



PATHWAYS TO
LOCALISATION:

**Local Actors' Partnership
Experiences in CVA Programmes
in Ukraine and Romania**

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COLLABORATIVE CASH DELIVERY (CCD) IS A NETWORK OF 14 OF THE LARGEST INTERNATIONAL NGOS WHO COLLECTIVELY DELIVER OVER \$1BN IN LAST MILE CASH AND VOUCHER ASSISTANCE EVERY YEAR.

www.collaborativecash.org

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CONTENTS

Acronyms	1
Executive Summary	2
Key Findings	2
Recommendations	3
Introduction	4
CCD Localisation Pilot	6
Methodology	8
User Journey Approach	8
Limitations	9
Findings	10
Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design	10
Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics	10
Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing	10
Phase 4: Sustainability and Future Collaboration	11
Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design	11
Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics	12
Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing	13
Phase 4: Sustainability and Future Collaboration, Lessons learned and Recommendations – local partners’ perspectives	14
Recommendations	15
Annex A: User Journeys of Local Actors	17

ACRONYMS

BB	Building Blocks
CaLP	Cash Learning Partnership
CCD	Collaborative Cash Delivery Network
CoP	Community of Practice
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
CVA	Cash and Voucher Assistance
CWG	Cash Working Group
DEC	Disasters Emergency Committee
Eoi	Expression of Interest
GCT	Group Cash Transfer
ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
I/L NGO	International/Local Non-Governmental Organisation
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPCA	Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance
PALC	Participatory Action Learning in Crises
R2P	Right to Protection
SCLR	Survivor and Community Led Crisis Response
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since January 2023, the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC)-funded Collaborative Cash Delivery (CCD)¹ programme piloted four different localization models across Ukraine, Poland, and Romania to enhance cash and voucher assistance (CVA) delivery. In addition, as part of further learning on equitable partnership models for Ukraine response, other CCD member agencies and their local partners were also approached to share learning from their localisation initiatives and two models were selected.

An external consultant has evaluated these models for their relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability, with the report expected in September 2024. The CCD also documented the experiences of local organisations involved in the pilots, with the primary objective to *systematically capture the experiences of local partners across various stages of the partnership with CCD member agencies*.

Documenting local partners' experiences through user journeys approach² provided valuable insights into the partnership dynamics, pilot implementation including cash delivery, and capacity strengthening, reflecting the perspectives of local NGOs throughout the multi-phase process. Overall, this exercise involved conducting the in-depth interviews with nine representatives of six local partners in Ukraine and Romania who were engaged in different localisation models and delivering CVA. The type of the CVA also differed from

Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance (MPCA) (four organisations) to Group Cash Transfers (GCTs) (two organisations).

Key Findings

Local partners engaged with MPCA or GCTs due to aligned goals and established relationship with INGOs, benefiting from streamlined initiation processes. Training enhanced local partners' abilities, though further capacity strengthening is needed in cash technical aspects and financial management. The experience from using both MPCA and GCTs approaches highlighted the importance of the engagement of partners in project design phase and transparent decision-making, successfully setting the stage for future scaling up of CVA initiatives and collaborations with INGOs.

While the overall experiences of local partners implementing MPCA or GCT approaches were similar, distinct differences emerged in their specific implementations. Partners using MPCA faced particular challenges with beneficiary data management and application of criteria qualifying individuals/households for receiving cash assistance coupled with the delays in funding disbursement from INGOs and issues with the Building Blocks (BB)³ deduplication platform. These challenges were more pronounced compared to GCTs, which,

1 [Collaborative Cash Delivery \(CCD\) Network](#) was founded in the wake of the Grand Bargain 2016 annual meeting, and is a global network of international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) who operate in every global humanitarian crisis that provides cash and voucher assistance (CVA) programming. CCD's partners are estimated to deliver 80% of the "last mile" CVA globally.

2 The user journey approach is a method to understand the experience of a stakeholder as they interact with a product, service or system. This approach helps identify pain points and opportunities for improvements.

3 [Building Blocks | WFP Innovation](#)

although also impacted by delays, seemed to handle beneficiary data management with slightly more adaptability. The challenges for MPCA included delays in funding from INGO partner. As a result, local partners had to deliver the programme within shorter timelines than originally agreed upon for cash delivery, necessitating rapid adjustments and leading to challenges in aligning goals with available resources and managing logistics. Furthermore, some partners implementing MPCA projects in Romania initially struggled with new terminology of CVA programming and in general humanitarian response, since they had very little to no prior knowledge and experience of CVA programming or working with refugees.

For the capacity strengthening approach, partners using GCT approach highlighted specific needs for further training in technical processes and advanced financial management, while MPCA focused more broadly on enhancing overall understanding of cash programming as well as the practical application of cash programming principles and methodologies. This difference reflects the varying complexity and scale of the projects associated with each modality. For sustainability and future collaboration, the feedback from MPCA implementers pointed more strongly towards the necessity for flexible and transparent decision-making processes, whereas GCT findings emphasized the importance of community engagement and the potential for expanding operations through new funding streams. This distinction underscores the different impacts of the cash modalities on local partners' operational dynamics and future collaboration strategies. Overall, while MPCA and GCTs shared several commonalities in their challenges and successes, the specific nuances in their

implementation and capacity strengthening needs highlight the need for bespoke approaches for each modality.

Recommendations

To strengthen partnership practices between CCD member agencies and their local partners, several recommendations are proposed. These recommendations focus on enhancing communication, improving processes, strengthening capacity, and ensuring transparency. In terms of **communication and coordination**, agencies should establish clear points of contact, use centralized platforms for real-time updates, and strengthen initial communication through detailed project initiation packages and workshops. Regular coordination meetings and shared digital workspaces will also foster better collaboration.

On the **partner assessment process and funding** side, simplifying vetting procedures, streamlining funding disbursements, and introducing flexible funding models will enhance efficiency and adaptability. Tailored solutions for unique community needs, improved procurement processes, and better logistical planning will address scalability issues. **Capacity strengthening** should focus on providing tailored training and mentorship programmes, while documenting and sharing successful strategies will support continuous learning. Lastly, **transparency and planning** should be prioritized by improving transparency in agreements with clear requirements translated in local languages, establishing clear project timelines, documenting successful strategies, and promoting a deep understanding of the local context. More detailed overview of the recommendations is provided in the below sections.

INTRODUCTION

From February 2022 localisation emerged as a key focus for stakeholders responding to the escalation of the crisis in Ukraine. This topic gained attention in various humanitarian fora discussing Ukraine regional response plans. In June 2022, several international and national organisations actively involved in the humanitarian response in Ukraine published [An Open Letter – An Opportunity for Grand Bargain Signatories to translate their commitments to Local Leadership of Crisis Response into Practice](#) – highlighting practical steps of supporting local humanitarian action in country.

In August 2022, local Ukrainian Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) published [an Open Letter – If not now, when?](#) – urging donors and international community to shift the power and approach towards local CSOs in Ukraine.

[The 2023 Humanitarian Localization Baseline for Ukraine](#), published by International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), offers a comprehensive analysis of the localization landscape in Ukraine, focusing on the involvement of local actors in the humanitarian response. The report examines the baseline across seven key dimensions of localization, providing a thorough evaluation of progress and challenges. The analysis reveals significant strides in engaging local NGOs and CSOs, with growing recognition of their roles and capabilities. The most evidence of progress was found in the areas of participation and capacity, where local actors have increasingly become active contributors to the humanitarian response. However, the report also highlights ongoing challenges, including

power imbalances between international and local actors, insufficient direct funding to local organisations, and the need for capacity strengthening efforts that are tailored to local contexts. The least progress was observed in funding and policy influence, where local actors continue to face difficulties in accessing direct funding streams and exerting influence on policy decisions. The report emphasizes the importance of improving coordination and collaboration between international and local actors, ensuring that local perspectives are fully integrated into decision-making processes.

The DEC commissioned [a scoping exercise](#) to assess the state of localization in Ukraine's humanitarian response. The report found that while there have been efforts to adopt localization principles, progress remains uneven. A significant challenge is the limited direct funding available to local organisations, with most resources still channelled through international actors. The report also identified a need for more targeted and contextually relevant capacity strengthening initiatives, as current efforts often fail to meet the specific needs of local NGOs and civil society organisations. Partnership dynamics frequently reflect traditional power imbalances, with local actors having limited influence over decision-making processes. Additionally, local organisations struggle to assert their perspectives in policy discussions and advocacy efforts, highlighting a gap in policy influence. The report calls for increased direct funding, more equitable partnerships, and stronger advocacy for local voices in policy development.

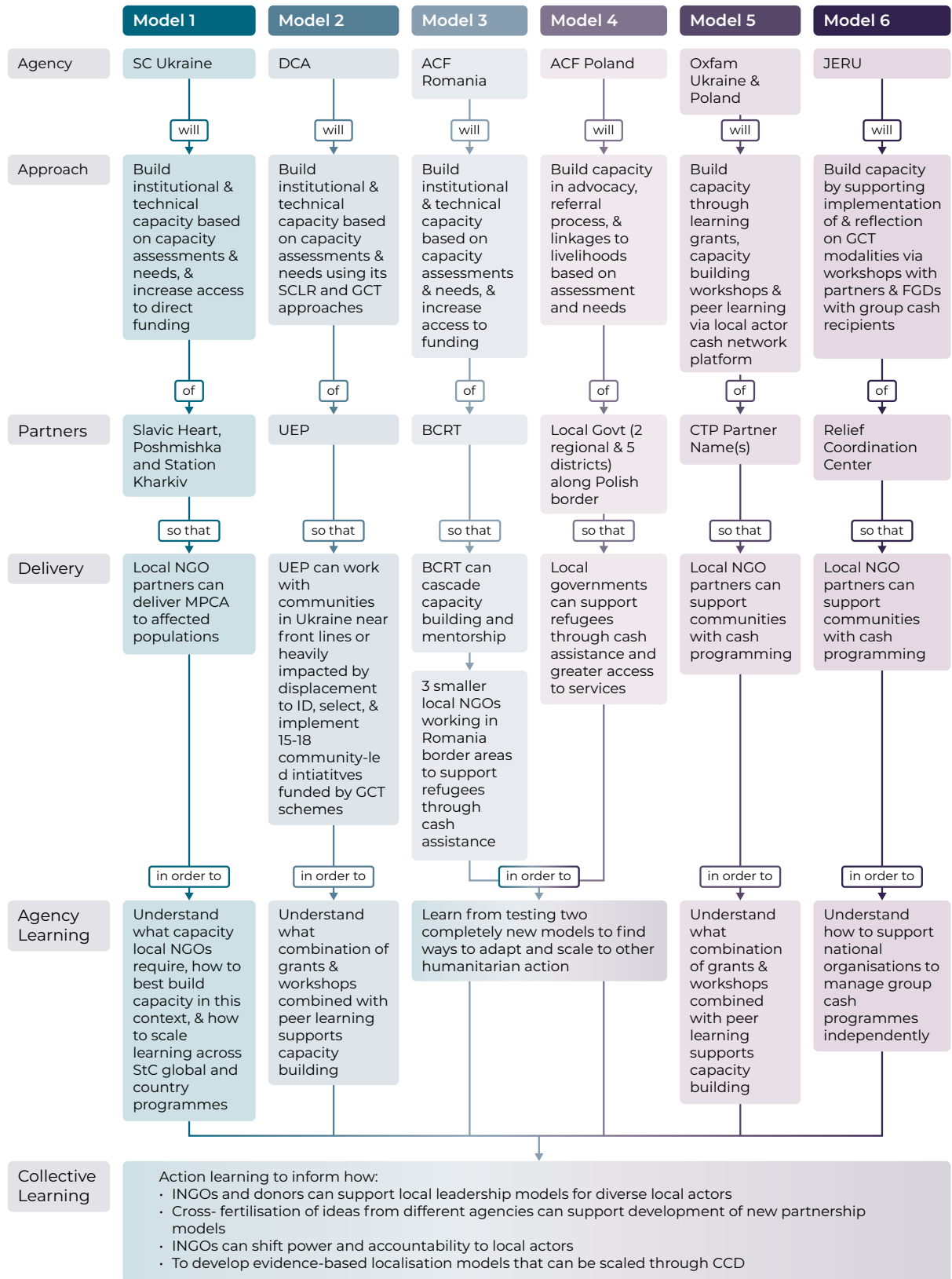
To address these challenges and provide evidence and guidance, the Cash Learning Partnership (CaLP) developed [a Briefing Paper](#) outlining the role of CSOs in Ukraine. This paper includes recommendations and key findings related to partnership models, coordination mechanisms, funding practices, and other pertinent aspects of CVA implementation in the country.

Following this topic, CCD conducted research among its members to explore partnership models with local CSOs in the context of implementing CVA programmes in Ukraine. The findings revealed that numerous international organisations utilize local CSOs to carry out various aspects of CVA programmes. This typically involves sub-contracting the local CSOs to perform tasks such as beneficiary outreach and registration for CVA support. However, in certain cases, the partnership extends beyond the traditional sub-granting model, with local partners taking responsibility for designing and implementing entire CVA programmes. In these instances, international agencies act as intermediaries between local CSOs and donors to ensure compliance with grant requirements. Other partnership models for CVA that empower local CSOs are being

implemented through various cash modalities such as GCTs, Assess and Assist and Survivor and Community-Led Crisis Response (SCLR) approach which encompasses supporting local formal and non-formal community organisations and groups to run transformative and community-led programming.

The CCD has its own Skype-based Communities of Practice (CoP) in Ukraine and Poland in which member agencies can share information and collaborate on key areas of interest. Furthermore, since February 2024, CCD has established a dedicated CoP for LNGOs/LCSOs in Ukraine who implement CVA programmes. The CoP is led by a national NGO – Right To Protection (R2P) and provides a dynamic communication platform (Telegram channel) for its members, organizes events and workshops on key prioritized topics by the CoP (such as taxation in cash programming – in collaboration with the Ukraine Cash Working Group (CWG)), facilitates knowledge sharing, and offers capacity strengthening initiatives replicating some of the good practices from the Cash Trainer of Trainers (ToT) Model tested by CCD in Ukraine and Romania under DEC-funded Collective Initiatives programme piloting different localisation models.

CCD Localisation Pilot



Since January 2023 in the framework of ongoing DEC-funded programme, CCD through its members piloted four different localisation models in Ukraine, Poland and Romania. It also encouraged the sharing of various partnership proprietary models of other non-funded member agencies with the local organisations through the established Steering Committee which united five CCD member agencies (three funded and two non-funded). Oxfam and JERU shared their localisation models, and the Steering Committee meetings promoted experience sharing on equal partnership approaches among the six models.

This localisation pilot initiative adopted a comprehensive cash technical and institutional capacity strengthening approach to local partners expecting to achieve the following outcome: *local humanitarian actors have the institutional and technical capacity and funding to effectively and efficiently respond to conflict related humanitarian needs in Ukraine, Poland and Romania through quality cash programming in line with international humanitarian standards.*

Model 1: A pilot project engaged three local NGOs in eastern and central Ukraine, where they designed and delivered MPCA projects to conflict-affected populations. The NGOs received technical and operational support to strengthen their capacity, with the aim to deliver full CVA cycle effectively.

Model 2: A two-level model involved a national agency and local communities in identifying, funding, and monitoring humanitarian interventions to meet priority needs of affected communities. This approach, which included capacity strengthening and community-led responses, sought to complement broader humanitarian efforts including household level support through MPCA.

Model 3: In Romania, a large organisation helped build the capacity of three smaller NGOs along the Romania–Ukraine border to design and implement cash assistance programmes.

Model 4: In Poland, efforts focused on increasing local government capacity to link refugees to humanitarian aid and social protection schemes that are available.

Model 5: Capacity development was achieved through learning grants, workshops, and peer learning within local actor networks. This model aimed to develop scalable localization practices through CCD.

Model 6: This model emphasized group capacity strengthening, supporting national organisations in managing autonomously group cash programmes through workshops and discussions with cash recipients.

A comprehensive review of these models was recently commissioned by CCD through an external consultancy, with the report expected to be published in September 2024. In addition to this review, CCD has prioritized documenting the experiences of local organisations throughout their partnership journeys with these models. This documentation aims to provide valuable insights into their experiences, challenges faced, potential bottlenecks, and effective practices. Analysing these user journeys reveals trends, patterns, and recurring challenges related to localization in the implementation of CVA programmes in Ukraine. It is important to note that Models 4 and 5 were excluded from this documentation exercise: Model 4 was not implemented as planned, and the agencies involved in Model 5 opted to withdraw from the exercise.

Methodology

The research process involved conducting in-depth interviews with representatives from local partner organisations, overall, six key informant interviews with five organisations from Ukraine and one from Romania. Out of six organisations, two were engaged in delivery of community-led initiatives (group cash transfers) while other four focused on multipurpose cash (MPCA). The interviews included gathering both qualitative data from these organisations to provide a comprehensive view of their experiences. The analysis process included mapping user journeys for each key informant to illustrate key touchpoints, interactions, challenges, and successes throughout their partnership experience. Finally, the collected data analysed in this report to derive insights and propose actionable recommendations. The names of the local partners participating in this project remain confidential, and hence, the report is anonymized, focusing on the main findings, recommendations, and detailed user journeys of each interviewed partner.

User Journey Approach

The user journey methodology applied in this exercise focuses on the experiences of local partners and NGOs in their partnerships with INGOs under CCD localisation pilots. This approach involves mapping and analysing the entire process of partnership from the perspective of these local partners, aiming to reveal whether the partnership dynamics were equitable and to identify the challenges they faced.

The methodology begins by capturing the experiences of local organisations throughout their engagement with INGOs. It examines their initial interactions, including the process of receiving information, establishing partnerships, and executing collaborative projects. By visualizing these interactions, the methodology seeks to uncover whether the partnerships were characterized by equal collaboration or if there were imbalances in power and decision-making.

Local partners were encouraged to recount their experiences in detail, including their actions, opinions, perceptions, and overall mindset during each stage of the partnership. This narrative approach helps in understanding how these organisations navigated the partnership process, the specific challenges they encountered, and the effectiveness of the practices employed. Through this comprehensive analysis, the methodology aims to provide valuable insights into partnership trends, patterns, and recurring challenges. It sheds light on the dynamics of collaboration between local NGOs and INGOs, offering a nuanced view of how partnerships can be improved to ensure more equitable and effective engagement in the implementation of CVA programmes in Ukraine.

Limitations

Research limitations in this exercise included:

1 Sample Size and Representation:

With a limited number of local partner organisations available to participate in key informant interviews, the sample is not representative of all local agencies partnering with INGO in cash delivery, however, all main local partners from CCD localisation pilots have been included in the exercise.

2 Variability in Experience:

The experiences of local partners can vary widely based on factors such as the specific INGOs they worked with, the context and location of their operations, and the type of cash assistance programmes they were involved in, which may complicate the analysis and generalization of findings.

3 Implementation Challenges: Practical issues such as scheduling interviews, different timelines for different localisation models and availability of partners impacted the overall timeline and consistency of the data collected.

4 Exclusion of Models: Models that were not included in the documentation exercise—due to non-materialization or withdrawal of participating agencies—may result in an incomplete picture of the overall landscape of partnerships across the localisation models initially anticipated under the programme.

5 Response Bias: Despite efforts to explain the aim of the exercise and ensure anonymity, local NGOs might still present their experiences more favourably due to their reliance on CCD members for future funding, leading to less candid and accurate feedback.

FINDINGS

The detailed summary for each partnership phase is as follows:

Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

Local partners were motivated to engage with the project due to the alignment of goals and pre-existing relationships with INGOs. These established connections facilitated a smooth initiation of partnerships, benefiting from minimal exchange of documentation and efficient and simplified processes. However, challenges emerged with delays in receiving funding from INGOs to LNGOs (without clear indication to LNGOs on deadlines of financial tranche delivery due to slow processing at HQ level), which resulted in condensed project timelines for local partners and necessitated rapid adjustments. Aligning project goals with available resources proved difficult, exacerbated by logistical issues such as lengthy administrative approvals from INGO partners' side and physical security risks for LNGO staff to travel to certain areas. Additionally, issues with communication about INGO requirements and internal processes and unexpected reporting demands added to the administrative burden. The selection criteria and vetting processes varied significantly, with some partners facing resource-intensive assessments. Overall, the initiation phase highlighted the benefits of strong initial partnerships but also underscored the complexities of managing evolving project needs.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

During implementation, communication with INGOs improved over time, though initial challenges persisted due to staff turnover and lack of clarity on the roles of INGO staff involved in partnership. Local partners experienced difficulties with using new cash programming concepts and terminology, which were compounded by delays in funding disbursements and issues with the Building Blocks (BB) deduplication platform. These challenges impacted project timelines and beneficiary data management. Despite these barriers, local partners achieved notable successes, expanding their intervention areas, increasing visibility, and engaging in new projects. The collaboration, while beneficial, faced inefficiencies due to differences in organisational cultures and expectations.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

Capacity strengthening efforts aimed to address various gaps identified by the local partners: understanding of the humanitarian architecture and the language it uses as well as organisational and technical (cash) capacity. However, further support is needed in areas of advanced financial management and cash

technical processes. Future cash operational expansion will require additional training and support, particularly in technical and accountability areas, and improved skills in monitoring and evaluation.

Phase 4: Sustainability and Future Collaboration

Community engagement was deemed crucial for project success. Local partners valued the flexibility of GCTs for addressing specific community needs but noted the necessity for more inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. Capacity strengthening efforts faced challenges, emphasizing the need for a nuanced approach to training. The pilot laid a solid foundation for future endeavours in volunteerism and cash programming, positioning local partners to expand operations and engage with diverse funding streams. Ongoing discussions about potential collaborations with other INGOs reflect a readiness to build on current successes and explore new opportunities. Engaging experienced local actors and conducting detailed additional needs assessments will enhance accountability and effectiveness.

Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

Local partners were motivated to engage due to the alignment of goals and existing relationships with INGOs. Local organisations were drawn to the partnerships due to their shared objectives and prior collaborations with INGOs. These established connections and aligned interests facilitated the initiation of partnerships, enabling a smooth start to joint projects.

The partnership initiation process was generally straightforward, with minimal documentation and prior interactions facilitating ease. The establishment of partnerships was often streamlined due to existing relationships and a relatively simple documentation process. Partners benefited from previous interactions with INGOs, which eased the initial stages of partnership development and allowed for quicker setup.

Challenges included delays in funding, resulting in condensed project timelines and the need for rapid adjustments. Partners encountered significant challenges related to delays in receiving funds. These delays led to compressed project timelines, forcing partners to rapidly adjust their plans and implement project activities in a shorter timeframe than initially intended.

Local partners faced difficulties in aligning project goals with available resources and managing logistical issues. Aligning project goals with the available resources posed a challenge for local partners. They had to navigate logistical issues such as the distribution of aid and the coordination of activities under constrained conditions, which affected their ability to deliver as planned.

Issues arose with ensuring comprehensive communication about project requirements and dealing with additional reporting demands not initially conveyed. Some partners experienced difficulties related to communication. They faced unexpected reporting requirements and documentation demands that were not clearly outlined at the beginning of the partnership, leading to confusion and added administrative burden.

The selection criteria and vetting processes varied; some partners experienced light-touch assessments, while others found them time-consuming and resource-intensive.

The vetting and selection processes for partnerships varied significantly. While some partners experienced relatively simple and straightforward assessments, others found the process to be resource-intensive and time-consuming, requiring substantial documentation and evaluations.

Overall, the experiences for the partnership initiation underscored the benefits of strong initial partnerships and the complexities of managing and adapting to evolving project needs. The experiences highlighted the importance of having strong initial partnerships to facilitate project implementation. However, they also revealed the complexities involved in managing projects, especially when adapting to changing needs and unexpected challenges during the implementation phase.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

Communication and Coordination: According to the perceptions of local partners, communication with the INGO has generally improved over time, with interactions regarding project activities and next steps becoming smoother. However, the partnership faced initial challenges, particularly for some local partners, due to frequent staff turnover within the INGO and unclear roles, which led to confusion about communication hierarchies. These early difficulties stemmed from roles and structures that were either not clearly defined from the outset or not fully staffed at the project's initiation. While the current phase of collaboration benefits from well-established communication channels and effective coordination, some local partners

experienced hurdles due to the presence of multiple focal points and differences in organisational cultures.

Project Implementation Challenges: Local partners initially struggled with adopting new international concepts and terminology that were unfamiliar and often lacked direct translations into their local language. This made understanding and applying these concepts challenging. Furthermore, delays in funding disbursement and issues with the Building Blocks (BB) deduplication platform significantly impacted project timelines and the preparation of beneficiary documentation. Problems with beneficiary data management and scoring for evaluations also caused delays in cash delivery. These challenges, according to local partners, were compounded by the complexities of integrating new systems and processes that were not initially well-suited to the local context.

Project Implementation Achievements:

Despite the challenges faced, local partners perceive that they achieved notable successes in project implementation. They managed to expand their intervention areas, increase their visibility, and for some of them even engage in new projects. Capacity strengthening initiatives were particularly successful, with local partners demonstrating significant improvements in their ability to manage and utilize beneficiary data accurately. Efficient teamwork and the ability to leverage organisational growth contributed to effective project outcomes, showcasing the resilience and adaptability of local partners despite the obstacles encountered.

Overall Collaboration Dynamics: Local partners generally found the collaboration with the INGO partner to be beneficial, with strong support and guidance aiding project implementation. However, they also

encountered issues such as uncertainty, delays, and complex reporting requirements. These challenges, combined with differences in organisational expectations and processes, added burdens and led to inefficiencies. The perception among local partners was that while the support from the INGO was valuable, the collaboration was not without its difficulties, particularly in terms of adapting to new systems and managing evolving project dynamics.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

The process of learning and knowledge sharing has revealed several key insights into how capacity strengthening efforts and training initiatives can impact project implementation. Initially, there was a noticeable gap in awareness about international organisations and their work. Many local partners were unfamiliar with major international entities until they had direct interactions. This lack of awareness, coupled with the complexities of international terminologies and concepts, highlighted the need for increased general knowledge and accessible information about these organisations.

Training sessions, particularly those provided by the INGO partners, have been instrumental in addressing challenges related to unfamiliar terms and humanitarian concepts. These sessions helped local partners become more acquainted with essential terms, facilitating smoother project implementation. Furthermore, the capacity strengthening support from the INGO partners proved effective in enhancing the local partners' abilities, allowing them to attract additional funding, expand their staff, and engage in new projects. Despite the

progress, issues such as the need for further capacity strengthening in technical processes and advanced financial management were identified. More particularly,

Current Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

Training Effectiveness: Trainings provided by cash trainers were highly beneficial in overcoming challenges with unfamiliar terminology and abbreviations.

Collaborative Support: Capacity strengthening support from the INGO partner in cash management and organisational capacity was significant. Local partners appreciated the collaborative approach in workshops and coaching sessions, which allowed for tailored support and effective alignment with donor expectations.

Enhanced Skills: Comprehensive training sessions, including those on market monitoring, project design, and budgeting, significantly improved understanding and skills. Notably, some partners mentioned that the training on targeting and monitoring was transformative for them.

Project Scale Considerations: For some local partners, the current project scale did not necessitate additional capacity strengthening. However, there is recognition that future expansions would require further capacity strengthening.

Future Capacity Strengthening and Support Needs

Technical and Accountability Training: Additional training is needed to address technical and accountability challenges in cash delivery systems.



Advanced Training Needs: Further training in advanced financial management, registration, verification best practices, and other areas is required for improved multi-faceted project implementation.

Scaling Up: Expanding or transitioning to full-scale projects will necessitate capacity strengthening for handling larger scales for CVA programmes and more extensive reporting and financial requirements.

MEAL and Technical Skills: Improved skills in building and processing Kobo forms and additional training on MEAL processes are needed to enhance monitoring and evaluation.

Community Engagement: Regions with less developed NGO networks need more engagement measures, such as training and mentoring, to strengthen community involvement and support.

Phase 4: Sustainability and Future Collaboration, Lessons learned and Recommendations – local partners' perspectives

Community Engagement: Community engagement was identified as vital for the successful execution of projects. The local NGOs valued how these elements fostered effective project implementation and strengthened the partnership with the INGO. This approach helped ensure that projects were more responsive to community needs.

Use of Group Cash Transfers (GCTs): The GCT modality provided flexible financing that was beneficial in addressing specific community needs, such as infrastructure

improvements. Local partners appreciated the adaptability of this approach, which allowed for more tailored and immediate responses to emerging needs. However, issues related to grant selection processes and the scalability of interventions revealed the need for more inclusive and transparent decision-making practices. Local NGOs noted that the existing processes sometimes led to dissatisfaction and highlighted the importance of involving community members in decision-making to enhance transparency and fairness.

Capacity Strengthening Challenges: Capacity strengthening efforts faced challenges, particularly regarding fund allocation and aligning foreign understandings with local needs. Local NGOs emphasized the need for a nuanced approach to training and support, recognizing that standard practices may not always fit local contexts effectively.

Foundation for Future Endeavours: The project successfully established a foundation for future work, especially in areas like volunteerism and cash programming. This groundwork has positioned local partners to expand their operations and engage with various funding streams and international donors.

Potential for Future Collaborations: Discussions with other INGOs about potential future collaborations are underway. These discussions reflect a readiness to build on current successes and explore new opportunities. The local NGOs are keen on enhancing regional networks and expanding project scopes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on feedback from LNGO representatives, the following recommendations are made for CCD member agencies working with or planning to work with local partners on CVA programme delivery. These are grouped into communication and coordination, processes and funding, capacity strengthening, and transparency and planning:

1 Communication and Coordination

Improve communication and establish clear points of contact: Develop a comprehensive communication plan, designate specific liaison roles, and agree on a centralized platform for real-time updates and document sharing. Streamline communication to avoid duplication of efforts.

Strengthen initial communication and documentation: Provide partners with a detailed project initiation package, including all necessary requirements and expectations. Conduct initial workshops or webinars to ensure mutual understanding and utilize accessible digital platforms for easy access to project documents.

Facilitate better coordination and collaboration: Schedule regular coordination meetings, encourage open dialogue through collaborative tools, and create shared digital workspaces for partners to access and contribute to project information.

2 Assessment Processes and Funding

Simplify the vetting and due diligence process: Explore harmonized and passporting tools piloted by CCD member agencies to streamline partner assessments. Develop a standardized checklist to evaluate partner capabilities and past performance more efficiently.

Streamline funding channelling to local partners: Define clear funding timelines and approval processes within partnership agreements to prevent delays. Introduce automated disbursement systems tied to project milestones and create contingency plans for financial constraints.

Foster flexibility for partnership and funding: Implement flexible funding models and adaptive project management approaches to accommodate changes and unexpected challenges, ensuring responsiveness to evolving project needs. Address scalability limitations by developing tailored solutions for unique community needs, streamlining procurement processes, and addressing logistical issues to avoid delays.

Investing in adequate resources for documentation and pre-planning will also prevent delays and enhance project efficiency. Clear targeting criteria and flexible financing models should be maintained to address community needs effectively.

3 Capacity Strengthening

Enhance training and capacity building:

Offer training focused on organisational development, financial oversight, and project management tailored to local partners' needs. Consider online learning modules and mentorship programmes to provide ongoing guidance and support.

Enhance public awareness about international organisations and their roles

in localisation process that will also foster transparency on their localisation strategies and objectives. International organisations should improve public understanding of their localization efforts by clearly communicating their strategies, objectives, and partnerships with local actors. This can be achieved through community outreach, public seminars, and engagement to explain their commitments to local leadership and capacity strengthening. Regularly sharing progress updates and engaging local partners and communities in two-way communication will build trust, increase transparency, and enhance accountability in the localization process.

Document and share successful strategies:

Create case studies and best practice guides based on successful strategies for capacity strengthening and share them through workshops or online platforms. Encourage local partners to contribute to or lead these documentation efforts. **Reflecting on project achievements and challenges through closing events will provide valuable insights** for future collaborations.

4 Transparency and Planning

Establish clear project timelines and milestones:

Develop detailed project plans with defined timelines and regularly review them with partners. Utilize project management tools for real-time tracking and adjustments based on progress. Establishing clear agreements with defined timelines and requirements will avoid confusion and improve collaboration by reducing bureaucracy and enhancing responsiveness to emerging challenges.

Improve transparency and flexibility in partnership agreements:

Ensure partnership agreements include flexible clauses for adjustments and are clearly communicated, potentially translating them into local languages. Provide processes for renegotiation if needed.

Prioritize local context understanding and people-centred programming:

Engage local partners and community members in the project design process to ensure solutions are tailored to community needs. Build on existing needs assessments and conduct participatory design workshops for co-creation jointly with partners. **Engaging with local organisations and maintaining a focus on community involvement** will enhance support mechanisms for successful future endeavours. **Involving local community members in selection committees will improve transparency and acceptance** in decision-making processes.

These recommendations aim to strengthen partnerships by fostering clear communication, simplifying processes, enhancing capacity, and ensuring flexibility and transparency for more effective collaboration and sustainable outcomes.

ANNEX A: USER JOURNEYS OF LOCAL ACTORS

Local Partner 1- NGO in Romania – operates in the field of regional development and cross-border cooperation. The main objectives focus on supporting and facilitating the implementation of Neighbourhood Programmes, on fostering cooperation between regions, communities, and authorities on both sides of the Romanian border to address common challenges. By designing and executing cross-border strategies and projects, they seek to enhance living standards and drive economic development in these communities. Their efforts promote good neighbourhood relations, social stability, and economic progress through funding initiatives that provide tangible benefits to border regions. Additionally, they advocate for the decentralization of responsibility, promote local initiatives aligned with local strategies, and foster innovation and technology transfer by bridging the gap between business and research. Ultimately, their goal is to attract investment and boost private investment volume in the border regions of Romania and Ukraine.

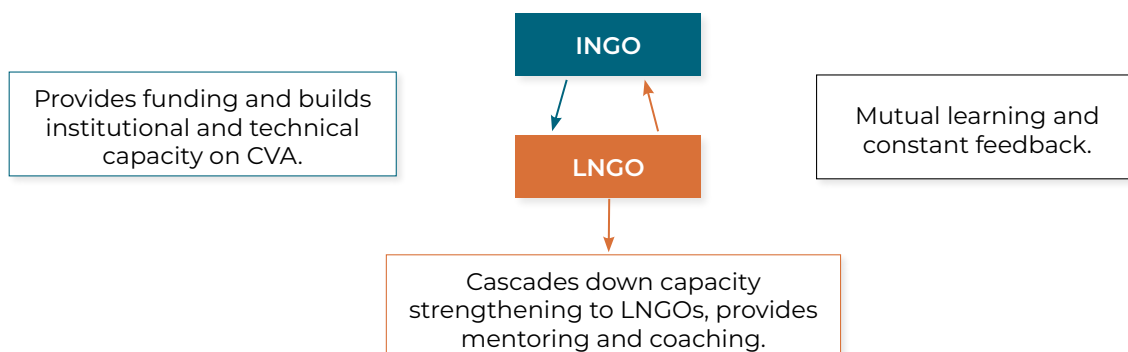
Local NGO had no previous CVA experience, and this project was the first opportunity to deliver full scale MPCA.

Timeline



Deliverables: Training, coaching and mentorship to build the capacity of three local NGOs in Romania. The three NGOs to deliver MPCA to 1,100 individuals across Suceava, Tulcea, and Maramures.

MPCA Model



Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

- **Motivations for Partnership:** INGO was searching for partners and one of their staff had a good connection with our Executive Director. Given our area of intervention and current activities, which include providing technical assistance for European-funded cross-border cooperation programmes between Romania and Ukraine, our network and interests aligned well with INGO's goals. We recommended localizing activities outside major centres to gain a closer border perspective, as our headquarters is just 40 kilometres from the Ukrainian border. Our extensive network in Romania and Ukraine, and our focus on poorer counties near the border, made us a suitable partner. Our project management experience with international donors, despite limited direct involvement in social activities, convinced us that our expertise would be valuable in this collaboration.
- **Due Diligence and Vetting Process:** There was no extensive due diligence process, light touch assessment and request for submission of some documents. We had previous experience and interaction with the INGO during emergency phase when we contributed to needs assessment done by INGO partner.
- **Challenges and Resolutions in Project Planning and Design:** During the planning and design phase of the cash project we did not encounter significant issues initially. However, challenges arose with the availability of funds. Despite our plans to deliver cards within specific

timeframes, delays in funding meant we couldn't provide the necessary support as scheduled. This led to the postponement of card distribution, condensing the planned two-month distribution period into just two or three weeks, which was very challenging. We managed this internally by engaging volunteers and other partners. This approach not only helped us navigate the difficulties but also laid the groundwork for the next steps of our project. It allowed us to engage and train other organisations, in cash assistance distribution.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

- **Communication and Coordination:** Currently, our communication with INGO runs smoothly, especially regarding project activities and next steps. We receive appropriate support and are well-informed about our responsibilities. Over the past year and a half, our partnership has matured, but we faced challenges initially, particularly during the DEC 1 and the first part of the DEC 2 projects. Communication with our INGO partner was difficult due to frequent staff turnover. The involvement of various staff members with different responsibilities often caused confusion. It seemed that roles and structures were either not clearly defined from the outset or not fully staffed when the project began, making it hard to understand the communication hierarchy. However, during this collaborative DEC project, communication with the INGO was excellent, as the channels were well-established by that time.

Additionally, we have always been able to share feedback with INGO partner, and they have been receptive. This open feedback culture was evident during our meetings with the INGO management. Through our interactions with INGO partner and other international organisations, we have improved our communication, becoming more assertive and culturally aware, which has enhanced our collaboration.

- **Project Implementation Challenges:**

- Adopting New Concepts and Terminology: We encountered significant challenges at the beginning of our project due to the new concepts and terminology used by international organisations in emergency interventions. These terms and tools (e.g. cash monitoring, MEAL) were unfamiliar to us and differed greatly from what we had previously used. It was particularly difficult to adopt these new terms and tools in our local context, as the specific terms often did not have exact translations into our local language, complicating our understanding and application of these concepts.
- Learning and Adaptation: Through consultation, learning from others, and various media sources, we gradually understood the purpose and application of these instruments, recognizing their use on a larger scale in regions like Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Despite this, the new way of intervening in emergencies remained a significant challenge for us.

- **Project Implementation Achievements:**

- Organisational Expansion and Visibility: We achieved significant organisational milestones, including the expansion of our intervention areas and an increase in our visibility. This growth allowed us to utilize our entire network effectively, connecting with international donors and establishing connections among entities within our network, particularly in social interventions.
- Capacity Building and Localization: We successfully generated the idea of a capacity-building project that engaged other NGOs in various parts of the border area. This effort anticipated the localization process, positioning us as a focal partner while also establishing branches at three major cross-border points through Romania: Torture, Sighetu Marmăției, and Suceava.
- Engagement in New Projects: Our experience working with international organisations led to our involvement in various other projects, further enhancing our capabilities and outreach.

- **Overall Collaboration Dynamics:**

- Working with INGO partner was highly beneficial due to their professionalism and expertise. Their approach to incorporating feedback and engaging all partners in project development fostered a collaborative environment. This positive experience was especially valuable as it marked a transition from non-social to social projects, leaving a lasting impact and enhancing our future project capabilities.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

● Current Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing:

- Trainings, such as those provided by cash trainer, were incredibly useful in overcoming some of the challenges with terminology and abbreviations. Even though we work with European funds, our country typically avoids using abbreviations, making it difficult to navigate instruments and methods that rely heavily on them. The training sessions helped us become familiar with the necessary terms in humanitarian context.
- The capacity-building support provided by INGO partner, particularly in cash and organisational capacity, has been significant. Our involvement in defining the support areas was thorough, as we participated in workshops and coaching sessions. The process was collaborative, allowing us to identify our needs, particularly in project management and social intervention. This tailored capacity building enabled us to attract additional funding and expand our staff, clearly demonstrating its effectiveness. While we had the opportunity to outline our requirements, INGO partner also played a role in aligning these needs with donor expectations and project objectives.

● Future Capacity Building and Support Needs:

- Despite our capacity and knowledge, there remain many questions about implementing cash delivery systems due to technical and accountability

challenges. Further capacity building and understanding of technical processes used by INGOs would be beneficial.

Phase 4: Lessons Learned, Sustainability, and Future Collaboration

● Recommendations for Future Projects:

- 1 Increased Awareness:** Raising awareness about different activities and donors can help. Many of us were unaware of major international organisations until we interacted with them directly.
- 2 Information Availability:** Providing more information to the general public about these organisations and their work could bridge some knowledge gaps
- 3 Time and Absorption:** Allowing sufficient time for people to absorb new information is crucial. Translation into local languages might not always be helpful; instead, raising general awareness and potentially using English as a common language could be more effective.

● Future collaborations:

In discussing future collaboration and the sustainability of our work, it is clear that having suitable staff who understand the local culture and working habits is crucial. The partnership with INGO has indeed enhanced our ability to connect with different funding streams and international donors, allowing us to participate in new projects and collaborations. While we have a

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the INGO, there are no immediate plans to continue the partnership beyond this project. However, we are considering new ideas, particularly in the area of volunteerism, which has seen significant development and positive impact in our communities. Overall, the experience has prepared us well for future projects, and we are ready to continue and expand our efforts in collaboration with other organisations.

Reflections on Partnership Experience

- Our partnership experience with INGO has taught us invaluable lessons about the importance of collaboration between local partners and international donors or INGOs. One key lesson is the critical need for having suitable staff who understand and respect cultural differences, and who are open to new ways of working. The ability and openness to tolerate and accept feedback has been fundamental in overcoming barriers and facilitating successful implementation. This experience has underscored that when teams are aligned in their approach and receptive to learning from one another, even the most challenging aspects of project implementation can be effectively managed.
- Our partnership experience with INGO has been a journey of gradual involvement and learning. Initially managed by the executive director, the project saw our increased participation over time as we joined working groups and meetings. This process allowed us to start formulating a strategy to handle the project's demands. However, the lack of a clearly defined connections between these various requests from CCD has made it challenging to understand the exact process and future actions. Despite attending various activities and meetings, the absence of a structured timeline and activity schedule has left us navigating an uncertain situation, making it difficult to align and prepare effectively.

"Partnership at local and regional level has been capitalized by fostering involvement in supporting the Ukrainian refugees. Moreover, the harsh context at the European Union's border gave us all the chance to learn from the best practices employed by INGOs."

- Programme Manager, Local Partner NGO

Local Partner 2 - NGO from Ukraine began its operation as a project in 2022, which became the foundation for the creation of an independent organisation in 2023. As of 2024, the local NGO has successfully implemented 18 projects with a total funding of more than \$1.3 million. Currently, the organisation is implementing eight projects with a total funding of more than \$1.8 million. The organisation has received and continues to receive financial support from more than 15 partners.

The mission of the organisation is to strengthen the capacity of LNGOs, engage local communities in overcoming existing challenges, structure the distribution of resources and localize the delivery of support for maximum effect. More than 100 staff and volunteers works for the organisation which actively recruits personnel for projects in various areas. The organisation does not accept donations from private individuals and operates with funding from international partners. The NGO operates on the territory of two regions, Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia. Their GCT intervention received one of the smallest budgets among all implemented projects.

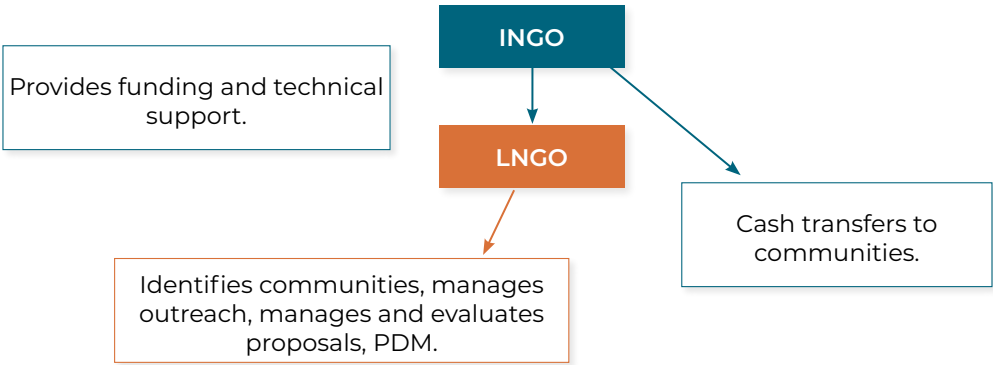
In this organisation, CVA is a new activity. Traditionally, this organisation specializes in monitoring the basic needs of the population, assessing the sustainability of settlements, coordinating evacuation missions, and supporting IDPs. The organisation is keen to expand its expertise in CVA issues and is interested in gaining more experience and developing programming in this field to better address the needs of the communities they serve.

Timeline



Deliverables: 5 GCTs delivered in 4 hromadas in Kharkiv/Zaporizhzhia oblasts in Ukraine.

GCT Model



Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

- **Motivations for Partnership:**

We entered into the partnership following an open call from the INGO partner organisation. Although the initial offer from the INGO was not aligned with our NGO's primary focus, we reached an agreement that satisfied both parties.

- **Establishment of Partnership and Initial Expectations:**

Our organisation initiated the partnership through submitting the proposal for an open call from the JERU, which led to a contract. During the agreement process, we established initial expectations, focusing on mutual benefits and aligned objectives.

- **Criteria for Selecting the Partner(s):**

We selected the partner based on our NGO's prior experience with documentation-heavy partnerships with other international NGOs. The simplified due diligence and capacity assessment process with the INGO was a significant factor in our decision.

- **Due Diligence and Vetting Process:**

The due diligence process with the INGO partner was relatively easy and brief, leveraging pre-existing documentation from previous assessments. The process included a simplified due diligence and capacity assessment, requiring updates to pre-filled forms and minimal additional documentation.

- **Contract Signing:**

The contract, a service agreement, was simpler with fewer requirements compared to a partnership agreement. The process

faced delays on the INGO's part but was eventually signed. The terms and requirements were communicated clearly, and while there were some concerns, we addressed them through negotiation. The contract was translated into the local language to ensure clarity and acceptance. We invested moderate resources in initiating the partnership, focusing on updating existing documents for the due diligence process. We chose a service contract over a partnership agreement to minimize administrative workload given the grant's scope.

- **Defining Goals and Objectives:**

We defined goals and objectives collaboratively with the partner from the outset. The partner organisation provided a list of target communities (hromadas), and we identified the most suitable ones. We established joint meetings and a committee to review applications and award grants based on a point system to community groups.

- **Challenges and Resolutions in Project Planning and Design:**

The main challenge during the planning phase was ensuring all parties agreed on the project locations and grant recipients. We resolved this through thorough communication and joint decision-making processes. The selection process for hromadas involved identifying remote areas, some of which we had worked with extensively, while others had less interaction. We provided the INGO with justifications for selecting these hromadas, using an interactive map and dashboard on our website that detailed the food supply and livelihood situations of the settlements.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

● Adaptations During Implementation

- There were no significant changes or adaptations during implementation, as everything was agreed upon from the beginning. The project locations and grant recipients were determined as a result of joint discussion and scoring, ensuring alignment with the initial project design.

● Communication and Coordination

- We faced communication challenges with the INGO. We had multiple contacts within the INGO (seven different people) for various aspects of the project, while our organisation had only one employee who was responsible for all areas of the project. Communicating with such a large number of contact persons and the need to inform each one individually required additional time.

● Project Implementation Challenges

- We questioned the INGO's ability to transfer money directly to the accounts of charitable organisations or community enterprises from the beginning. Although top management of partner believed it was possible, it was later discovered that the INGO's financial management system could not facilitate such transfers. This led to delays and the need to find alternative solutions, such as appointing an individual to receive the funds on behalf of the recipient (initiative group).

● Project Implementation Achievements

- Together with our INGO partner we focused on urging communities to prioritize needs that were unlikely to be covered by other humanitarian programmes or resources.
- Five grants (GCTs) of EUR 2,000 each were awarded in four remote villages to address critical needs: 1. An outpatient clinic in one village was provided with plumbing, a sewage system, and an indoor toilet. 2. Restoration of two wells to ensure water supply during blackouts in another village. 3. Upgrading bomb shelters to be more comfortable. 4. Improving road safety in a settlement.
- The transactions were managed by the INGO partner, while we handled the identification, outreach, and selection of hromadas.
- We conducted PDM with a couple of recipients, involving visits to the project sites to assess the impact and effectiveness of the grants.

● Overall Collaboration Dynamics

- While the collaboration faced challenges, particularly in communication and managing financial processes, the adaptability and cooperation between us and the INGO enabled successful project implementation.
- The focus remained on addressing the most critical and unmet needs of the communities, ensuring sustainable and impactful interventions.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

- **Current Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing:**

- Due to the smaller scale of the current project, there was no need for capacity building or knowledge-sharing initiatives identified.

- **Future Capacity Building and Support Needs:**

- If the project expands next year, likely through a partnership agreement with the INGO, there will be a need for capacity building to handle the larger scale and higher transfer value.
- If we secure further funding and move from a pilot to a full-scale project, there will be a need for a new project manager. The new project manager would require additional training and capacity building tailored to this type of intervention.
- A partnership agreement with more extensive reporting, narrative, MEAL, and financial requirements would necessitate capacity building for all involved staff.

Phase 4: Lessons Learned, Sustainability, and Future Collaboration

- **Achievements:**

- **Effective Use of GCT Modality:** The GCTs proved to be an efficient modality, particularly for interventions addressing specific community needs such as plumbing, wells, bomb shelters, and road safety. These interventions are not easily scalable through traditional humanitarian aid projects.

- **Community Involvement:** The project demonstrated the importance of involving local community members in the decision-making process. Although not feasible for this project, future initiatives would benefit from including local residents in the selection committees to ensure transparency and fairness.

- **Flexible Financing:** The application of an approach based on the principle of flexibility enabled communities to make efficient procurements without the need for extensive tender processes or compliance with rigid supplier policies. This approach facilitated the engagement of local suppliers who may not meet extensive vetting requirements, enhancing local economic participation.

- **Challenges:**

- **Applicant Dissatisfaction:** One community expressed dissatisfaction with the grant selection process, as applicants who were not awarded grants felt their submissions were unfairly excluded. This highlighted the need to involve local community members in future decision-making processes to enhance transparency and acceptance.

- **Scalability Limitations:** While food aid projects can be easily upscaled, the specific needs addressed by the GCTs, such as infrastructure improvements, are not easily scalable. This limitation underscores the need for tailored solutions that can address unique community needs effectively.

● Recommendations for Future Projects:

1 Incorporate Local Community

Members: For future projects, it is recommended to involve local community members in the selection committees to ensure decisions are perceived as fair and inclusive.

2 Maintain Flexibility in Financing:

Continue to utilize flexible financing models like GCTs which can address specific community needs efficiently, avoiding overly bureaucratic procedures that could hinder local supplier engagement.

3 Effectiveness of GCT Modality:

GCT is considered an effective modality for cash assistance, especially when implemented by national staff, who can execute tasks more efficiently and quickly than international experts.

● Future Collaborations:

We are in discussions with other INGOs involved in GCTs, but there has been no response or concrete plans yet. There is an interest in continuing the implementation of GCT next year, contingent on securing support and expanding the project.

Reflections on Partnership Experience

- Despite some issues, we found the INGO partner to be helpful and friendly, making the overall experience positive.
- There were no specific targets from the INGO, allowing us the flexibility to identify and address the most pressing needs of the communities.

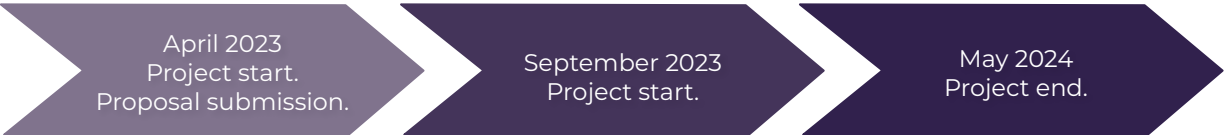
“We agreed on everything from the very beginning.... I was always reaching out to them, reporting on everything... They were nothing but helpful, friendly, it was a good experience.”

– Programme Director, Local Partner NGO

Since 2013, **Local Partner 3 – charitable foundation from Ukraine** has been working for people who find themselves in difficult life circumstances and unites those who want to help them. The fund was established in one of the oblasts of Ukraine and currently implements social projects in cooperation with international humanitarian organisations, involving state authorities and non-governmental public organisations, covering 19 oblasts of Ukraine.

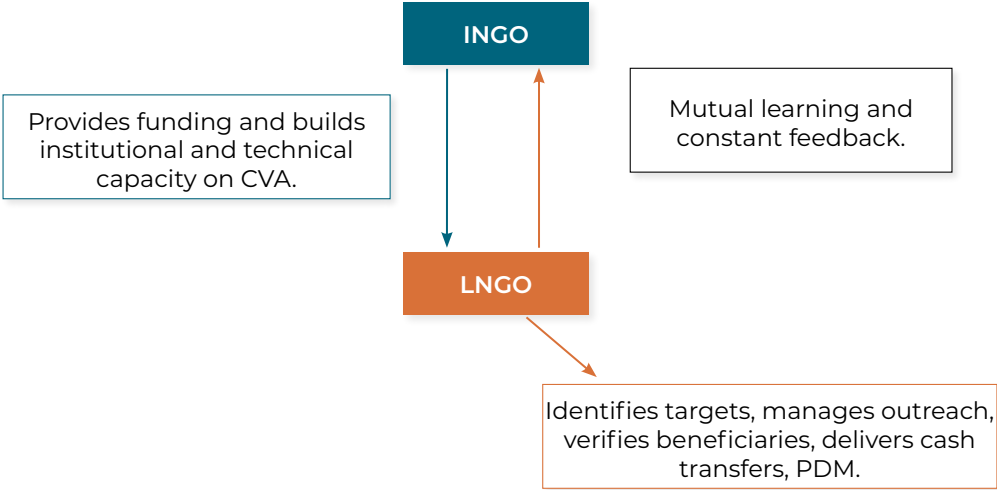
In 2023, their annual turnover was UAH 435mln and the organisation provided psycho-social and humanitarian assistance to over 1.1mln of adults and children across Ukraine. The partner had prior experience of CVA implementing a small cash project in 2022.

Timeline



Deliverables: MPCA delivered to 1,200 individuals in Zaporizhzhia oblast, Ukraine.

MPCA Model



Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

- **Motivations for Partnership:**

Our motivation to enter into the partnership stemmed from our previous longstanding collaboration with the INGO partner on other projects. Despite our limited experience with cash programming, having only engaged in one such project in 2022, we were driven by the opportunity to gain valuable experience and expertise in this area, especially for delivering full scale MPCA. The process of learning and capacity strengthening for CVA provided us with significant financial and operational insights. Before this partnership we were engaged in registration only for cash programmes. This partnership has enabled us to apply these learnings across all our projects, enhancing our overall capacity and effectiveness.

- **Establishment of Partnership and Initial Expectations:**

The partnership was established when I started working on the project in April, with our first meeting held in Eastern Ukraine where I was introduced to the project's scope. By August, we began preparing staff training and signed the contract. The process was rapid and streamlined; we had minimal documentation, which we promptly revised and signed. Initial expectations were focused on quickly getting up to speed with the project's requirements, given our limited documentation and accountability processes at the outset.

- **Due Diligence and Vetting Process:**

There was no extensive due diligence process since we had established longstanding partnership with INGO before this project. The assessment process was not a burden for us and did not require lots of investments from our side.

- **Challenges and Resolutions in Project Planning and Design**

- Initial Delays and Reassessment: The project faced a delay in receiving the first tranche of funds, leading to a reassessment of our target locations. Initially planning to register 200 people in one of the cities and the rest in three other hromadas, we had to pivot our focus solely to one city after some hromadas received other support since we were not able to provide assistance in time.
- Revised Criteria and Targeting: In November 2023, we adjusted our criteria to better address the needs of the community, focusing on families with multiple children and children with disabilities, as they were excluded from state support. This change allowed us to target groups that were not previously covered by other funds, leading to positive reactions from the beneficiaries.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

● Communication and Coordination

→ Our communication and coordination with the INGO partner, particularly with two focal points, was effective. They were always responsive, providing timely answers to all our questions without delay. Throughout the implementation process, they consistently supported us, offering guidance on best practices and advising us on what to avoid. The training and learning sessions were instrumental; we applied all the advice given, swiftly adopting new rules, including those related to financial support. However, it's important to note that this reflects my individual experience and may not entirely represent the perspective of the entire organisation.

● Project Implementation Challenges

- Funding Delay and Access Issues to Building Blocks (BB): The delay in receiving the first tranche of funds from INGO partner and subsequent access to the BB deduplication platform significantly impacted our timeline, causing delays in registering cash recipients and preparing beneficiary documentation.
- BB System Challenges: We faced difficulties with duplicates in the BB system and issues with beneficiary status updates. Despite regular communication and support from INGO partner, responses from BB were sometimes vague, complicating the resolution of these issues.

→ Scoring problem for evaluation/ verification: Our INGO partner experienced internal problem with scoring for evaluation of beneficiaries, which also caused certain delays to the cash delivery process. Hence, the beneficiary registration process started end of February and actual first payments delivered in April 2024.

● Project Implementation Achievements

- Humanitarian Hub Connections: Successfully connected to six humanitarian hubs in the oblasts however due to funding delays, only covered one of them with CVA.
- Efficient Teamwork: A small team of two managed to complete the entire project cycle for CVA without any technical or human errors, such as incorrect ID codes and delivered cash assistance to people in two weeks' period.
- Accurate Beneficiary Data: Maintained accurate records by following up with beneficiaries for additional information, ensuring smooth operations in this area.
- Positive Impact: Although the target was not as broad as desired, the project effectively provided much-needed support to our beneficiaries.

● Overall Collaboration Dynamics

→ The collaboration was marked by effective communication and strong support from the INGO partner. Regular and responsive interactions with key contacts ensured that questions were answered promptly, and guidance was consistently provided, e.g., on the issue with BB. The training and advice received

were instrumental in successfully adopting new rules and procedures. This effective partnership facilitated the implementation of the project, despite initial uncertainties, challenges and delays in receiving the tranches.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

- **Current Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**

→ Although we did not request specific training for Kobo form, our staff's prior experience in registration of beneficiaries proved useful. The numerous trainings provided by the INGO partner were invaluable, enhancing our understanding and skills across various aspects of CVA project implementation. Notably, the training on market monitoring introduced us to new methodologies. The comprehensive training on project design and budgeting was particularly impactful, offering insights we had not received from other partners. The November training was especially crucial, providing detailed information on targeting and monitoring, which transformed our general ideas into more constructive and actionable strategies. Overall, these trainings significantly bolstered our organisational and technical capacities.

- **Future Capacity Building and Support Needs**

→ We would benefit from further training in several key areas: advanced financial management, registration and verification best practices. Since we implement multi-faceted projects and programmes, we see lots of needs and opportunities for improving our work.

Phase 4: Lessons Learned, Sustainability, and Future Collaboration

- **Recommendations for Future Projects:**

1 Expand Funding and Coverage for Cash Assistance – given the extensive need for cash support across Ukraine, it is crucial to increase funding and broaden coverage to reach more individuals and families in need.

2 Address Legislative Challenges Through Collective Action - Local legislative hurdles (e.g. taxation) can impede the effectiveness and efficiency of cash assistance programmes, creating barriers to timely and adequate support. Addressing these challenges requires a unified approach from all involved parties, including NGOs, governmental agencies, and donor organisations. We should work collaboratively to advocate for policy changes and streamline regulatory processes.

- **Future collaborations:**

We are positioned for significant expansion in cash programming across Ukraine, leveraging our presence in 17 areas. Plans include increasing the target for cash recipients beyond the current 1,200 to address greater needs. While the current team of two is sufficient for this scale, future projects will require adjustments based on the time and scope of registration needs, potentially expanding the team as necessary. We are ready to undertake more extensive projects and have demonstrated the capability to manage up to 15,000 recipients within a month.

Reflections on Partnership Experience

- We found this partnership to be largely positive despite encountering some challenges. The biggest issue we faced

was the delay in tranche disbursement, which impacted our project timeline. However, we successfully reached our target, ensured that people received the necessary assistance, and managed the difficulties with BB. Our ability to overcome these obstacles and achieve our goals underscores the effectiveness of the partnership. We are optimistic about future collaborations and look forward to building on this successful experience.

“Now we understand how to work with this to implement the whole cycle of cash, thanks to this project... We hope to have future partnerships.”

– Programme Coordinator, Local Partner NGO

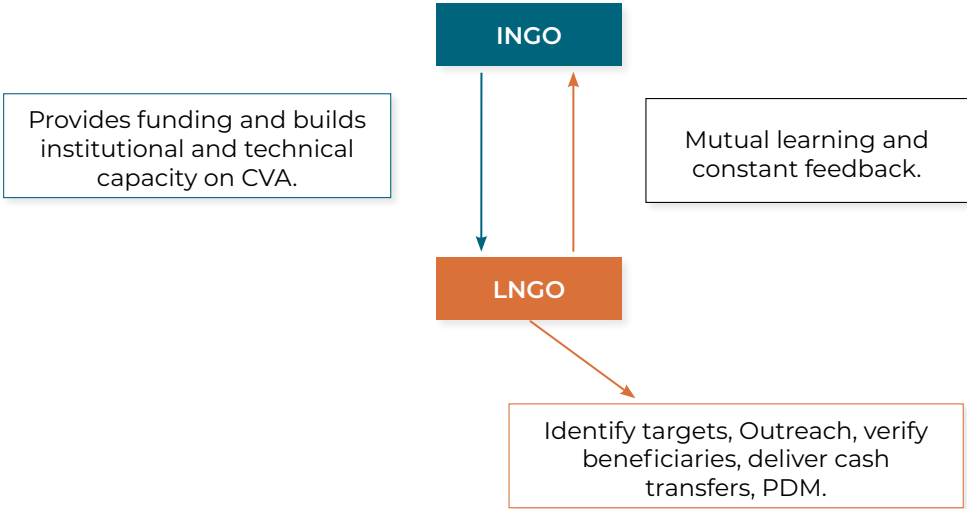
Local Partner 4 is a **charitable non-profit organisation** with legal entity status, registered in accordance with local legislation **in Ukraine**. The foundation was established in 2015, based on an initiative from an active women's volunteer group that began its humanitarian work in 2014 to assist those affected by the conflict in the eastern region of the country. The mission of the organisation is to help, protect and restore lives of women and girls affected by the war. The concept envisions a creation of diverse women's community that is protected, inclusive, active, and united, with the ability to recover and thrive even amidst the crisis in Ukraine. Overall, they have implemented around 70 social projects since 2014 in Ukraine. No prior CVA experience.

Timeline



Deliverables: MPCA delivered to 1,160 individuals in Donetsk oblast, Ukraine.

MPCA Model



Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

- **Motivations for Partnership:**

This INGO has been our longstanding strategic partner due to shared values and mission. This project offered us a unique opportunity to deliver full cycle of cash programme and engage with registration/verification as well as payments. This was our motivation to enter into partnership and provide assistance to our beneficiaries to address their needs.

- **Establishment of Partnership and Initial Expectations:**

The partnership with INGO was established long before this project. We were offered to apply through Express of Interest (EoI) process and submitted our proposal. Then we had joint discussion and planning of the project's concept, targeting of hromadas, etc. Overall, the process was quite straightforward and fast.

- **Due Diligence and Vetting Process:**

No comprehensive due diligence and assessment process was conducted due to already established previous partnership with us.

- **Challenges and Resolutions in Project Planning and Design**

- Preparation and Target Group Planning:

The project required a thorough pre-phase with detailed planning to address target group categories and avoid conflicts in hromadas, which ideally needed six months of preparation.

- Timing and Staffing Issues: Working in January proved difficult due to delays from people returning to

work later in the month. Additionally, there were issues with having the PDM questionnaires prepared before registration and also with the need for more bookkeepers/accountants. We set up the team of 16 people including four registrars, one verification officer, one bookkeeper and two managers. For a short period, we also engaged comms person and hotline specialists. It would have been better to have two bookkeepers/accountants to accelerate the financial management process.

- Budget and Security Concerns:

Budgeting constraints and limitations on available funds posed challenges and required to identify the most vulnerable targets among lots of needs, alongside security concerns and delays impacting the overall project implementation.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

- **Communication and Coordination**

- Communication and collaboration levels were high and characterized by attentive listening to our staff and incorporating our suggestions. There was consistent interaction with focal points, ensuring smooth coordination all the time. The quality of work was maintained at a high standard throughout the project. Overall, the partnership can be rated 9 out of 10.

- **Project Implementation Challenges**

- Limited Time for Implementation: The tight timeline for the project's execution created pressure and constraints, making it difficult to complete all necessary tasks effectively within the available period.

- Security Concerns: Security issues were a major challenge, requiring constant monitoring and adaptation to ensure the safety of both staff and beneficiaries. This added complexity to the project's management and implementation.
- Delays: Various delays impacted the project's progress, including those related to funding tranches and preparing PDM in advance. These delays affected the overall timeline and execution of the planned activities.

- **Project Implementation Achievements**

- We were implementing the project together with local authorities. We communicated with them to understand the needs of the local communities. They want us to help the local communities, and we've been working in this area for many years. People know us and have a friendly relationship with us. The two main successes of the project were that we helped many people in hard-to-reach areas and gained an understanding how to build our projects in the future on cash through the useful trainings and tools (MEAL, Kobo, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), access to BBs, etc).

- **Overall Collaboration Dynamics**

- Effective collaboration was established with the INGO partner. Their representatives provided guidance and continuous support when needed.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

- **Current Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**

- - We found training in MEAL helpful in terms of understanding monitoring processes, calculation of results/ indicators, using PDM forms. As for the tools, we received access to Building Blocks. SOP became a great tool for us and now we know how to work with that.

- **Future Capacity Building and Support Needs**

- - We would benefit from improving skills on building Kobo forms and on how to process the data; it would be nice to have more workshops and trainings on this.

Phase 4: Lessons Learned, Sustainability, and Future Collaboration

● Recommendations for Future Projects:

- 1 Invest Resources:** Ensure adequate investment in both financial and human resources. This includes having a specialized team for handling documentation and data to streamline processes and improve efficiency.
- 2 Enhance Pre-Planning:** Invest time in the project preparation and pre-planning phases. A well-structured planning phase can prevent delays and inefficiencies during implementation..
- 3 Prioritize Targeting:** Thoroughly define and manage targeting criteria to avoid conflicts within communities. Any financial aid project cannot meet the needs of 100% of community residents. That is why, at the beginning of the project implementation, it is necessary to assess the needs of the community, to determine the categories of the population that actually live there. Analyse which categories of the population need financial assistance and to narrow down as much as possible the categories of recipients of assistance who can participate in the project and also define clear selection/targeting criteria.

- 4 Understand Project Terms:** Develop a thorough understanding of project terms and requirements. Set realistic and achievable timeframes, allowing at least six months for CVA implementation.

● Future collaborations:

As of now, the project finished, and we don't have any further plans for a cash programme. We started negotiations with other INGO who are looking for partners to implement such projects and they want to consider our organisation as a strategic partner. We engaged in this process and would like to continue to broaden the operations of our organisation.

Reflections on Partnership Experience

- The communication was consistently effective, and we never experienced significant delays in receiving the assistance we needed. This seamless interaction and timely support greatly contributed to the success of our collaboration.

*"This was not an easy project... [for us].
"The highest value" was to be engaged
in this project."*

– Programme Coordinator, Local Partner NGO

Since 2014 the volunteer initiative of **Local Partner 5 - NGO from Ukraine** provides assistance to people in difficult life situations as well as instigates positive changes in the community. More than 130,000 citizens received assistance through this organisation. Since February 24th, 2022, with a full Russian invasion of the country and constant shelling of the territory of Ukraine, they have provided support to those citizens who don't have the possibility to provide themselves with basic supplies. With a risk for their lives, organisation's volunteers deliver the needed provision to the most dangerous parts of eastern Ukraine.

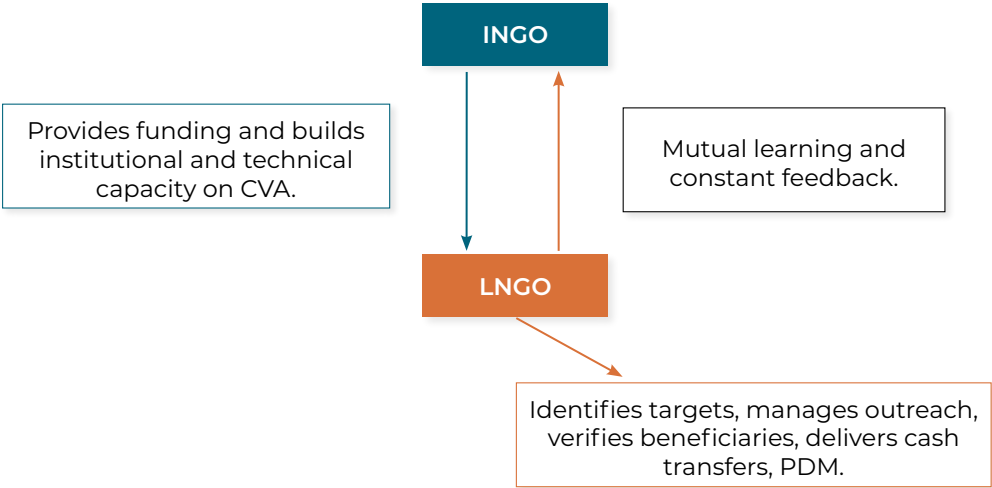
As of April 2022, they received more than 10,000 requests for help. Their weekly expenses for food were \$6,000. The organisation had implemented small cash project prior to this partnership, however, was not engaged in a full cycle of MPCA.

Timeline



Deliverables: MPCA delivered to 1,160 individuals in Donetsk oblast, Ukraine.

MPCA Model



Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

- **Motivations, Establishment of Partnership and Initial Expectations:**

Since the beginning of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (2014), we effectively engaged with communities, helped IDPs and, later, people in difficult life circumstances. But since large-scale invasion we focused on IDPs as part of our reorganisation efforts. Since then, our main activity in the region evolved into a broader humanitarian focus with diverse projects, including participative democracy, education, protection, humanitarian aid, monitoring of the implementation of state reforms. But after the large-scale invasion (2022), we again focused on humanitarian aid. We started cooperation with INGO partner in July 2022. The initial project included institutional support for the organisation (fuel, rental of warehouse space, etc.), while INGO partner provided essential products for distribution. In 2023, we expanded into cash delivery for occupied territories, registering 36,000 people and distributing cash to approximately 30,000 beneficiaries. Our previous experience with CVA motivated us to participate in this large-scale initiative with the same partner.

Initially at the inception phase of project when we had partners' meeting, we were informed of different terms and conditions (reporting requirements), however, during the implementation we were receiving multiple additional requests for reporting and documentation which was not communicated to us prior to the contract signing.

- **Due Diligence and Vetting Process:**

the INGO partner had an evaluation form for the partners. We had 5,5 hours online meeting answering the questions. It was an assessment of all our work. We provided answers regarding finance, procurement. Haven't received a copy of the assessment form. We then did the assessment for the second time. This was very time consuming for us and required lots of resources of staff to invest in.

- **Challenges and Resolutions in Project Planning and Design:**

During the planning phase, we encountered several challenges. A prolonged signing of the contract (the founding meeting took place on July 15th, and we submitted the project within a week). During the negotiations, we recalculated the budget six times, as it was necessary to adjust the decrease in the number of months, resulting in a condensed timeline of five and a half months for implementation. We attended training on November 11th without having a finalized contract with INGO partner, which was only signed on November 23rd, though dated November 1st. Despite not receiving any funds, we were required to submit empty reports. Within the framework of the pilot project, we had two agreements: the first, signed on November 26th (dated November 1st), was for capacity strengthening and the second, signed on February 26th (dated January 1st), left us only three months (the last month was given under the PDM) to complete the work and actual delivery of CVA, including the time already lost. We began registration of

beneficiaries in February, without a signed agreement and funds for disbursements, and disbursements did not begin until March 2024 (thus reducing the actual cash disbursement time to two months), after which we had to conduct special checks and PDM. In addition, each of the agreements provided for two tranches, and the fact that this will cause difficulties in the implementation of the project was repeatedly noted by us at the stage of planning and negotiations on the project. In fact, the second tranche of the CVA part went in later instead of the planned March. And the second tranche of the project on strengthening the potential arrived only ten days before the end of the project - in May 2024, requiring us to cover consultant costs ourselves, and a large part of the project on providing consultation, educational and psychological assistance to children was not implemented. For general understanding, 18 cases of children's difficult psychological condition were discovered, but we were unable to provide help, and moreover, we were refused a request to pay for the children's psychological support course in advance.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

● Communication and Coordination

- Our main focal point was the Partnerships Coordinator from the INGO partner. While she was a great person, her lack of cash programme background and limited authority hindered decision-making and slowed down the process. Communication with the INGO partner was difficult, often requiring lengthy waits for approvals and dealing with

agreements that contained errors. We faced uncertainty about funding and logistical issues, starting implementation in February 2024 before finalizing the agreement. We had to start registration and visiting households (the project provided for address registration and simultaneous monitoring of the place of residence) without initial funding and with no understanding at all whether the funds would be available; we also faced delays in fund transfers. By the project's end on May 21st, we had to turn to third-party organisations with a request to provide psychological assistance to the victims due to the lack of time to spend the budgeted funds. Additionally, at the end of the project, it unexpectedly turned out that we had to return the equipment purchased and adjusted for work on cash assistance which contradicted the project's goal of strengthening the technical capacity of local organisations to work in monetary projects. Despite these hurdles, we maintained our focus on achieving project goals and building capacity.

● Project Implementation Challenges

- We had delays in signing the documents with INGO partner. Other local NGO partners started to work in September, we started from 26th November due to delays. We had to change the budget six times. We had no clarity on why local partners were treated in a different way and not equally.
- We were requested to submit monthly narrative and financial reports for two separate contracts/projects which was not initially agreed. During the partners' meeting in June 2023, we were

informed that due to localization focus of this project, we will have simplified requirements and constant support from INGO partner, however, this did not materialize during the implementation phase.

- The lack of a clearly defined financial reporting policy on the part of the INGO partner led to the fact that during the implementation of the project we changed four financial managers, and each manager saw the reporting in their own way, which complicated the work of preparing the financial report. In addition, some of the financial managers demanded documents that had nothing to do with financial reporting, but at the same time constituted a huge amount of work. For example, the personal documents of the beneficiaries stored on our Google Drive and to which the financial managers had access were required to be renamed and placed in folders on another resource of the partner. The volume of documents was approximately 10,000 pieces. Given the limitations of time (not our fault) and personnel (this work was not agreed in advance and the personnel was not included in the budget), this situation was resolved at a special meeting with the relevant management of the partner, where it was confirmed that the financial manager had exceeded his authority and had no right to request these documents. The whole process took one and a half months.
- Long bureaucratic procedures and, as mentioned above, the absence of a clear financial reporting policy led to additional delays in providing the second tranches,

which in turn slowed down the project implementation process.

- Unpredictably, we had to work in the conditions of a severe blackout for the whole of March, and at the end of the project, when there were unspent funds due to no fault of ours, we were denied the purchase of unplanned possessions necessary to ensure the organisation's work (such as Eco flow or a generator).

● **Project Implementation Achievements**

- Despite constant obstacles and shortened deadlines, we were able to fulfil all the goals set in the CVA part, namely, we provided the affected population with a full cycle of payment of both MPCA and CVA funds. We also managed to adjust the whole system in such a way that it took three days from the visit to the payments (doubtful cases required more time, as well as delays in tranches). It is confirmed that for most beneficiaries, cash is the best form of assistance.
- We selected the target group very well, and thanks to targeted visits for interviews, we were able to more clearly identify the situation in the family and children's needs for the absence/presence of gadgets.
- Involving the beneficiaries in reporting on how they spend the target money was an unprecedented achievement. That is, people independently reported which gadgets they bought and how much they cost.
- We have many grateful and positive feedback from the beneficiaries.

- **Overall Collaboration Dynamics**

→ Collaboration was challenging for us due to uncertainty of financial reporting, endless changes in reporting requirements and delays in decision-making from INGO partner's side. This led to the failure of the project implementation schedules, as well as the failure to implement a large part of the project in terms of supporting families in identified needs due to lack of time. We had to sign two separate contracts: one for capacity strengthening component and another for cash distribution component, which put additional burden of double reporting (which was not agreed at the negotiation stage) and overstretched our scarce human and organisational resources.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

- **Capacity Building and Technical Support Challenges**

→ The institutional support of the project allowed us to purchase essential equipment such as tablets, mobile phones, and laptops for our team. These resources were crucial for maintaining operation, particularly during power outages. However, at the end of the project, we were informed that the five laptops would be reclaimed, contrary to the project's goal of building capacity. We contested this decision, as it undermined the project's objective of enhancing our operational capacity.⁴

Phase 4: Lessons Learned, Sustainability, and Future Collaboration

- **Recommendations for Future Projects:**

1 Establish Clear Agreements: Ensure that agreements between INGO and local partners are precise and well-defined, with explicit conditions including the timelines for tranche delivery to local partners and clear requirements from them. This will help avoid confusion and ensure all parties have a mutual understanding of expectations and requirements.

2 Streamline Reporting Processes: Simplify reporting requirements to reduce the administrative burden. Instead of multiple reports, aim for consolidated reporting periods and clear guidelines to streamline the process.

3 Enhance Mutual Understanding: Foster better communication and respect between INGOs and LNGOs. INGOs should make an effort to understand the local context and conditions, particularly in challenging or dangerous areas, and adjust their expectations and operations accordingly. Our partner did not allow us to purchase the equipment they have provided us with the remaining project funds, even though we spent the last month of the project working with severe electricity blackouts.

⁴ Note: the issue has been resolved through the negotiation between INGO and LNGO partners. LNGO partner has been granted permission to maintain the assets.

4 Reduce Bureaucracy: Minimize bureaucratic obstacles that hinder effective implementation. Address logistical and practical issues promptly and adapt processes to the local situation, such as changing banks or adjusting delivery methods based on on-the-ground realities.

5 Improve Flexibility and Responsiveness: Develop a more responsive approach to emerging challenges highlighted by local partners, ensuring that decisions can be made quickly and effectively in response to local conditions.

6 Provide Opportunities for communication and exchange of experience between INGOs.

- **Future collaborations:**
We participated in a closing event with our partners where we reviewed our project's achievements, challenges, and complications. Presenting our results to other organisations provided valuable insights and highlighted both the positive outcomes and challenges. While the experience was beneficial, we are now seeking clarity on how to proceed and build on this foundation for future collaborations.

Reflections on Partnership Experience

- The communication was not effective. We were constantly told that the decision should be made at Head Office level in Ukraine or at the HQ, which lead to delays. We had no idea who was making the decisions concerning the project.
- The contracts we signed were not aligned with our needs and didn't give any flexibility, e.g. on asset management. We raised this issue with the partner, however, we were told that these are standard templates and that the INGO partner is not able to change anything.
- We delivered a full cycle of cash for this project however, we are not even mentioned as partners (e.g., CWG's reporting). The whole credit for the implementation goes to our INGO partner.

"We spent a lot of time to write the reports, the management [financial manager] was constantly changing, each new one had a new vision, we wasted a lot of time."

– Programme Coordinator, Local Partner NGO

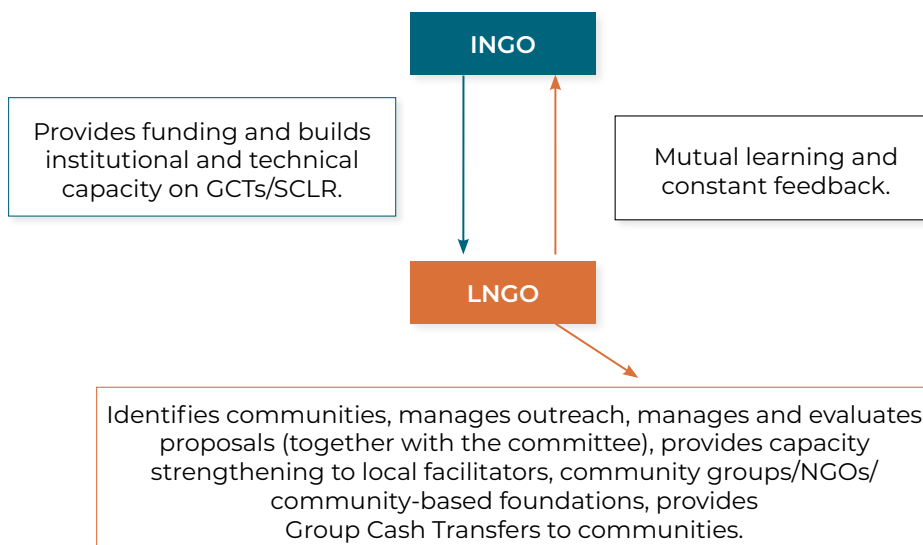
Local Partner 6 is a **charitable organisation** from **Ukraine** with over 10 years of experience in social transformations. Since 2011 they have been developing communities in Ukraine and after the largescale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, their work was completely transformed to rapidly react to humanitarian issues of their partners and beneficiaries all over Ukraine. Their mission is to foster growth and development of Ukrainian society by empowering key community stakeholders. This includes supporting young people through education and leadership training, collaborating with religious communities to enhance social cohesion, and enhancing the capabilities of professional social workers. The organisation also works with local governments to improve governance practices, promote volunteerism to build community resilience, and support non-governmental and charitable organisations through capacity-building initiatives. Their comprehensive approach aims to create a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient society where every individual and community has the support and opportunities to thrive. The NGO worked with GCTs, but in the organisation this process was referred to as “sub-granting”. This project gave them the opportunity to improve the internal processes for scaling their expertise to many key regions.

Timeline



Deliverables: 80 GCTs delivered in 11 oblasts: Kyiv, Cherkasy, Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Kropyvnytskyi, Kharkiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Poltava, Sumy, and Chernihiv, Ukraine.

GCT Model



Phase 1: Partnership Initiation and Project Design

- **Motivations for Partnership:**

The possibility of an integrated approach to solving humanitarian crises was main motivation for us. Also, the way of work, which is managed by INGO, namely that we first go to the communities and identify the problems they face, and on the basis of that we solve the problems of the final beneficiary.

- **Establishment of Partnership and Initial Expectations:**

Establishing cooperation was quite difficult, since we did not have clearly described project methods and tools from the very beginning. But later we received comprehensive training and a how-to guide that helped us understand how to implement the SCLR⁵ tool into our project. It was important for us to get support from the INGO team during the entire project implementation, but in the future we would like to be able to be more flexible in project planning, use our own policies (which are standardized according to the legislation of Ukraine and the requirements of international donors), and have an influence on changes in the project in connection with a better understanding of the situation in Ukraine, as we have 20 years of experience in this field.

- **Criteria for Selecting the Partner(s):**

The selection of INGO as a partner by the LINGO was based on the study and assessment of compliance with the values

and mission of our NGO. This includes shared values, perspectives on development and social change.

The selection of local NGO, included into our network is the next process. Our network unites 11 local partner organisations that successfully provide assistance in selected regions. This network of support centres is the basis for building social ties and cohesion, which strengthen the response to the crisis. When selecting local organisations to partner with us, we consider several key criteria: alignment with our values and mission; a well-defined staff structure including key roles such as managers, project managers, accountants, media support, and legal experts; an established volunteer process that complements our needs and strategy; existing partnership relationships with other regional organisations to enhance project implementation; extensive experience in working with donors, particularly in raising substantial funds exceeding EUR 50,000, demonstrating their proficiency in financial management and resource mobilization; and adherence to our technological approaches and strategies to ensure consistency in achieving project goals.

- **Due Diligence and Vetting Process:**

First, we received a list of required documents and completed questionnaires, which we submitted to INGO partner. They reviewed these documents and followed up with clarifying questions. We then scheduled a visit from the INGO partner team to our office, where

5 Survivor and Community Led Response - is a framework that emphasizes the leadership and decision-making power of disaster-affected communities in their own recovery and response efforts. This approach is based on the belief that communities are best positioned to identify their needs and priorities and to take effective actions to address them.

they spent four hours analysing our documentation. They reviewed various aspects of our organisation, including personnel documents such as employment contracts and personal files, as well as service contracts. They examined our accounting system, client bank, and the authority of signatories for bank payments. They also assessed how we store and maintain primary documents to ensure compliance with donor standards, analysed our property accounting rules, and verified inventory numbers for machinery, furniture, and other assets. Additionally, they reviewed our financial reporting and organisational budget. Based on their findings, INGO recommended improvements to our procurement system.

- **Contract Signing:**

These were general conditions, the details were communicated to us verbally, but we did not have them clearly described. The signing of the contract lasted about three months. The contract was not translated into the local language, which caused certain problems for us, since according to the current legislation of Ukraine it is recommended that the contracts be bilingual. In general, all provisions of the contract were acceptable.

- **Defining Goals and Objectives:**

Before proposing the project, we held meetings with local organisations and representative offices in the regions to determine the basic needs of the beneficiaries of the regions and to understand the directions of cooperation with our network. Privileged regions where there is the greatest need for humanitarian response, etc., were also determined.

- **Challenges and Resolutions in Project Planning and Design:**

During the project planning and design phase, we adapted the SCLR approach to the Ukrainian context, focusing on using micro-grants based on local community analysis. Feedback from partners and initial cycles led to adjustments, including additional training for procurement processes and changes to facilitation timing.

Phase 2: Project Implementation and Collaboration Dynamics

- **Adaptations During Implementation**

→ Key adaptations during implementation included customizing tools, reducing the number of regions from 18 to 11, increasing local coordinators to 22, and extending facilitation time from 10 days to 1 month. These changes optimized the project to better meet local needs and improve efficiency.

- **Communication and Coordination**

→ Communication with the INGO partner takes place through in person or online meetings, as well as email correspondence. The partner is always quick to respond when there are certain issues during project implementation and tries to resolve them quickly.

→ We experienced significant differences in organisational cultures with our partner LNGOs. Some organisations are newly established, while others have been around for over 10 years. In some organisations, the staff may consist of only three people, in others of 300. There are organisations where all work relates to volunteers, and in others -

with employees of departments. Also, some organisations have all policies in place, while others are governed only by the charter. We were able to minimize these differences because of the flexibility in our approach. We focused on complementing and developing organisations with what they lacked. In particular, we have focused on interaction and collaboration, focusing on how we can contribute to mutual enrichment. Networking and cross-sectoral play an important role in this, as they allow organisations to interact, share experiences and receive advice from colleagues.

- We appointed project and operational managers for overseeing project management and NGO cooperation, and a grant manager for donor communication. We also engaged local partners in 11 Ukrainian regions, who coordinate through local facilitators. The decision-making process in this collaboration is intricate, involving the collection, analysis, and documentation of regional needs; joint planning to address these needs; conducting working meetings for comprehensive issue analysis and transparent cooperation; and systematically evaluating progress while seeking ways to enhance collaboration.
- INGO partner team provided us with an email for sending complaints or suggestions, particularly concerning issues like sexual or other forms of exploitation, though we didn't need to use it. Throughout each project cycle, we had opportunities to provide feedback. We utilized open-ended questions in feedback questionnaires, retrospective

sessions, interim electronic surveys, and data snapshots from online meetings. After collecting this information, we followed up and synchronized with partners. We also used our experience to plan development and educational programmes aimed at enhancing our organisation's capacity.

● **Project Implementation Challenges**

- The questions arose regarding the implementation of procurement processes and our team received additional training from partners on this aspect. Also, during the project implementation process, problematic aspects regarding the timing of the facilitation sessions arose, the time was adjusted in relation to the requests and the timeline was changed. In addition, at the request of the groups and local coordinators, more time was allocated for the preparation of documents (submission of applications) before pitching, etc.

● **Project Implementation Achievements**

- Key achievements of the project include the successful transfer of responsibility to communities through the provision of GCTs, allowing communities to determine their own priorities and enhancing the inclusiveness and effectiveness of crisis response. Several NGOs were established during the project, and some groups prepared proposals, budgets, and reports for the first time, marking a shift from merely receiving aid to administering it. This transition also empowered key local organisations to act as grant distributors for SCLR grants in their areas. Another

significant achievement was the increased engagement of groups in developing and implementing their own initiatives, sparking local interest and innovation. The project also expanded the network of active NGOs, involving over 200 civil society organisations from approximately 120 territorial communities in addressing regional needs, thanks to the efforts of local coordinators and our broad network across 11 regions.

- **Overall Collaboration Dynamics**

→ In our overall collaboration, we focused on not just future cooperation with the partner, but also on developing our organisational capabilities and effectively utilizing available resources. We sought to bolster regional support by engaging various societal branches and started implementing a horizontal networking strategy. This strategy promoted mutual reinforcement and mentoring among us and other partners.

Phase 3: Capacity Strengthening and Knowledge Sharing

- **Current Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing**

→ We facilitated the capacity building by providing local NGOs with trainings and consultations. Our partners played a key role in developing the capacity building plan and its implementation. Each of them gathered the capacity

building needs from the NGOs in their regions and facilitated the corresponding trainings. These included legal, financial, organisational and other trainings. Moreover, our partners helped local NGOs with various other issues. From questions about the application to questions about the registration of the NGO.

→ We think that one of the best tools we used to share knowledge between the partners were the round tables. Our partners value the round tables we organize for them not only because they get to share the knowledge but also because they see that they're not alone in this and their problems are not unique and can be solved.

→ The difficulty was to help the foreign partner understand the needs of Ukrainians during the war, because the foreign donor does not always understand the local context, the legislation of Ukraine and what needs a person in a crisis can cover on his own, and for which he needs help.

- **Future Capacity Building and Support Needs**

→ A high level of community involvement was determined, but some regions of Ukraine have a less powerful NGO network. To improve the situation, additional engagement measures such as additional training and mentoring, etc., need to be implemented.

Phase 4: Lessons Learned, Sustainability, and Future Collaboration

● Achievements

- Sub-granting, combined with accountability, hands-on learning, capacity building and a focus on improving community-led processes, enabled local NGOs to rapidly address self-identified needs and leverage opportunities in their communities to encourage inclusive scale-up of support. This created a synergistic effect of involving new partners, as well as government officials, in the processes. In addition, capacity building trainings (more than 30 held in 11 regions) at the request of the groups (topics depended on their initiative, available opportunities, requests, etc.) made it possible to increase the capacity of key actors in the region and create a pool of capable organisations that can respond more quickly to needs of the region.
- This approach (SCLR) was new for 11 regions, so it can be said that the coverage of more than 100 communities and 149 applications with 39 winners determined in two cycles is a high level of achievement of the project goals and an impetus for a certain change of thinking to promote the application of a flexible approach, taking into account the needs of the community.

● Challenges

- Work in the frontline regions is a real challenge for the work of local coordinators, because these communities need the most support and help. But working with them is complicated due to security issues and lack of public transport.
- During the facilitation sessions, the difference in experience and level of awareness of the participants (NGO representatives) is felt, which sometimes leads to tense discussions in determining priorities and decisions, which in turn affected the delay in the time of the facilitation session. Taking into account this experience, local coordinators (facilitators) divide the participants according to the level of awareness if possible.
- The implementation of the project attracts the attention of a large number of NGOs, which leads to an increase in the projected time for processing and collecting documents of participants in the sub-grant competition. This, in turn, affects the timing and financing of the winning participants according to the plan.
- The implementation of the project is carried out in compliance with the procurement policy. But the procurement of services is complicated by the lack of the required number of applicants, so sometimes there is a need to re-announce the procurement process, which takes a lot of time.

● Recommendations for Future Projects:

1 Involve Experienced Local Actors:

Engage local partners with established relationships and influence in their communities to enhance accountability, trust, and mutual assistance, leading to more effective and meaningful results.

2 Conduct Detailed Needs Assessments:

Utilize comprehensive needs assessments through Participatory Action Learning in Crises (PALC)⁶ sessions to understand community needs and priorities. This approach ensures that support addresses both immediate and long-term needs, while clear instructions for local facilitators help in organizing project processes effectively.

● Future Collaborations:

We are currently assessing the sustainability of our project's impact on local NGOs through reports and monitoring visits. Early indications show positive organisational growth and increased trust among city government officials for NGOs that received sub-grants. For instance, an NGO in the Poltava region, initially allocated a communal property room for a wellness space, has since received additional space and funds for repairs from local authorities following the successful grant.

Looking ahead, we plan to continue and expand our partnership by building on our regional networks. Our strategic vision includes enhancing organisational capacity through training and monitoring,

conducting facilitation sessions to address regional issues, providing ongoing NGO grant support, and organizing forums to showcase successful cases in the region.

Reflections on Partnership Experience

- Reflecting on our partnership experience, we found that adapting the SCLR approach to the Ukrainian context was crucial for the success of our project. We were driven by the positive outcomes of implementing this approach in other countries and aimed to tailor it to meet the specific needs of Ukrainian communities. The core idea was to use micro-grants to address local needs identified through community analysis, without being influenced by external actors. The novelty of the approach and tools required us to undertake additional consultations and training for local coordinators across 11 regions. Throughout the initial cycles, we encountered and addressed several issues based on feedback from our partners. This iterative process of learning and adjusting allowed us to refine our methods and improve the effectiveness of our project implementation.

"It was important for us to receive support from the INGO partner team during the entire project implementation, but in the future, we would like to be able to be more flexible in project planning."

– Grants Manager, Local Partner NGO

⁶ Participatory Action Learning in Crises (PALC) is a framework that integrates principles of participation, action, and learning to address challenges in crisis situations, such as natural disasters, conflicts, or other emergencies. This approach focuses on involving affected communities in the problem-solving process, enabling them to take action and continuously learn and adapt.

PATHWAYS TO LOCALISATION:
Local Actors' Partnership Experiences in CVA
Programmes in Ukraine and Romania



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