

Caught up in conflict

Reducing harm for civilians in conflict-affected areas, **Ukraine**

Women and children are, as ever, the most vulnerable to the effects of war and to abuse at the hands of those who hold power in any given location and situation. Building on its existing work and networks in Ukraine the Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) aims to reduce harm to civilians, through promoting community self-protection and effective civil-military engagement.

The problem

The Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in devastating harm for civilians. Russian forces have used tactics designed to create massive casualties, resulting in dramatic patterns of civilian harm. The security situation remains volatile.

Areas within a range of 70-100km from the frontline face a high risk of escalation, while experiencing large scale population movements, as well as being the scene of intense activity by military, aid agencies and volunteer groups. For example for the families returning, the presence of planted mines in playgrounds and unexploded ordnance present an immediate danger to children's lives. Such situation create an immense – and presently unmet – need for effective communication and coordination between civilian communities, military and non-military stakeholders. In the absence of such coordination, civilian protection needs go unheeded and they continue to bear the heaviest costs of the war.

The partner

CIVIC has been a vital and unique player in the Protection of Civilians movement for almost two decades across more than ten countries. CIVIC collaborates with civilians to bring their protection concerns directly to those in power, engages with armed actors to reduce the harm they cause to civilians, and advises governments and multinational bodies on how to make lasting policy changes. CIVIC has been present in Ukraine since 2017, working directly with local communities and assisting the Ukrainian government and Armed Forces to build capacity to protect civilians.

The philanthropic solution

CIVIC will focus its response efforts in three pillars:

1. Strengthening communities' preparedness and resilience to immediate and future protection threats through a locally driven, solutions-oriented approach of community protection groups that help civilians more effectively advocate for their protection needs with key stakeholders
2. Building effective civil-military coordination systems to address the immediate protection needs of vulnerable civilians by strengthening the capacities of security and defense actors any by designing and implementing effective evacuation systems
3. Amplifying research, documentation and advocacy to affect concrete improvements in civilians' lives. This includes research on how stakeholders can help self-protection practices that civilians have adopted as well as on the way disinformation impacts civilian harm.

The evidence

Based on CIVIC's prior work in Ukraine since 2017, the organization has a proven track record of improving civil-military coordination and has improved civilians' confidence in addressing their needs with military actors from only 8% to 53%. As part of this grant, CIVIC will also systematically collect information on self-protection tactics and provide evidence-based recommendations to civilians and protection actors.

The impact

CIVIC aims to enhance preparedness and improved capacity of protection actors to address civilians' protection needs in conflict-affected communities, with a focus on areas at risk of escalation and newly liberated areas in Ukraine.

How it's helping

"What we have found is that civilians have become first-responders themselves, often bringing critical humanitarian aid to vulnerable populations and evacuating individuals whom international NGOs are unable to access. Supporting these civilian networks is a direct investment in the lives of men, women and children affected by this devastating war." Oksana Kikot, CIVIC Ukraine Interim Country Director

All programmatic data provided by CIVIC. The UBS Optimus Foundation is a grant-making foundation that offers UBS clients a platform to use their wealth to drive positive social and environmental change. The Foundation selects programs that improve children's health, education and protection, ones that have the potential to be transformative, scalable and sustainable as well as programs tackling environmental and climate issues.

This document is for informational and educational purposes only and has no regard to the specific objectives, financial situation or particular needs of any specific recipient. It is not intended as a promotion of any UBS services nor an offer or a solicitation of an offer to sell or buy any product or other specific service. UBS Optimus Foundation does not provide investment, legal or tax advice. It strongly recommends to all persons considering the information herein to obtain appropriate independent legal, tax and other professional advice.

© UBS 2022. All rights reserved. The key symbol and UBS are among the registered and unregistered trademarks of UBS Group AG. IS2201907; Exp. 4/30/2023

UBS AG
UBS Optimus Foundation
P.O. Box
8098 Zurich