afghan Community** (Odesa)
- **Foundation Friendship** (Odesa)
- **Refugee Viber Chat** (Kyiv)
- **Home in Ukraine** (Kharkiv)
- **Syrians** (Kharkiv)
- **Ikhsan-Shchyryst** (Drohobych)
- **Syrians** (Kyiv)
- **Khurasan** (Kharkiv)
- **Tatar-Bashkir Community** (Odesa)

Women's and youth communities

- **Al Masar** (Odesa)
- **United Youth** (Odesa)
- **Atiaf** (Mukachevo)
- **Ukrainian Muslimahs League** (Odesa)

Partners sent a questionnaire to 30 respondents to collect the data reviewed in this report. In addition, representatives of two Mosques providing service to Muslims of different nationalities and legal statuses in Kyiv were also interviewed.

All respondents were informed of the mapping's purpose and confirmed in writing their consent to the inclusion of their input in the mapping without disclosing personal details.

On 28 July 2023, UNHCR presented preliminary findings in a meeting held with partner organizations working with refugees and asylum seekers, as well as practitioners from other

international or national organizations and institutions, and members of refugee community organizations. Participants were also consulted on the next steps for the mapping.

On the 31st of August, the results of the mapping were also reviewed in a focus group discussion held with four leaders of community organizations. The organizations that took part in the meeting were NGO Afghan Foundation Friendship, Free Belarus Centre, IC Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine, and NCA Afghan Community. Participants discussed the challenges they face in communicating with refugees and asylum seekers, and involving them in their activities.



Al Masar Cultural Center and a representative of the Ukrainian Muslimahs League treated to traditional oriental sweets and Arabic coffee. Odesa, July 2023. Photo by TTA

KEY FINDINGS

This section provides an overview of the data collected about the community organizations

identified in the mapping and still active in Ukraine.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

70 percent of the active community organizations are located in two particular oblasts: Odesa and Kyiv.

Odesa oblast has six organizations: NCU — Afghan Community, United Youth, Foundation Friendship, Ukrainian Muslimahs League, Al Masar, and the Tatar-Bashkir Community. Four organizations operate in Kyiv city and Kyiv oblast: the Ar-Rakhma Mosque, the Cultural Center and Mosque on Dehtiarivska Street, the Free Belarus Center, and the African Council in Ukraine. The concentration of community structures in these two oblasts reflects the geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine (see above section “Background — refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine”). These two oblasts continued to host the majority of refugees and asylum seekers in contact with UNHCR after the start of the war (see above section Background — refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine). The profile of both oblasts can also explain the higher number of refugees

and asylum seekers compared to the rest of the country. As major urban and economic centers, both Kyiv and Odesa offer substantial opportunities and amenities for refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into Ukraine.⁴

Other community organizations of refugees and asylum seekers can also be found elsewhere in Ukraine. For example, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers originating from Azerbaijan mostly live in Kharkiv and Chuhuiv (Kharkiv oblast), where the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party is also located. The Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine has its central information office in Drohobych, Lviv oblast, where many Crimean Tatars relocated, including the community leader. Ikhsan-Shchyryst is also located in Drohobych. Many refugees and asylum seekers from different post-Soviet countries have found support from both organizations and reside in the same area.

However, community organizations can operate as networks across the country. While the African Council in Ukraine is mostly present in Kyiv, the organization comprises active members residing in various regions of Ukraine such as Kharkiv, Lviv, Odesa, Ternopil, Vinnytsia, and Volyn oblasts. As an umbrella organization, the League of Muslim Women in Ukraine brings together active female members from around ten organizations in different oblasts of Ukraine: Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Sumy, Vinnytsia, and Zaporizhzhia.

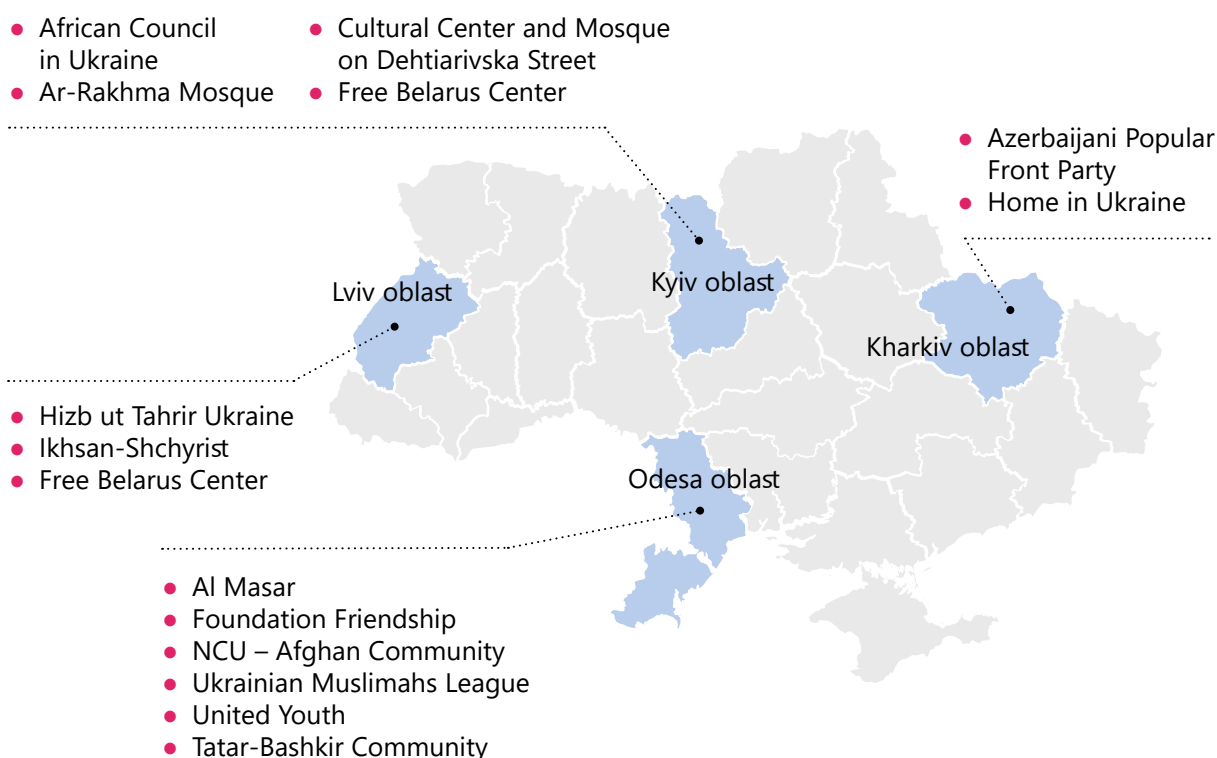
70%
**of the active community
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⁴ What makes capital cities the best places to live? <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/publications/policy-brief/2020/what-makes-capital-cities-the-best-places-to-live>

While most of the refugees and asylum seekers from the Russian Federation reside in the Odesa and Kyiv oblasts, smaller numbers are also located in other oblasts (such as Lviv and Kharkiv). The dispersion of this group of

refugees, asylum seekers, and other citizens of the Russian Federation explains the choice of social media as the main form of community organization.

Geographical distribution of the community organizations



PROFILE AND MANDATE

The history and identity of the community groups identified in the mapping are diverse. Community organizations supporting refugees and asylum seekers also have religious or political backgrounds. Several community organizations were created to support particular groups but progressively reach out to other groups of refugees and asylum seekers. Other groups intended from the start to support people beyond refugees and asylum seekers. This section reviews examples illustrating these patterns.

Religious organizations and institutions are critical community structures for refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine, particularly for Muslims. They provide vital support to mental well-being and social welfare to worshippers. Emotional support and preventing feelings of sadness and loneliness resulting from expatriation are key activities of all the Mosques and communities united around the religious background.

The Ukrainian Muslimahs League has a long history dating back to the 1990s when religious organizations started developing alongside Ukraine gaining its independence. Initially, Muslim women were a part of the Islamic Cultural Centers that appeared in different Ukrainian cities. They organized meetings and events to protect Muslim women's and children's welfare, health, and education. In 2018, these women separated from the centers and established the Muslim Women of Ukraine as an umbrella organization that protects the rights and interests of Muslim female representatives, children, and adolescents.

In Kyiv, two important Mosques provide significant community support to refugees and asylum seekers, bringing larger communities together that have been functioning on the territory of Ukraine for many years.

The Mosque and Cultural Center on Detharivska Street and the Mosque Ar-Rakhma

on Lukyanivska Street belong to the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (RAMU) called "Umma." Registered in September 2008, RAMU brought together 30 religious communities in Donetsk oblast (7), Kyiv oblast (5), Luhansk oblast (4), and Dnipropetrovsk oblast (2). RAMU has consistently expressed its support for a strong Ukrainian State while calling for building an atmosphere of mutual support and trust in Ukrainian society and establishing interreligious and intercultural dialogue. Besides religious functions, RAMU runs an Islamic library, a Muslim radio, a publishing house, a media center Islamic Media, a school, and an Islamic University. RAMU claims an intercontinental membership. The majority are Crimean Tatars, Volga Tatars, Azerbaijanis, Turks, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, representatives of the peoples of the North Caucasus, Arabs, Afghans, Pakistanis, Chechens, Dagestanis, and others.



Representatives of the NCU-Afghan Community in national costumes. Odesa, July 2023. Photo by TTA

Some community organizations supporting refugees and asylum seekers have been created for political purposes.

For example, that is the case of the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party, an exiled opposition party. It is worth mentioning that this party is not present in Ukraine only and has a cross-border dimension, with branches in various countries. Its branch in Ukraine brings many Azeri migrants and refugees together, mostly residing in Kharkiv. Besides political activities, the group provides opportunities for community gatherings at their homes or the funerals of compatriots. Another example of a community organization with a political identity is the Free Belarus Center which was created in 2020 in the wake of the presidential elections in Belarus and the wave of repression against civil society representatives which forced many Belarusians to leave the country and find protection in neighboring countries.

Refugees and asylum seekers share the forced displacement experience with other communities displaced within Ukraine and receive support from organizations stemming from these communities.

In 2018, PO Ikhsan-Shchyrist in Drohobych (Lviv oblast) opened the Cultural Center of Crimean Tatars to host cultural celebrations, learning sessions for men, women, and children, and official meetings. The Cultural Centre provides support to refugees and asylum seekers from post-Soviet countries, namely Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, and helps them to find their place in the new town and provides assistance in responding to the problems of daily life.

Some communities unite based on ethnicity or nationality. The African Council in Ukraine was officially registered in 2010 to unite African migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, to protect their rights in Ukraine. The organization's history dates back to the late 90s



Cultural event to unite refugees and IDPs. Kyiv, November 2023. Photo by Rokada

when there were numerous attacks on Africans in different cities across the country. Today, the African Council serves as a bridge between the two cultures by organizing exhibitions, round tables, and cultural events to familiarize Ukrainians with African culture, history, traditions, clothing, and art. The organization is committed to combating xenophobia, racism, and prejudice in Ukraine.

Some communities come together to promote particular age group and their integration into Ukrainian society. That is the case of the United Youth in Odesa. Similar groups are also focusing on the integration of women (Ukrainian Muslimahs League and Al Masar).

MEMBERSHIP AND ADMISSION

Only a minority of the community organizations identified in the mapping exclusively comprise refugees or asylum seekers. Most community organizations are open to all foreigners sharing a common feature such as a country or region of origin, a religion, or the experience of displacement and migration.

80%

**of the community organizations
have migrants (with temporary
or permanent resident permits)
among their members**

That is also the case of the Free Belarus Center, where migrants represent 90 percent of its members. This is also the case of the Home in Ukraine TG chat for Russian citizens, which has only 10 percent refugees and asylum seekers among its members, the rest being migrants granted residence or work permits on other grounds.

With Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the membership of community organizations has changed significantly. This is the case of the Ukrainian Muslimahs League, which currently comprises 60 percent Ukrainians (local women and IDPs), 35 percent migrants, and 5 percent refugees and asylum seekers, whereas, before February 2022, members of the League were mostly refugees and asylum seekers (60 percent) and migrants (40 percent).

Several community organizations have Ukrainian nationals among their members. That is the case of the National-Cultural Association Afghan Community, which has 40 percent Afghan

migrants, 10 percent refugees, and 50 percent Ukrainians among its members. Around 60 percent of the members of the African Council in Ukraine are migrants, while 30 percent are naturalized Ukrainian citizens or individuals born into families of African-Ukrainian heritage and who have obtained Ukrainian citizenship. Only 10 percent of its members are refugees and asylum seekers. Another example is the Belarusian group in Kyiv, with 5 percent of its members being Ukrainian nationals. It should also be noted that 20 percent of the Free Belarus Center's staff are Ukrainian nationals.

Half of the members of the PO National-cultural Union — Afghan Community are mostly people with Afghan heritage as members, including Afghans who obtained Ukrainian nationality alongside Ukrainian spouses. In contrast, the Afghan Refugee Viber group was exclusively for Afghan refugees and asylum seekers. Before the invasion, it did not allow individuals who had obtained Ukrainian citizenship through naturalization. The administrators of the Viber group and its leader, a translator, thoroughly checked the legal status of those wishing to join the chat and excluded those members who obtained Ukrainian citizenship, arguing that they were not as vulnerable as refugees and asylum seekers and did not require support from the group.

Some community organizations accept new members upon a vote from members or management. For example, the management council of the PO Ikhsan-Shchyrist decides on the admission of new members.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS

Most of the community groups mapped also experienced a significant reduction in their members since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, especially among refugees and asylum seekers.

First, several groups have almost lost their entire basis in Ukraine and ceased to exist. That is the case of some Afghan community organizations, which were vibrant before the invasion. Their leaders have moved abroad to seek safety from the war in Ukraine. Most Afghan refugees and asylum seekers living in Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa before the war fled to various European countries. Two community organizations from these groups (the Afghan Community Khurasan in Kharkiv, and the Afghan Viber group Refugee in Kyiv) stopped functioning within Ukraine as almost all their members fled abroad and maintained communication among them solely via chats and messenger apps.

Although Syrians were one of the main refugee groups in Ukraine before February 2022, they did not create strong community organizations. According to respondents, Syrian refugees and asylum seekers prefer to keep their distance from other compatriots. The majority of Syrian communities, who were based in Kharkiv and Kyiv, fled Ukraine to the Netherlands or Germany. As a result, the few Syrians who remained in Ukraine after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine scattered across different Ukrainian cities with no known structures or channels to unite them.

70%
of their members
lost community organizations
on average in 2022

The loss can be as high as 95 percent (the African Council of Ukraine). The Afghan NGO Foundation Friendship lost 75 percent of its members, NGO Al Masar — 70 percent, the Free Belarus Center — 50 percent, and the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party — 20 percent.

However, a few community organizations have also regained a few members as they returned to Ukraine. For instance, 80 percent of the members of the National-Cultural Union — Afghan Community had fled abroad as a result of the war in Ukraine, but 20–30 percent of them have returned since.

Religious groups have also experienced a considerable decrease in their members. In particular, the Mosque on Dehtiarivska Street regularly hosted up to 1,500 worshippers before the invasion. In 2023, approximately 300 people regularly attend the Mosque. Most refugees from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian territories, who used to be among the regular attendees earlier, fled Ukraine to Europe.

Only a few community organizations have expanded in 2022 and 2023, mainly as virtual groups. Most notably, this is the case of the Russian TG chat Home in Ukraine, with around 3200 members. The group has been expanding considerably, with approximately 300 people joining the group monthly. Since 2022, Russian citizens have been the largest group of refugees and asylum seekers, comprising 38 percent in 2022 and 40 percent in 2023 of refugees and asylum seekers in contact with UNHCR in Ukraine. Also, a group of Afghan citizens living now mainly abroad and chatting on Viber expanded as many compatriots needed support and practical advice on survival in wartime.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

50% of the community organizations have a formal management body at their head. Among them, all community organizations in Odesa are registered organizations, with an elected council as a governing body, with a President or Chairperson, and people with other functions (vice presidents, secretaries, and heads of departments or different activity branches).

Community organizations that are established as TG chats or Viber groups are managed by volunteer administrators. That is the case of the Afghan Viber group Refugee and Russian TG chat Home in Ukraine. The latter has seven

administrators, including four women. The Afghan community group had three administrators before Russia invaded Ukraine, of whom two were women. Both groups had administrators who had been appointed without a fixed term.

50%
of the community organizations
have a formal management
body at their head



Master class on cooking Ukrainian cuisine for refugees and IDPs. Kyiv, November 2023. Photo by Rokada

Women are always among them. All administrators must know at least one or two foreign languages, how to use computers and other devices or applications, and have completed higher education.

The participation of women in group management differs among organizations. Women occupy several leadership positions in the organizational structure of the Free Belarus Centre. Some groups established specific sections or subgroups for women. IO Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine has a women's branch headed by women. Women established the Ukrainian Muslimahs League and managed it with an 8-member committee. When not part of the management team (for instance, the religious group Liberating Word and NGO NCA The Afghan Community), female members may be actively involved and lead particular activities. That is the case with education activities, where women are particularly involved in organizing and providing classes and training in Sunday schools.

COMMUNICATION WITH MEMBERS

Refugee community groups in Ukraine use various communication channels such as messaging apps like Viber, Telegram, and WhatsApp, as well as social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Zoom. The Free Belarus Center's representatives also use Twitter and Signal and plan meetings using MS Team. Face-to-face meetings are held regularly in community centers such as Islamic Cultural Centers, Mosques, or in public places like cafes. Some Odesa refugee community representatives mentioned they even used satellite communication systems to stay in touch with members during regular blackouts in the late Autumn of 2022 — early Spring of 2023.

Two nationality groups (nationals from the Russian Federation and Belarus) often opt for low-profile communication among their members due to fear of hostility from the Ukrainian population. These nationals prefer to communicate online and only occasionally meet in person in small groups. Nationals from these countries are not admitted into the asylum procedure in most oblasts and face problems obtaining or extending residence permits, causing fear of

deportation. They cannot prolong their passport due to the absence of consular services from their countries in Ukraine from the end of February 2022.

The COVID pandemic pushed community organizations to develop or strengthen virtual groups to maintain contact with their members.

That is the case of the Afghan Viber group Refugee created in March 2020. The group helped participants apply for UNHCR assistance. They still communicate online, including with members dispersed throughout Europe because of the war in Ukraine.

Websites that are both engaging and informative are valuable means of communication for both migrants and locals. Several organizations have developed substantial websites, including the Free Belarus Center, the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine, the IO Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine, and the Ukrainian Muslimahs League. They use their sites to present their work, share information with their members, and invite interested parties to support them.

ACTIVITIES

The mapping questionnaire requested community organizations to list the types of activities they implement and to indicate the level of prevalence of these activities in their overall work.

The NGO NCA The Afghan Community, NGO Foundation Friendship, NGO AL Masar, the Ukrainian Muslimahs League, and IO Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine are the top five refugee community organizations that conduct the broadest range of activities in support of their members.

In general, cultural events, legal assistance, activities for women and youth, and language

classes are the most common activities run by community organizations. They all aim at the well-being and legal protection of the community members, as well as their integration into Ukrainian society.

On the other hand, the activities that appear to be the least developed include support to business and employment, vocational training, financial and material assistance, raising awareness in host communities, and evacuating from unsafe areas. These activities may require more significant funding and may depend on external support.

Activities of the refugee community organizations

Community names	Support to youth	support to women	Advocacy (national, oblast local level)	Cultural events	Material or financial assistance	Legal support	Language classes	Vocational training	Business and employment support	Awareness of host communities	Evacuation from unsafe areas
African Council in Ukraine	High prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence		Low prevalence	Medium prevalence	Low prevalence
Al Masar	High prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	Medium prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence
Azerbaijani Popular Front Party					High prevalence	High prevalence					
Foundation Friendship	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence
Free Belarus Center	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence		High prevalence	Low prevalence			High prevalence	High prevalence
Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	Medium prevalence
Home in Ukraine TG chat			Low prevalence		Low prevalence	High prevalence					Low prevalence
Ikhsan-Shchyrist	High prevalence	High prevalence		High prevalence	Medium prevalence		Medium prevalence				
National Cultural Union – Afghan Community	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence
Tatar-Bashkir Community	High prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	Medium prevalence	Low prevalence
Ukrainian Muslimahs League	High prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence
United Youth	High prevalence	High prevalence		High prevalence			High prevalence				
Community organizations inactive since 2022											
Atiaf	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence			Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence	High prevalence	High prevalence
Khurasan				High prevalence	Low prevalence	High prevalence			Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence	
Liberating Word				High prevalence	Medium prevalence		Medium prevalence				Medium prevalence
Viber chat Refugee		High prevalence		High prevalence		High prevalence					
Syrian groups in Kyiv			High prevalence		Medium prevalence	High prevalence					
Syrians in Kharkiv		Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence	Medium prevalence			High prevalence	High prevalence	Medium prevalence		

● High prevalence
 ● Medium prevalence
 ● Low prevalence

Certain groups carry out humanitarian activities to assist people in situations of vulnerability. One such group is the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party, which has ten active members residing in Kharkiv. They regularly meet to discuss current events and coordinate the delivery of humanitarian aid from abroad. Additionally, they provide financial assistance to their members in case of need. The members of PO Ikhsan-Shchyrist also help coordinate the humanitarian aid sent from abroad.

Some groups extend their assistance beyond members of their community. This is the case of the African Council in Ukraine which provides humanitarian aid to vulnerable Ukrainian nationals in need. The African Council's members were also involved in cleaning up destroyed areas of Irpin, Bucha, and Hostomel as volunteers. Additionally, they offer assistance with document translation and interpretation services for migrants whenever needed.

From the first day of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, RAMU activists and volunteers actively contributed to the humanitarian response. RAMU communities offered refuge to migrants, distributed food and medicine, and assisted with evacuations.

The Ukrainian Muslimahs League shares information on its Facebook account about its humanitarian activities in different oblasts of Ukraine, including the distribution of first aid kits, water, clothes, and hot food to local populations.

One of the Russian TG chat Home in Ukraine administrators states they regularly collectively donate to the Ukrainian Army.

Advocacy for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers does not seem to have a strong prevalence in the activities of the community organizations mapped. There are a few exceptions and notable achievements, such as the creation of the Coordinating Council of Refugee Communities in Odesa in 2021. Refugee community



NCU-Afghan Community. Odesa, July 2023. Photo by TTA

groups led this initiative in Odesa with the support of TTA. The Council meetings were attended by representatives from the Migration Service and city and regional departments and tackled important issues surrounding the development of refugees in the host society. As a result, the refugee communities could

sign a general appeal to the Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for human rights, advocating for asylum seekers' access to free medical care in Ukraine. That has been a significant step towards promoting the rights of refugees and asylum seekers in the country.

LEGAL STATUS

50 percent of the community organizations are formally registered. The statuses of registration include:

- Public, non-profit organizations — 9 (+ 1 is in the process of registration as a public, non-profit organization).
- Charitable foundation — 1.
- Religious non-governmental organization — 1.

50%

**of the community organizations
are formally registered**

Community organizations that are officially registered engage in a wider range of activities than unregistered community groups. Registered

organizations implement an average of nine activities, whereas non-registered organizations have only an average of five activities.

Examples of community organizations that are not formally registered include the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party and the Islamic Information Office Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine. Both parties belong to larger cross-border organizations. They are registered outside of Ukraine and have strong online platforms, through social media and mobile networks. The Tatar-Bashkir Cultural Center in Odesa is a young community in the process of registration as a public organization. As of July 2023, the organization had up to 30–40 members, including Ukrainians, IDPs, migrants, and refugees, and expected to grow further. Other groups lack the capacity and leadership required for formal status, or, as groups based mostly on social media communication, do not require registration.

CAPACITIES AND SKILLS

Community organizations often include highly qualified professionals and people with higher educational backgrounds among their members or staff. That is the case of the Free Belarus Center, which employs professional lawyers to provide legal services to people seeking asylum or other legal assistance. The Center has 20 staff members on its payroll in Ukraine

and Poland. Representatives from virtual community groups indicated that they preferably consider applicants with a strong educational background and proficiency in multiple languages to be administrators for their group. This was stated to be the practice in the Afghan Viber group Refugee and the Russian TG chat Home in Ukraine.

Community organizations also include professionals in new economic sectors, including social media managers or designers and IT specialists. That is the case of the TG chat Home in Ukraine and the IO Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine. Project managers can be found among members of the NGO United Youth members. Afghan community organizations include several female teachers. Journalists among the Azerbaijani Popular Front Party and the Free Belarus Center

members support the communication of the organization.

Representatives from the African Council in Ukraine are often asked to ensure translations and interpretations for their members as many participants know French, Spanish, English, Arabic, Portuguese, and Russian, and, mostly for younger members, a good command of Ukrainian. Most of their members are highly educated and have academic degrees, including a doctorate, mostly among non-refugee members.

CURRENT CHALLENGES

This section reviews the challenges and developments that community organizations have been experiencing as a result of the war in Ukraine. These were indicated in the mapping questionnaire and discussed in the focus group.

Expanding activities in response to the war in Ukraine

Several community organizations have expressed their support for Ukraine in the war against the Russian Federation. For instance, RAMU stated on 6 November 2023 that the organization confirmed its support to Ukraine in its war against the Russian Federation. While continuing its work in support of the development and strengthening of civil society, as well as education and interfaith dialogue, Umma states its “support [for] the territorial integrity and independence of our state, work in the interests of Ukraine and Ukrainian Muslims”.⁵ RAMU also claims to continue informational activities “to convey the truth about the war in Ukraine and the aggression of the Russian Federation to the Muslim audience abroad”.

Other groups have also extended their assistance beyond their members in support of the Ukrainian population in general. That is the case of the African Council in Ukraine, providing humanitarian aid not only to its members but to the Ukrainian nationals in need. The African Council has also been involved in cleaning up destroyed areas of Irpin, Bucha, and Hostomel and in supporting their reconstruction.

Destruction and disruption of activities

As a result of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, at least three mosques belonging to the RAMU communities were destroyed or seriously damaged, and some Muslim communities had to stop their activities in areas under the temporary military control of the Russian Federation.

Need to maintain activities with a small membership

Due to the war, all groups experienced a massive exodus of their members. They now have to function with a considerably reduced capacity.

⁵ Notice Of The General Meeting Of The Spiritual Administration Of Muslims Of Ukraine «Umma», 6 November 2022. <https://umma.in.ua/en/node/3213>

Organizations lack active members to coordinate activities. NGO United Youth learned to survive in the absence of its leaders who fled abroad, or trying to establish contact with members who fled or lost contact. Members who wish to return to Ukraine may face obstacles, often due to the lack of identification documents. For instance, the NGO National-cultural Union — Afghan Community mentioned that their male members remained in Ukraine while their families fled abroad, often without identity or travel documents. As a result, they now face difficulties returning to Ukraine. Many Syrian families (mostly granted complementary protection in Ukraine) fled Ukraine without identification documents. They are often not considered eligible for temporary protection in EU countries but cannot return to Ukraine.⁶

Financial constraints

Around 30 percent of the community organizations mapped reported lacking adequate funding to maintain their activities and network. That is the case of the Ukrainian Muslimahs League, NGO Foundation Friendship, and NGO United Youth, which mentioned they lack support to implement their projects. NGO Al Masar lacks resources to complete the construction of the Islamic Cultural Center in Odesa, as planned before the outbreak of the war.

Financial support to community organizations by their members may also be hampered by

the bank accounts blocked in Ukrainian banks, to which certain groups have been subjected (Belarusian and Russian nationals).

Discrimination

The precarious status of asylum seekers hampers their engagement in community activities. This is the case of Russian and Belarusian nationals who face considerable challenges and pressure, which hamper their ability to engage in community activities. Often members of these communities stay in Ukraine with expired travel documents, which cannot be renewed following the closure of consular services from their countries in Ukraine. Russian and Belarusian nationals fear being arrested and deported. The State Migration Service of Ukraine (SMS) often refuses to register asylum applications by Russian nationals who may fear for their safety if returned to the Russian Federation. Their lack of access to financial and banking services also makes them unable to access humanitarian cash assistance. Additionally, they may face discrimination based on nationality when registering for certain services.

Although already observed before the invasion of Ukraine, prejudices continued to be experienced by women in hijabs in Ukraine. Women wearing a hijab face additional challenges in being accepted and respected as trustworthy interlocutors in Ukrainian society.

⁶ Protection Facing Non-Ukrainian Asylum Seekers and Refugees Fleeing Ukraine to the EU. <https://r2p.org.ua/page/protection-risks-facing-non-ukrainian-asylum-seekers-and-refugees-fleeing-ukraine-to-the-eu>

RECOMMENDATIONS

The overview of community organizations of refugees and asylum seekers presents a wide variety of groups, which is undoubtedly even greater in reality. This mapping did not include, for example, the solidarity networks that may exist in the economic sector, such as the networks between merchants in markets, where many migrants are present. The network of Islamic institutions goes beyond those contacted for the mapping. The mapping also did not focus on solidarity groups led by Ukrainian nationals in local communities which could in particular offer 'community sponsorship' for the integration of refugees or the reception of asylum seekers.

As a result of Russia's war on Ukraine, community organizations for refugees and asylum seekers in Ukraine have been weakened, mostly by losing a significant number of their members who fled Ukraine like millions of Ukrainians. Only a small number of organizations have gained new members among the national groups already present in Ukraine and who find themselves in precarious situations in Ukraine due to their nationality. Community organizations, however, retain considerable potential. They have adapted to the new context in particular by developing or strengthening network links through social media. Their capacity to welcome and support refugees and asylum seekers, even weakened, remains available. While the Ukrainian State continues to rely largely on humanitarian organizations for the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers, the capacity of communities remains a critical support, undoubtedly underexploited. A policy and action plan for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees must include community

organizations as partners associated with their development and implementation.

Community organizations for refugees and asylum seekers present very different profiles, including informal groups or duly registered associations, organizations with a mutual aid vocation or relying on political or religious structures, national networks, or locally anchored organizations. Involving community organizations in the protection of refugees and asylum seekers cannot be done according to a single model and must rather be modulated according to capacities and motivations. A political organization offering solidarity support to refugees and asylum seekers cannot be supported for its humanitarian activities by the UNHCR but can be part of an information dissemination network or participate in basic training on the protection of refugees or asylum seekers. On the contrary, a solidarity group between refugee women or a community center open to refugees and asylum seekers without exclusion can be part of the structures that a support program can target as part of a protection program.

The recommendations below should be read in light of these considerations and adapted to the context, the profile of community organizations, and their potential.

To state authorities

- Ensure that refugee community organizations can participate in decision-making regarding system of protection and integration. The forum for annual consultation with civil society organizations including community organizations of asylum seekers and refugees could be considered an opportunity to hear their concerns and

recommendations and share information on key developments relating to asylum policy.

- Develop a plan for the reception and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in cooperation with refugee community organizations.
- Sponsor access to free Ukrainian language courses for refugees and asylum seekers.

To refugee community organizations

- Initiate opportunities for exchange with other refugee community organizations in Ukraine and create networks for information sharing and consultation on advocacy or other possible joint or coordinated initiatives.
- Ensure the equal participation of women in their leadership and management structures.
- Ensure the explicit inclusion of refugees and asylum seekers in their mission statement and designate contact persons to focus on their protection.
- Reach out to refugees and asylum seekers to ensure their access to the assistance provided, for instance through social media or other networks, with the view to extend support to refugees and asylum seekers living in isolation or outside main urban centers.
- Approach and maintain a regular dialogue with local authorities at the hromada (local) or oblast level to establish constructive

connections and strengthen access to relevant public services or other opportunities.

- Liaise with other civil society networks at the local or national level and create connections with humanitarian or development non-governmental organizations which may support their organizational development, advocacy, or protection services.

To NGOs and International organizations

- Ensure regular consultations and exchanges with refugee community organizations, including through annual meetings
- Support the exchange of experiences among community organizations, through the creation of a network among these organizations, or workshops
- Develop a plan for the development of community organizations, including capacity strengthening, and support for their visibility and acceptance in Ukrainian society
- Support the capacity of refugee community structures to provide essential protection services, including access to information, psychosocial counseling, and referral
- Facilitate communication between refugee community organizations and national/local authorities and public services
- Support the creation or maintenance of community centers that can shelter activities of the refugee community in major urban centers

ANNEXES

ANNEX #1

Refugee community organizations mapped in this research

Active (as of August 2023)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 African Council in Ukraine (Kyiv) | 8 Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine (Drohobych, Lviv oblast) |
| 2 Al Masar (Odesa) | 9 Home in Ukraine (Kharkiv) |
| 3 Ar-Rakhma Mosque on Lukianivska Street (Kyiv) | 10 Ikhsan-Shchyrist (Drohobych, Lviv oblast) |
| 4 Azerbaijani Popular Front Party (Kharkiv) | 11 National-Cultural Union — Afghan Community (Odesa) |
| 5 Cultural Centre and Mosque on Dehtiarivska Street (Kyiv) | 12 Tatar-Bashkir Community (Odesa) |
| 6 Foundation Friendship (Odesa) | 13 Ukrainian Muslimahs League (Odesa) |
| 7 Free Belarus Center (Kyiv) | 14 United Youth (Odesa) |

Inactive (as of August 2023)

- | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| 15 Atiaf (Mukachevo, Zakarpattia oblast) | 18 Viber Chat Refugee (Kyiv) |
| 16 Khurasan (Kharkiv) | 19 Syrians (Kharkiv) |
| 17 Liberating Word (Kyiv) | 20 Syrians (Kyiv) |

1 **African Council in Ukraine** (Kyiv)



It was registered in 2010 as an NGO to unite migrants and refugees from African countries living throughout Ukraine, protect the rights of Africans and Afro-Ukrainians, and help them integrate into Ukrainian society. Their leadership participates in councils and committees to represent national minorities in Ukraine, discuss proposed laws, and offer amendments. At the beginning of the war, 95–97 percent of the

members fled abroad. After the invasion, this community assisted in evacuating and accommodating a refugee who also had a disability. They continue to support refugees and asylum seekers upon request. In 2023, only 10–15 active members are staying in the country.

Activities of the organization

- **HIGH PREVALENCE**
 - Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
 - Cultural events
 - Support to youth

● MEDIUM PREVALENCE

- Awareness of host communities
- Support to women

● LOW PREVALENCE

- Business and employment support
- Evacuation from unsafe areas

- Language classes
- Legal support
- Material or financial assistance
- Vocational training

 facebook.com/groups/307509039299156

 *Hasn't functioned since the invasion*

2 **Al Masar (Odesa)**



Al Masar is registered as an NGO functioning under the umbrella organization of the Ukrainian Muslimahs League, having branches in ten different cities in Ukraine. It operates in Odesa to safeguard the rights and interests of community members and preserve and develop cultural traditions and educational activities for women, children, and youth. For refugees and asylum seekers, they provide translation services, support and mentor them and provide humanitarian aid on a case-by-case basis. Nearly 70 percent of its members have fled abroad, depriving the organization of a critical funding basis. The management of the NGO highlighted their insufficient knowledge of Ukrainian laws and language, as well as their lack of experience in advocacy for rights and local integration.

Activities of the organization

● HIGH PREVALENCE

- Awareness of host communities
- Cultural events
- Evacuation from unsafe areas
- Support to women
- Support to youth

● MEDIUM PREVALENCE

- Business and employment support
- Material or financial assistance
- Vocational training

● LOW PREVALENCE

- Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
- Language classes
- Legal support

 facebook.com/almasar.araaid

 almasar.araaid@gmail.com

3 **Ar-Rakhma Mosque on Lukianivska Street (Kyiv)**



The Ar-Rakhma Mosque is the first and largest Mosque in Kyiv. It officially opened in November 2011 in a neighborhood where Muslims have traditionally settled. Before

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the Mosque Ar-Rakhma accommodated up to 3000 worshippers from Tajikistan, Syria, Afghanistan, Lebanon, and other countries. Apart from religious functions, this Islamic complex provides other services, such as an Islamic library, a Muslim radio, a publishing house, a media center, Islamic Media, a school, and an Islamic University. The management pays

special attention to poor Muslims including refugees and asylum seekers, providing them with humanitarian assistance whenever possible. The Mosque also provides free religious

education and reaches out to the private sector for funding social activities.⁷

 islam.ua

 info@islam.ua

4 **Azerbaijani Popular Front Party** (Kharkiv)



The Azerbaijani Popular Front Party in Ukraine is a group of around 100 migrants and refugees living in Kharkiv and Kharkiv oblast. It is not formally registered in Ukraine. The party has members in Azerbaijan, France, Germany, and Ukraine. The party established its presence in Ukraine in 2014. Members volunteer their time and resources to collect financial and humanitarian aid for those in need. They also assist with obtaining necessary documents and provide financial support

for refugees and asylum seekers. Small groups of active members regularly meet in person or online to discuss current affairs and coordinate humanitarian aid sent by compatriots abroad. The party lost approximately 20 percent of its members after February 2022. Its Facebook pages have been occasionally blocked, especially after February 2022.

Activities of the organization

- HIGH PREVALENCE
- Material or financial assistance
- Legal support

 facebook.com/genclerkomitesi

5 **Cultural Centre and Mosque** **on Dehtiarivska Street** (Kyiv)



The Mosque has a capacity for about 1,500 worshippers but is currently visited regularly by only 300 people. Most refugees from Iraq,

Syria, Afghanistan, and Palestine, who used to be among regular attendees earlier, fled Ukraine to Europe. The Mosque organizes and distributes food and humanitarian aid sent from overseas or collected by regular attendees to the displaced people most in need.⁸

 muslims.in.ua

 office@arraid.org

⁷ The mosque belongs to the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine (RAMU), the religious umbrella organization registered in Kyiv that brings together Muslim communities from different oblasts in Ukraine. RAMU organizes and registers communities, provides training for imams and parishioners, assists with mosque and prayer room construction and organization, hosts events and holidays, and manages educational activities. At the beginning of 2022, RAMU united more than 30 active communities. Russia's invasion of Ukraine had a significant impact on the activities of RAMU. At least three mosques were destroyed.

⁸ See footnote 7 above.

6 **Foundation Friendship** (Odesa)



It was established as PO in 2009, uniting about 1000 Afghan nationals residing in Odesa, including refugees, migrants with residence permits, and Ukrainian nationals. It aimed to promote cultural and educational projects that facilitate the integration of Afghans into Ukrainian society. Before the invasion, the organization had a school, providing lessons to all members, including refugees and asylum seekers. After the 24th of February 2022, the leadership remaining in the country continued to assist those who left online, helping them obtain necessary legal consultation and psychological support. Issues faced by members include reunification with family members abroad, access to protection in Europe, and return to Ukraine without travel documents lost during the war in Ukraine.

Activities of the organization

- **HIGH PREVALENCE**
 - Cultural events
 - Evacuation from unsafe areas
 - Material or financial assistance
 - Language classes
 - Support to youth
- **MEDIUM PREVALENCE**
 - Awareness of host communities
 - Business and employment support
 - Legal support
- **LOW PREVALENCE**
 - Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
 - Support to women
 - Vocational training

📘 facebook.com/fundfriendship

📧 fundfriendship@gmail.com

7 **Free Belarus Center** (Kyiv, Lviv, Warsaw)



The Free Belarus Center started operating in Kyiv as an NGO in February 2022, to provide primary legal assistance to Belarusian nationals, including refugees who fled Belarus for political reasons. The Centre currently has offices in Kyiv and Lviv. Around 200 Belarusian refugees and migrants are in contact with the Centre. The Centre has about 20 staff members and volunteers. Upon Russia's invasion of Ukraine,

50 percent of Belarusians assisted by the Center fled to Poland, where the Centre has opened a branch office (Warsaw). The Free Belarus Center provides free legal, advisory, and psychological services, contributes to training for activists, relocates those who are facing serious concerns for their security, and advocates for the rights of Belarusian migrants and refugees, in cooperation with other organizations in Ukraine and abroad.

Activities of the organization

- **HIGH PREVALENCE**
 - Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
 - Awareness of host communities

- *Cultural events*
- *Evacuation from unsafe areas*
- *Legal support*
- *Support to women*
- *Support to youth*

● LOW PREVALENCE

- *Language classes*

🌐 freebelarus.center

@ freebelaruscenter@gmail.com

8 ***Hizb ut Tahrir Ukraine*** (Drohobych, Lviv oblast)



Hizb ut Tahrir was created in 1953 as a group of Islamic scholars united to restore the Islamic way of life by establishing the Caliphate. In Ukraine, Hizb ut Tahrir appeared as an information office, which is not registered, on the Crimean Peninsula. It unites political Islamists across the country, including the Crimean Peninsula, with a center in Drohobych, Lviv oblast. As an organization, it holds educational meetings, lectures, and feasts for Muslims and non-Muslims. Hizb ut Tahrir provides assistance to refugees and asylum seekers with regard to their legal status in Ukraine, through information, counseling, and advocacy. Hizb ut Tahrir also provides training on religious topics and language classes for youth.

Activities of the organization

● HIGH PREVALENCE

- Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
- Awareness of host communities
- Cultural events
- Legal support
- Support to women
- Support to youth

● MEDIUM PREVALENCE

- Business and employment support
- Evacuation from unsafe areas
- Material or financial assistance

● LOW PREVALENCE

- Language classes
- Vocational training

📘 facebook.com/HizbUA

🌐 hizb.org.ua

@ office@hizb.org.ua

9 ***Home in Ukraine*** (Kharkiv)



From February 2023, a Telegram (TG) chat named "Home in Ukraine" was created with the aim of offering a platform for Russian nationals residing in different cities of Ukraine to share information and concerns. The group has since

then grown to over 4,400 members and provides assistance and support to those affected by the situation. The members of the group donate to the Ukrainian Army and advocate for the rights of Russian citizens, including refugees, by drafting petitions and appeals to the Ukrainian government. The group primarily provides legal assistance to those dealing with migration issues, with the support of an attorney among its members.

Activities of the organization**HIGH PREVALENCE**

- Cultural events
- Support to women
- Support to youth

MEDIUM PREVALENCE

- Material or financial assistance
- Language classes

 t.me/homeinukraine

 homeinukraine.org/cases

10 ***Ikhsan-Shchyryst*** (Drohobych, Lviv oblast)

PO Ikhsan-Shchyryst is a registered organization that has been operating in Drohobych, Lviv oblast since 2016. In 2018, it established the Cultural Center of Crimean Tatars, which organizes cultural celebrations, learning sessions for men, women, and children, and official meetings. The organization provides temporary shelter and assistance to displaced people from Crimea or refugees from post-Soviet countries, such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan. They also collaborate with other organizations to support their members.

Activities of the organization**HIGH PREVALENCE**

- Language classes

LOW PREVALENCE

- Cultural events
- Evacuation from unsafe areas
- Legal support
- Vocational training

 facebook.com/drohobych.krym

 ihanshirist@gmail.com

11 ***National-Cultural Union — Afghan Community*** (Odesa)



Created in 1996, the organization was registered in 2001. It aims to unite the Afghan nationals of Odesa, whether migrants or refugees and facilitate their integration into Ukrainian society in cooperation with other public organizations. Until 2022, the association had officially 700 members but was reaching out to more than 2000 people. The main activities include holding cultural events, organizing training for youth, and providing legal assistance and financial and material support where necessary. Members face issues of family separation as a result of war in

Ukraine, and a lack of documents to leave or return to Ukraine. Leaders of the community organization belong to the Coordinating Council of Refugee Communities in Odesa and were actively advocating for the rights of refugees and asylum seekers until February 2022.


Activities of the organization**HIGH PREVALENCE**

- Awareness of host communities
- Cultural events
- Evacuation from unsafe areas
- Language classes
- Legal support
- Material or financial assistance
- Support to youth

● LOW PREVALENCE

- Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
- Business and employment support

- Support to women
- Vocational training

 facebook.com/afghansinodessa

12 **Tatar-Bashkir Community** (Odesa)

As of November 2023, the community was still in the process of registering as a civil society organization. The community brings together about 30–40 active members of refugees and asylum seekers from Tatarstan (Russian Federation) to facilitate their integration into Ukrainian society while preserving Tatar-Bashkir culture and language. From February 2022, the community lost many members, including people able to transmit the Tatar-Bashkir language and culture. The community collaborates with other organizations supporting migrants and refugees, for example with Tenth of April, Al Masar, and the Islamic Cultural Center in Odesa.

Activities of the organization

● HIGH PREVALENCE

- Cultural events
- Language classes
- Support to women
- Support to youth

● MEDIUM PREVALENCE

- Awareness of host communities

● LOW PREVALENCE

- Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
- Business and employment support
- Evacuation from unsafe areas
- Legal support
- Material or financial assistance
- Vocational training

13 **Ukrainian Muslimahs League** (Odesa)



In 2018, the Muslim Women branch of the Al-Raid organization decided to form the Ukrainian Muslimahs League, which is registered as an umbrella NGO. In Early 2023, the League united women's departments in several cities, including Chernivtsi, Dnipro, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Sumy, Vinnytsia, and Zaporizhzhia, which work together to develop education activities for children, to support women, to promote awareness of Muslim culture and traditions, and combat prejudices against Muslim women.

The League provides food and water to soldiers in the Ukrainian Army and visits internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, many of whom are Muslims. The League organizes and participates in humanitarian actions in different cities and collaborates with other proactive organizations including those supporting refugees and asylum seekers.

Activities of the organization

● HIGH PREVALENCE

- Business and employment support
- Cultural events
- Evacuation from unsafe areas
- Language classes, Support to women
- Support to youth
- Vocational training

● LOW PREVALENCE

- Advocacy (National, oblast, or local level)
- Awareness of host communities
- Legal support
- Material or financial assistance

🌐 muslimat.in.ua/pro-nas

📘 facebook.com/muslimat.ua

✉ info@muslimat.in.ua

14 **United Youth** (Odesa)



The organization was registered in 2018 as an NGO by a group of young people from Afghanistan living in Odesa to support youth development and integration. Activities include education, sports, community development participation, and support. From February 2022, up to 90 percent of its members, including its chair, fled abroad.

Activities of the organization

● HIGH PREVALENCE

- Cultural events
- Language classes
- Support to women
- Support to youth

📘 facebook.com/unitedyouth.org.ua

✉ unitedyouth.org.ua@gmail.com

15 **Atiaf** (Mukachevo, Zakarpattia oblast)

Inactive

This organization has ceased to exist since 2022. It was registered in February 2020 to protect the rights of refugees and other individuals in need of support in Ukraine. Atiaf provided humanitarian and legal assistance, as well as translation support. The organization had about 30 members living in Zakarpattia oblast.

16 **Khurasan** (Kharkiv)

Inactive

This organization ceased to function after the 24th of February 2022. It was an organization of Afghan refugees and migrants, mostly coming from Khurasan in Pakistan. It supported refugees and migrants with legal assistance in obtaining documents and Ukrainian residence permits. The organization cooperated with local authorities to promote the rights of Afghan migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers, living in Kharkiv. In addition, the organization provided temporary financial or humanitarian support, as well as housing.

17 *Liberating Word* (Kyiv)*Inactive*

This non-registered group was active before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, with more than 70 members, including migrants and refugees from Afghanistan, Iran, and Tajikistan. The group aimed to facilitate mutual support, including financial aid, and to provide a space for exchange and socialization among people speaking Farsi. They held cultural events and organized home visits, and language classes. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the group supported the evacuation of its members to third countries. Most of its members currently live abroad but continue to communicate online.

18 *Refugee Viber Chat* (Kyiv)*Inactive*

Until February 2022, this chat group connected up to 200 Afghan students, refugees, and asylum seekers living in Kyiv. It was managed by a volunteer, and supported by elected administrators. The chat group helped newcomers financially and with Ukrainian language classes. Challenges identified by the chat group include the need for interpreters to support Afghan women, the lack of integration opportunities, and problems obtaining the recognition of educational diplomas. Most members have fled abroad but continue communicating online.

19 *Syrian Nationals* (Kharkiv)*Inactive*

In 2018 in Kharkiv, around 50 Syrian nationals, mainly asylum seekers, organized a community Viber group headed by a translator who had lived in Ukraine for a long time and knew the Ukrainian legislation and the language. Members occasionally met in person for celebration workshops and language classes. The Viber group conducted advocacy in collaboration with the Afghan and African communities.

20 *Syrian Nationals* (Kyiv)*Inactive*

Many Syrian nationals in Kyiv created informal networks to support the development of small businesses, such as restaurants or street food stands, although they lacked the necessary documents and residence permits. After the invasion, almost all Syrians fled Ukraine to European countries, including the Netherlands or Germany.

ANNEX #2

Examples of community-based protection activities and engagement with community groups

Rokada

- In December 2020, training for a Kyiv refugee youth initiative group was conducted jointly by UNHCR, NGO Rokada, and the All-Ukraine Youth Center. Young refugees initiated a project on the social inclusion of refugees, funded through a UNHCR Community-Based Protection grant program.



- In November 2021, the Youth Integration Club, within the framework of the community project Refugees in Art Theater performance, presented the I JUST WANT TO LIVE show, which was filmed by the NGO New Life. This event was attended by various guests, including UNHCR and implementing partners' representatives, and theater critics.



R2P

- R2P engaged with five communities located in Kyiv (the Afghan Community, the Somali Community, Community of French, Russian, and Arabic speakers) and two communities in Kharkiv (Afghan and Syrian nationals), and organized a series of paralegal training to reinforce their legal awareness about the rights and duties of refugees, asylum seekers, and complementary protection holders necessary to further integration into Ukrainian society.



- R2P worked on building the resilience of refugee communities by holding group counseling for women from communities of nationals from Afghanistan, Arabic countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Cameroon, to raise awareness about reproductive health, and protection from domestic violence.



Neeka

- Under the livelihood project from UNHCR, business grants were allocated to refugees in Zakarpattia oblast, allowing them to kick-start small businesses such as cafes and restaurants in the area.



Tenth of April

- Before Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, the NGO Al Masar collaborated with NGO Success to establish a community space in Odesa, called the Integration Social Centre. Since Spring 2022, this center has been open to local communities, refugees, and other vulnerable social groups. This project was supervised by the Odesa Youth Center, attached to the Department of Domestic Politics of Odesa City Council.
- In May 2022, NGO Foundation Friendship opened the Zoo for Children Affected by Conflict as a communication platform for representatives of different communities of refugees and IDPs, promoting integration into host communities. The project also provided psychosocial support to children and adults in distress.

