



JOINT STATEMENT

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Gdańsk

Localizing Recovery in Ukraine:

From Humanitarian Partnership to Sustainable Recovery Leadership

Over the past four years, Ukraine has become one of the most important testing grounds for localization in humanitarian action. Ukrainian civil society organizations have demonstrated their ability to deliver large-scale assistance, influence policy, coordinate effectively with government institutions, and manage increasingly complex programming. The humanitarian localization agenda has produced visible gains in participation, policy influence, access to funding, and financial equity, marking an important shift from consultation towards influence¹.

At the same time, **Ukraine's recovery agenda remains far from localized.**

Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery needs will claim USD 588 billion over the coming decade², with the largest investment requirements concentrated in transport, energy, housing, commerce, and agriculture. Recovery financing is predominantly driven by the European Union and its Member States, the World Bank Group, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), G7 governments, and other international financial institutions coordinated through the Ukraine Donor Platform.

However, unlike humanitarian donors, **most recovery and development actors still do not systematically work directly with Ukrainian civil society organizations.** This creates a growing disconnect for Ukrainian NGOs, which continue to encounter fundamentally different partnership models, funding opportunities, and decision-making spaces when operating within humanitarian versus recovery frameworks.

Recovery in Ukraine remains heavily oriented toward physical infrastructure, construction, procurement, and repairs, predominantly implemented by governmental contractors and international institutions. While these investments are essential, they are insufficient on their own. A rehabilitated school shelter, an accessible administrative building,

¹ Humanitarian Advisory Group, [Localization Baseline for Ukraine: Progress Report 2025](#)

² The World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, the European Union, the United Nations, [The Fifth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA5\)](#)

a restored community centre, or a modernized healthcare facility only achieves its intended impact when people actively use and benefit from it.

The 'soft' social components of recovery are therefore equally important. Community engagement, information dissemination, awareness raising, social cohesion initiatives, mental health and psychosocial support, youth participation, support to vulnerable groups, livelihoods programming, and local economic development are all necessary to transform infrastructure investments into meaningful and sustainable outcomes. Yet these activities frequently fall between humanitarian and recovery funding streams despite the widespread commitment to the humanitarian-development nexus.

At the same time, local governments across Ukraine are operating under extraordinary pressure due to wartime demands, population movements, workforce shortages, and expanding recovery responsibilities. Labour shortages have become one of the defining challenges of Ukraine's recovery environment, affecting healthcare, education, social services, and local administration alike. Ukrainian recovery experts estimate that the country may face a shortage of up to 4.5 million workers by 2030³, while employers across sectors already report significant difficulties recruiting qualified personnel. These constraints inevitably affect the ability of municipalities to provide the community engagement, social inclusion, mental health, livelihoods, and outreach services that make recovery investments sustainable.

In this context, **locally embedded Ukrainian NGOs are uniquely positioned to complement public institutions and international actors.** They possess community trust, local knowledge, technical expertise, and operational flexibility that enable them to reach vulnerable populations, mobilize community participation, and deliver services that ensure recovery investments generate lasting social impact. Many Ukrainian NGOs have already demonstrated their ability to operate at scale, coordinate with local authorities, manage complex donor compliance requirements, and deliver integrated programming across humanitarian, recovery, and development sectors.

The role of the Government of Ukraine at both national and local levels remains indispensable. Government institutions are ultimately responsible for setting priorities, ensuring accountability, and sustaining recovery investments over the long term. However, while coordination between government and civil society has matured significantly within the humanitarian response, recovery governance often remains characterized by one-way engagement and 'back room' deals. Civil society organizations are frequently invited to provide data, evidence, and technical recommendations, yet remain excluded from strategic decision-making processes, governance mechanisms, and funding opportunities.

The progress achieved in humanitarian localization demonstrates that alternative models are not theoretical - they already exist. The first national PULSE consortium proves that **the scale, reach, and efficiency of the humanitarian response in Ukraine would not have been possible without Ukrainian civil society organizations.** However, recovery efforts have not yet benefited from the same transformation. While Ukrainian

³ [Ukraine's Economy Ministry reports staff shortages in all sectors and 8 million economically inactive Ukrainians](#)

organizations are regularly consulted, they remain significantly underrepresented in recovery financing, governance, and implementation structures. As a result, many recovery investments risk delivering infrastructure without inclusion, assets without services, and reconstruction without community ownership.

Projects designed without meaningful participation from local civil society are less likely to reach marginalized groups, respond to local priorities, or generate sustainable outcomes.

We therefore call on recovery and development donors, international financial institutions, and government stakeholders to extend the logic that has already proven successful in the humanitarian response to Ukraine's recovery agenda. We call to:

- Increase direct funding to Ukrainian civil society organizations as recovery actors in their own right;
- Establish funding mechanisms that support both infrastructure and community-based recovery interventions;
- Invest in long-term government-civil society and business-civil society partnership models that go beyond consultation and enable shared planning, implementation, monitoring, and accountability;
- Create meaningful opportunities for Ukrainian NGOs to participate in recovery governance, priority-setting, and resource allocation processes;
- Adapt localization commitments and principles that have strengthened the humanitarian response to the realities of recovery and development programming.

A recovery agenda that embraces localization can build on the achievements of the humanitarian response and ensure that reconstruction investments are not only delivered efficiently, but are also owned, sustained, and made meaningful by the communities they are intended to serve.

Right to Protection Charitable Fund

Caritas Ukraine

NGO Girls

Voices of Children Charitable Foundation

Proliska Humanitarian Mission

League of the Strong

Helping to Leave

The Halo Trust Ukraine