



UNITED NATIONS
UKRAINE



THE STATE OF YOUTH IN UKRAINE

Analytical Report compiled by the UN Working Group on Youth



Kyiv 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FOREWORD	5
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
COMMITMENTS TO INVESTING IN YOUNG PEOPLE	16
1. YOUTH HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	21
Identified issues and gaps	26
Recommendations	27
Bibliography	29
2. YOUTH EDUCATION	30
Brief overview of the situation	32
Identified issues and gaps	33
Recommendations	35
Bibliography	36
3. YOUTH EMPLOYMENT	37
Brief overview of the situation	39
Identified issues and gaps	41
Recommendations	43
Bibliography	45
4. YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE	46
Brief overview of the situation	48
Identified issues and gaps	51
Recommendations	54
Bibliography	55
5. YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM	56
Brief overview of the situation	58
Identified issues and gaps	61
Recommendations	62
Bibliography	63
6. YOUTH AND THE ARMED CONFLICT	64
Brief overview of the situation	66
Identified issues and gaps	69
Recommendations	72
Bibliography	73



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“The State of Youth in Ukraine - 2019” is an analytical report prepared by the UN Youth Working Group in Ukraine. It provides a snapshot of the current situation regarding young people in Ukraine. The report analyzes existing data, identifies the main issues and gaps present, and provides recommendations about what should be addressed moving forward in the following six areas: health and well-being; education; employment; participation in public and political life; volunteerism; and youth and the armed conflict. The report can be used as an advocacy tool to inform policy and decision-makers, donors, and relevant partners on the main issues and problems facing young people in Ukraine.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

: AR Crimea	Autonomous Republic of Crimea
: BMI	Body Mass Index
: CEB	Chief Executives Board for Coordination
: CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
: ERW	Explosive Remnants of War
: FSWs	Female Sex Workers
: GCA	Government Controlled Areas
: GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (The German Agency for International Cooperation)
: HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus Infection and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
: IANYD	Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development
: IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
: IEDs	Improvised Explosive Devices
: MARA	Most at Risk Adolescent
: MOES	Ministry of Education and Science
: MOH	Ministry of Healthcare
: MoYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports
: MSM	Men who have Sex with Men
: MTCT	Mother-To-Child Transmission
: NACE	General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities
: NCDs	Non-Communicable Diseases
: NGCA	Non-Government Controlled Areas
: NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
: OECD	The Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development
: OSCE SMM	The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine
: PHC	Primary Health Care
: PISA	The Programme for International Student Assessment
: PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
: PWIDs	People Who Inject Drugs
: SHS	Secondhand Smoke
: SSD	Safe School Declaration
: UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
: YFCs	Youth Friendly Clinics
: Youth-SWAP	System-Wide Action Plan on Youth
: YWG	The UN Youth Working Group in Ukraine

FOREWORD

Young people hold boundless potential to contribute innovation, passion and be trailblazers for change. Supporting young people to unleash their potential to the full can serve as a driver and accelerator for the Sustainable Development Goals, which world leaders have committed to achieving by 2030. The United Nations therefore seeks to ensure that your people are included, empowered, and regarded as key partners within all our efforts at local, national and global levels.

We've learned from our experience in Ukraine and worldwide, that support for young people yields multiple dividends for communities and societies. Young people can envision, demand, and be active contributors and transformers to a more just and equitable world, through entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation, and active civic engagement.

This report is a product of the UN Youth Working Group. The group was established with the objective of ensuring a coordinated and collaborative approach across all UN agencies active in Ukraine in our support to the Government of Ukraine, to non-governmental organizations, academia - and most importantly - to Ukrainian young people, with the overall aim of ensuring that youth development is a strategic priority for the country. The report identifies obstacles that young people in Ukraine face today, offering concrete recommendations for how they can be addressed, this report aims to provide advocates and decisionmakers with the analytical data needed for well-informed policies that would enable the young generation to flourish.

Fully harnessing the potential of young people in Ukraine requires investment in their capacities, removing structural barriers that impede their development, and ensuring their meaningful inclusion in decision-making. Investing in youth is investing in the country's future. I urge all stakeholders to review the findings and recommendations laid out in this report and consider them in policy-making, programming, and advocacy.



Ms. Osnat Lubrani,
UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian
Coordinator in Ukraine

FOREWORD

Through this analytical report, the UN Youth Working Group in Ukraine seek to highlight the issues and gaps in services facing young people, simultaneously offering non-binding targeted recommendations of how these may be addressed.

The working group shares the sentiment expressed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, M. António Guterres that: “[...] believing that we are facing enormous challenges, believing that the best hope for those challenges is with the new generations, *we need to make sure that we are able to strongly invest in those new generations*” and hopes this report will help Ukraine to put into practice the global commitments made towards young people in recent times.

We believe that young people are ultimately their own best advocates; so, it is therefore our pleasure and honor to open this report with a contribution from Yelyzaveta Fedorovska, *Head of the UN Youth Advisory Panel* in Ukraine: “We believe that nowadays in Ukraine, young people have the ability to fulfill their own potential, as well as to reinforce spheres such as the job market, education, and cooperation between the government and our young people. Right now, youth participate in some processes, including decision-making and development and even though many changes have been made regarding youth participation in recent years, it is unfortunately is not yet at a sufficient level. Active and meaningful engagement of young people in their own communities can and should be a starting point for the improvement of Ukraine’s national capacity.”

Indeed, the challenges that young people face in Ukraine are becoming increasingly complex, and have been further complicated by the conflict in the East. However, advancements have been made that should not be overlooked. Youth development has become a strategic priority for the country and the contribution of young people is increasingly valued across the board. When given an opportunity, young people - amounting to one third of the country’s population - continuously develop their skills through quality education, employment, and healthy lifestyles. This must be reinforced and continued, because the participation of youth is particularly important given the profound demographic, social, economic and cultural transformations Ukraine is currently experiencing.



Caspar Peek
Chair of the UN Youth Working Group

1 15 February 2017. Guterres, M. Antonio. Address at CairoUniversity: “Facing global challenges, finding hope in youth”,

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN Youth Working Group in Ukraine (YWG) has developed this analytical report on the state of youth in Ukraine - a snapshot of the current situation of young people. It is envisioned as being an advocacy tool to inform policy and decision-makers, donors, and partners on the main issues and problems young people face. Specifically, the report provides an overview of current existing data, identifies the main issues and gaps in their fulfillment, and provides recommendations about what should be addressed moving forward in the following six areas: health and well-being; education; employment; participation in public and political life; volunteerism; youth and the armed conflict. The below executive summary follows the same structure.

DEFINITION OF YOUTH

The United Nations defines adolescents as including persons aged 10-19 years and youth as those between 15- 24 years without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. Together, adolescents and youth are referred to as young people. Due to limitations on data available, in this report the term can refer to various age groups up to 34 years old - as many surveys follow the Ukrainian legislation, which defines youth as being individuals between the ages of 14-34.

TRENDS IN POPULATION DYNAMICS

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine about 6.2 million people aged 10-24 lived in Ukraine as of January 1, 2018, not including persons living in the occupied territories of AR Crimea and Sevastopol (an additional 350,000 according to data from January 1, 2014) and youth from stateless minorities including Roma, refugees, and asylum-seekers. There is no available precise and recent data on the number of young people living in NGCA of Donbas. According to the State Statistics Service about 917,000 people, aged 10-24 lived in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as of January 1, 2014. Looking more generally at the demographic make-up of Ukraine, there are more young men aged 10-24 than women: (51% vs. 49%), 48% of youth are under 18 and 52% are aged 18-24, youth constitutes 16% of the rural population and 14% of the Ukrainian urban population with around a third of the total youth population living in rural areas. Overall, the number of youth has been steadily decreasing since 2000, further accompanied by a birth rate that has been decreasing since 2012. Despite this decrease, it is expected that starting in 2020, the number of youth will again begin to increase, due to an increasing birthrate in the years prior to 2012. Lastly, there is a clear trend showing that the mean age of women at first birth is increasing, an occurrence similar to that of OECD countries .

2 19 June 1981. UN General Assembly. Report of the Advisory Committee for the International Youth Year (A/36/215 annex) (unpublished)

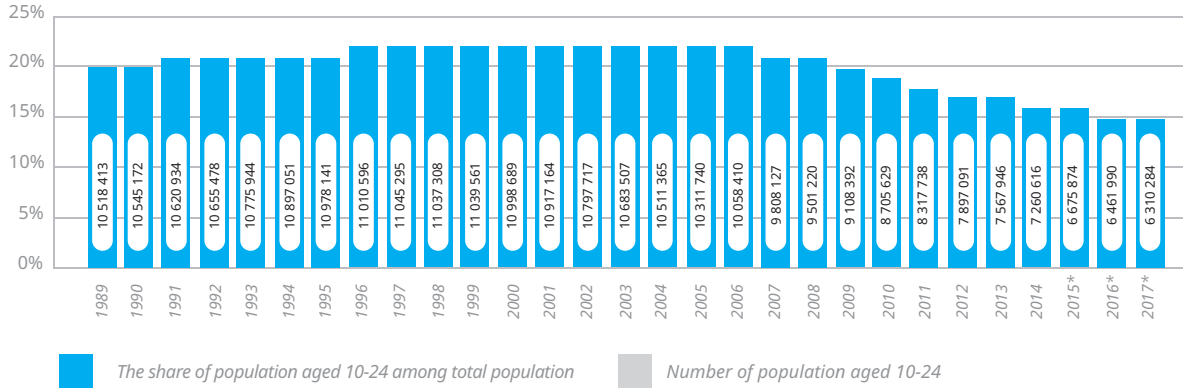
3 2017. OECD. Age of mothers at childbirth and age-specific fertility. https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF_2_3_Age_mothers_childbirth.pdf



Trends in population dynamics and fertility of youth

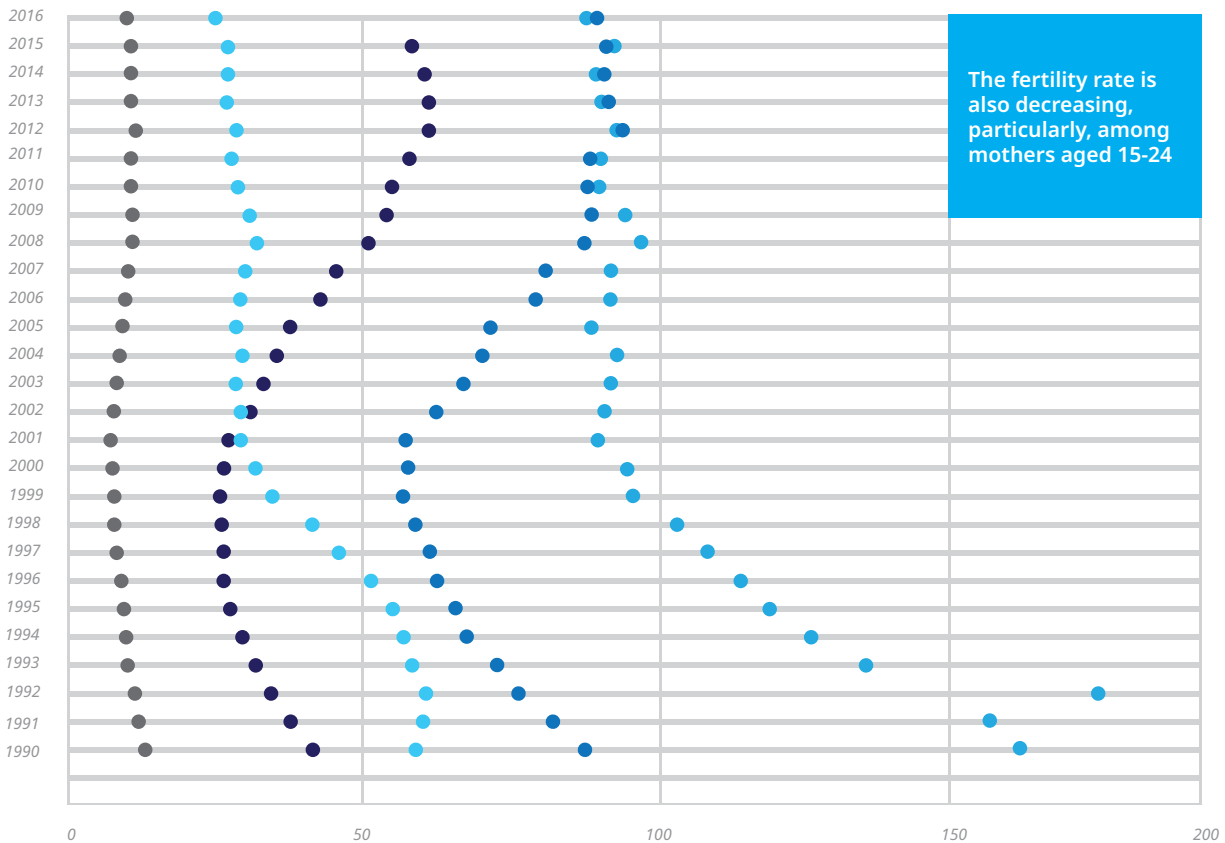
The number of population aged 10-24 is decreasing since 2000

*Not including AR Crimea and Sevastopol



The number of live-births per 1000 mothers/citizens

● Total population of Ukraine ● Mothers aged 15-19 ● Mothers aged 30-34 ● Mothers aged 25-29 ● Mothers aged 20-24



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine

*Not including AR Crimea and Sevastopol and NGCA



HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

HIV remains a serious threat affecting young people, despite a number of positive trends being observed in recent years. Despite the fact that young women are more likely to take an HIV test, do so more often, and possess an overall higher knowledge of HIV prevention, women in Ukraine aged 15-24 remain more likely than men of the same demographic to be affected by this epidemic, and feel the effects at a younger age. Additionally, despite its undeniable importance, adolescents' understanding and knowledge of HIV prevention remains below target levels, as does the percentage of adolescents and young people receiving HIV testing in their lives. Additionally, currently most contraceptives and pregnancy tests available in Ukraine can only be acquired by paying out of pocket.

Young people in Ukraine are similarly affected by the following non-communicable disease (NCD) risk factors: low levels of physical activity, being overweight or obese, having a poor diet, smoking, and alcohol or drug consumption. Specifically regarding reproductive health, there is a trend of sexually active individuals of all ages frequently failing to use condoms – although in some cases this is due to being sexually active with only one regular and trusted partner. More positively, adolescent birth rates in Ukraine have been declining steadily since 2008, as has the abortion rate for girls under 18 years old. The legislative framework for youth health includes specifications for the standards of medical care for adolescents, which have been adopted by the MOH, as have the laws and decrees concerning the rights of children and youth. Finally, 142 integrated and youth-centered health service centers have been in operation since 2016 across Ukraine, and these successfully provide young people with services including HIV testing and on-site treatment of STIs. However, it must not be overlooked that patients, especially young ones, often lack money to pay medicines or required treatments.

Identified gaps pertaining to NCD risk behaviors in Ukraine stem from a lack of regulation of point-of-sale tobacco marketing, increasing sales of e-cigarettes, and the ease by which minors are able to purchase alcohol. With this in mind, it is regrettable that while harm reduction services are widely available in Ukraine, they are usually adult-focused. Looking in turn at issues related to the healthcare system, the lack of a clear definition of which demographic groups constitute youth is problematic, as are the contradictions pertaining to the age at which young patients require parental consent for various procedures). Further, while the presence of Youth-friendly clinics (YFC) is encouraging, they are not yet well linked to other actions undertaken by the government, and suffer from staffing and managerial issues. This reveals a lack of institutional ownership on behalf of the Ukrainian government in this area.

The main recommendations of the United Nations for improving existing policies and strategies related to youth health, as well as for combating HIV and the prevalence tobacco consumption, improving reproductive health and increasing the reach of YFC services are as follows:

Regarding the problem of HIV/AIDS among youth in Ukraine, it is recommended that both preventative measures and the targeting of at-risk populations be strengthened across the board. More generally, specific instructions, methodological recommendations and additional training of service providers on HIV counselling and testing for underage clients should be implemented, with a specific focus on providers at YFCs. It is further advised that sexual education and access to condoms and other types of contraceptive be developed and improved in order to better reproductive health and knowledge among youth. This should be accompanied by more widespread availability of confidential and affordable STI testing and treatment.





To decrease the prevalence of tobacco use among Ukrainian youth, it is recommended that the government adopt relevant legislation on e-cigarette sales and advertisement, while simultaneously strengthening the enforcement of existing tobacco regulations. In addition, measures intended to discourage young people from taking up smoking, and encourage current smokers to quit should be introduced. These may include the prohibition of flavored cigarettes and e-cigarette liquids. Lastly, in order to address the gaps in existing policies and strategies strong leadership and advocacy for youth health in the Ministry of Health, and an inter-sectoral approach to collaboration with other relevant sectors including the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Youth and Sports are necessary. Moreover, the standardization of data disaggregation as well as better cost planning and budgeting will greatly improve decision-making in policy areas relevant to young people. At the same time, continued advocacy for universal access to health services for adolescents must be conducted.

EDUCATION

Despite a high literacy rate and a comparatively high tertiary education enrolment rate, Ukraine faces challenges both in terms of the quality of the education provided, and in matching between the job market and young people's education. While Ukraine has embarked on an education reform process targeting competency-based teaching, the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine has been negatively impacting the educational situation of children and teachers in that part of the country. These negative effects include, but are not limited to, damaged educational facilities, poor quality of education and overall negative psychosocial impacts. The Government of Ukraine is seeking to address these and other issues in the East,

including by considering the endorsement of Safe School Declaration (SSD).

The most prominent and urgent issues therefore lie in; the unsatisfactory quality of education which is exacerbated by low levels of youth engagement in the planning and evaluation of the educational system, and potential barriers to education along the Contact Line, which include a general lack of safety when attending school for students and teachers, as well as a lack of knowledge concerning mines, IEDs and ERWs. The latter problem is aggravated by the weakening of safety nets as well as underdeveloped key life skills and competences. Lastly, violence at school such as bullying has also been identified as an issue to be addressed across Ukraine, as has improving access to education for the most vulnerable groups of young people.

Consequently, the United Nations recommends the following steps be taken to address the gaps and issues highlighted above. First, the quality gap should be tackled by the New Ukrainian School reform process; key competency development and capacity building for teachers are important components here, as is including young people in related decision-making processes. Secondly, psychosocial support provided in tandem with the teaching of key life skills and competencies should be provided to young people residing in conflict areas. Thirdly, both in the conflict-affected areas and in the rest of the country, it is recommended to pilot and implement a 'Safe School' concept to address, in a tailored manner, the safety gap. Fourthly, inclusiveness in the educational system should be more thoroughly developed. Lastly, adolescents and young people should always be supported and encouraged to meaningfully engage in shaping the future of their communities, particularly by participating in public matters.





EMPLOYMENT

The youth unemployment rate in 2017 was 18.9% , with women and younger individuals showing lower employment rates than men and those in the upper age ranges of ‘youth,’ respectively. Unsurprisingly, youth in rural areas faced a higher risk of unemployment than those living in urban areas. Self-employment remains low amongst young people and most young workers are in occupations that are mid- to high-skill intensive. It is important to note that, as previously mentioned, there is a significant mismatch between young people’s interests, skills, and education on the one hand, and the occupations they find themselves in, on the other. Looking at salaries, overall, young men earn more than young women do and the highest-earning youth are those in self-employed positions. Across all gender and occupational categories, young workers who have completed general secondary schooling earn the highest wages, followed by youth who have completed vocational training. Informal employment remains an area of concern in Ukraine as the number of youth working informally exceeds the number of formal workers in 12 of 20 key economic activities. Four out of five youth who have informal employment are working in the formal sector: this shows a degree of non-compliance with the provision of social security and benefits to employees among employers in Ukraine.

The following key issues pose the most significant threat to youth employment:

1. Ill-considered choice of occupation (due to misinformed perceptions of prestige as well as a lack of career counselling for students) and a consequent underutilization of the vocational education system that has over-promoted higher educational institutions.
2. Low numbers of skilled workers and young people being trained by vocational schools and higher educational institutions of the I–II accreditation grade (despite the highlighted high earnings potential).

Besides these issues, other problems facing young people vis-à-vis employment include obstacles to obtaining work experience, declining work-based learning mechanisms, and ineffective mechanisms for easing skills mismatch – stemming from poor labor demand forecasting and a lack of employer involvement in education systems. Moreover, limited financing of youth-targeted institutions and inadequate social protection of young workers, especially those in informal employment, have been identified as challenges.

The United Nations has formulated the following recommendations to address these problems, and should be understood in the context of the broader social and economic reforms, which must be an inherent part of the revised youth employment policy. They should also be guided by consideration of the Youth Guarantee Recommendations of the EU, and the EU youth policy priorities.

First, it is recommended to upgrade government’s regulations of the vocational guidance system, as well as to adopt the law entitled “On vocational guidance of the population”. Further, it is advised that a multi-unit vocational guidance network intended to facilitate outreach to youth and increase the skills of relevant specialists be established. Second, support for the growth of youth entrepreneurship through improvements to the normative and legal bases, as well as prioritization of services for young entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial skills among young people (for example through the Ukrainian Pact for Youth 2020). Lastly, it is recommended to build the capacity of the non-for-

4 Participation of Youth in State Reforms. Annual Report to the President of Ukraine on State of Youth to President of Ukraine, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Kyiv, 2018. http://dsmsu.gov.ua/media/2018/12/18/3/Dopovid_.pdf



mal learning system, in order to encourage the engagement of youth volunteer movements and to support the implementation of projects financed by the EU and other countries

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE

Despite a high percentage of people believing that opinions of young people and children should be taken into account in decision-making processes - some of them even expressing the need to establish consultative body of children and youth at both national and local levels - only a third of young people surveyed, expressed a belief that the government adequately supported youth and their participation in public and/or political life. More than half of young people have ideas on how to develop their communities and a majority responded that they would be willing to participate in the shaping of youth policies in their country. Young people thus appear to be eager to be engaged in public life, but they do not feel empowered to do so. Indeed, a high percentage of young people reported being uninformed about the functioning of youth civil society organizations and their activities within Ukraine. The most common types of engagement of young people with civil society in Ukraine are: initiatives supporting the Ukrainian Army in the Eastern Conflict Areas, actions aimed at small-scale infrastructure development in local residential areas, and providing assistance to displaced people and/or victims of the conflict in the East, and most young people expressed a preference for developing their skills in youth clubs. The factors most commonly reported as preventing young people from more active participation in civic activities were; lack of time, lack of belief that participation would make an impact, and no

relevant or trustworthy organization being present in their community. Lastly, youth participation in political life is low, – as measured by monitoring of the political situation, interest in politics and demographic voter turnout – as is their engagement and membership in NGOs.

The following issues and gaps were identified with respect to this topic. First, provisions in the national legislative framework for youth engagement in decision-making processes have not translated into meaningful youth participation in policy development at either the regional or the local level. This problem is exacerbated at the local level, because strategic documents related to decentralization reform fail to clearly define how youth should be incorporated in the process of policy development here. Additionally, newly established amalgamated communities need specific guidance and technical support in developing their own youth policies.

Second, the level of participation of young people in youth civil society organizations remains lower than target levels (especially compared to their informal involvement in civic activities). This is partially due to legal barriers to formal engagement as well as a lack of available information. Youth interest in and engagement with either political activities or local community activity is very low.

Third, the State Youth Policy lacks a unified approach to youth engagement in public and political life, a problem aggravated by the lack of comprehensive national Youth Strategy in Ukraine – which is currently laid out in three separate sets of documents. Lastly, the evidence-based approach used to define problems and develop solutions in youth policy is rather ad-hoc and dependent on international technical assistance and could use refinement.





The following steps are therefore recommended by UNDP to facilitate youth participation in public life. Youth policy priorities should be mainstreamed into government strategic policies and concepts (particularly those related to decentralization reform, the facilitation of civic education, and civil society development). Further, the legal framework should be updated in order to facilitate the operationalization of concrete mechanisms for youth participation. Moreover, the capacities of national authorities, local governments and amalgamated communities at the subnational level should be developed so that the existing mechanisms of youth civic engagement can be made more effective and work to improve youth participation, including in schools and communities. Finally, a target should be set for the enhancement of civic awareness among young women and men, to be achieved through both formal and non-formal civic education, simultaneously raising awareness of their right and responsibility to participate.

VOLUNTEERISM

Although volunteering has been recognized in the National Target Program of the Youth of Ukraine 2016-2020 as a key tool to promote informal learning, active citizenship, and youth involvement, Ukrainian young people's understanding of opportunities to volunteer are limited and their engagement in volunteering activities remains at a similarly low level. Despite youth being the most significant demographic involved in volunteer activities in Ukraine – in keeping with global trends – youth volunteer activism is still occurring at a lower level than in most European countries. Traditionally, Ukrainian society has relied on voluntary youth engagement, although the term volunteer has only come into use more recently. Today,

while volunteer defense battalions are perhaps the most known volunteer groups in Ukraine, recent institutional developments have served to ease the process of engaging in volunteer work for young Ukrainians (notable inclusions are amendments to The Law on Volunteering, and defining voluntarism as a priority area of Ukraine's State Program for Youth Development 2016-2020).

Looking in turn at the organizational level, one can see that Ukrainian civil society organizations increasingly seek engage youth volunteers in their activities. International mobility has become one of the key features of youth volunteer engagement with organizations based in Ukraine (such as the European Voluntary Service (EVS)). At the individual level, the presence of youth volunteers in an area can significantly contribute to the country's social cohesion. In the context of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, for example, there have been a number of initiatives seeking to unite young people from the East and West of Ukraine and promote among them the idea of active citizenship.

Consequently, two main issue areas have been identified. Firstly, despite the dissemination of information about volunteer organizations, the volunteer movement and the benefits of volunteering, awareness of these remains low among young people. Consequently, many young Ukrainians are already engaging in volunteer activities without realizing specifically what they are doing. Secondly, volunteer activity is most widespread in Kyiv and other large Ukrainian cities, and as a result, volunteer opportunities for young people living outside these areas are few and far between, increasing barriers to their participation.

In order to remedy this situation, the UN has developed three sets of recommendations with



the intent of promoting volunteerism at the environmental, organizational, and individual levels. A common understanding of volunteerism and a shared appreciation of its value should be supported through consistent collection of disaggregated data about youth engagement in volunteer activity. Stakeholder consultations intended to strengthen cross-sector national ownership should be encouraged, in tandem with the operationalization of the government's commitment to promote youth volunteerism. It is also recommended to conduct targeted public awareness campaigns designed to promote various dimensions of volunteering among Ukrainian youth.

At the organizational level, it is suggested that closer collaboration between CSOs, universities and youth centers be supported, in order to generate more youth volunteering opportunities. Further, local authorities and civil society should be encouraged to create more volunteer opportunities at the regional and community level in the interest of not only supporting the ongoing decentralization process, but also in order to support overall social cohesion in Ukraine. Lastly, it is advised that youth volunteer activists be empowered to promote volunteerism, to conduct broader awareness raising activities, and to help in developing the capacity of organizations to participate in volunteerism.

YOUTH AND THE ARMED CONFLICT

As of January 2014, it was estimated that 917 000 people aged 10-24 were living in Donetsk and Luhanska oblasts, where the ongoing hostilities have been observed to infringe on the living conditions of civilians, particularly youth, on both sides of the contact line. This infringement may include limiting their access to adequate housing, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, and access to essential medicines and basic health services, including psychological support. All of this is taking place in the context of severe disregard for human rights standards and international humanitarian law. Besides damages to essential infrastructures in the proximity of the contact line, and immense safety risks, the very establishment of the contact line has isolated and divided communities, distanced residents from public services, disrupted trade, and forced young people to relocate in order to continue their studies, employment or allow them to access basic social, administrative or healthcare services. Additionally, the combination of direct exposure to violence, a de facto barrier to movement, and damaged facilities has dramatically increased unemployment among both parents and young people.

The emotional wounds and trauma of living through years of conflict have become an everyday reality for hundreds of thousands of children and teenagers living in Eastern Ukraine. Due to insufficient local financing, the closing or merging of educational facilities has become more frequent, and the presence of military installations near some schools, as well as the occasional necessity of crossing of the contact line in order to reach a school are all practical concerns for those remaining open. Additionally, a lack of extracurricular facilities in the area means that young people do not have any decent places to spend their leisure





time, nor to seek assistance. When combined with other aggravating factors previously mentioned, this heightens the likelihood of young people interacting with the military, visiting dangerous areas, participating in risk-taking behaviors or substance abuse, and showing signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, despite a largely still-intact health infrastructure, the quality of medical care in Eastern Ukraine has deteriorated as a direct and indirect result of the conflict. This is made particularly alarming by compounding environmental changes that put children and their families at greater risk of health problems.

The following issues affecting youth living along the contact line have been identified. Overall, a lack of infrastructure, high unemployment rates and extreme poverty make young people living in these regions highly vulnerable. This has led a portion of this demographic to resort to highly damaging coping mechanisms including reduction in calorie intake, begging, increased alcohol intake or abuse, and participation in sex work.

The following issues affecting youth living along the contact line have been identified. Overall, a lack of infrastructure, high unemployment rates and extreme poverty make young people living in these regions highly vulnerable. This has led a portion of this demographic to resort to highly damaging coping mechanisms including reduction in calorie intake, begging, increased alcohol intake or abuse, and participation in sex work. Unfortunately, the latter is becoming increasingly widespread and cases involving the sexual abuse of girls under 18 and even under 16 have been reported. Given the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Donetsk oblast and the lack of quality sexual health education, women and girls who participate in sex work are particularly vulnerable to transmission of HIV, and thus

require specialized protection. An increase in the transmission rate of HIV has already been observed in the Donbas, resulting from increasing rates of sex-work and displacement among other factors. Looking at mental health, despite high reported rates of PTSD among young people, there is a critical gap in availability and accessibility of psychological and psychosocial services for young people that urgently needs to be addressed. Lastly, in the context of a widespread military-patriotic rhetoric, there is a dangerous lack of measures, in both the educational system and in security and law enforcement agencies, designed to prevent, detect, allocate responsibility for and respond to children's involvement in hostilities.

The following five measures are recommended by the UN for application in conflict-affected areas of Ukraine. First of all, a monitoring, referral and support system should be established in order to allow young people suffering from the conflict to address human rights violations. This would further necessitate the proper training of a necessary range of specialists. Secondly, through non-formal education, grants or internal travel, knowledge sharing and cooperation opportunities should be brought to the most affected young people. Third, tailored information campaigns about health issues (including reproductive health) relevant to young people should be conducted, as should Mine risk education workshops, and activities designed to prevent of recruitment or participation of under-aged children in the conflict. Lastly, every school, technical school, and university should have trained specialists who can competently work with young people experiencing psychological trauma or other problems as a consequence of direct or indirect exposure to the conflict.



COMMITMENTS TO INVESTING IN YOUNG PEOPLE

GLOBAL COMMITMENTS

As stated in key provisions of international documents, international agencies and national governments must be committed to the full provision of fundamental human rights to all young people, without exception. The United Nations has recognized that the creativity, ideals and vitality of young people are of the utmost importance for the continuing development of the societies in which they live. This was acknowledged by the Member States of the United Nations in 1965 through the endorsement of the *Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples*. Twenty years later, in 1985 the UN General Assembly observed the This was followed a decade later by a 1995 initiative further strengthening of the United Nations' commitment to young people, and targeting the international community's response towards the challenges of youth for the next millennium. This was adoption of the international strategy *World Program of Action for Youth* to the year 2000 and beyond⁶.

In 2011, the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) pledged to increase the effectiveness of the United Nations in advocating for and supporting national efforts to implement international agreements and development goals related to adolescents and youth. In a respective Joint statement dating from 25 July 2011⁷, it was mentioned that the *International Youth Year* declared by the UN General Assembly, provided an opportunity for young people worldwide to work together to;

5 1965. OHCHR. Declaration on the Promotion among Youth of the Ideals of Peace, Mutual Respect and Understanding between Peoples <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/>

6 2010. UN. World Program of Action for Youth.

7 25 July 2011. IANYD. Joint statement of the UN inter-agency network on youth development. <https://social.un.org/youthyear/docs/JointStatementInteragency.pdf>



enhance dialogue and mutual understanding, promote the participation of young women and men at all levels and increase commitments to and investments in adolescent and youth development. The IANYD further committed to intensify its efforts to promote and support comprehensive policies that would include young people’s voices, focus on issues relevant to them and enhance the use of data on young people in specific and more comprehensive policies.

In April 2013, the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) endorsed a *System-wide Action Plan on Youth (Youth-SWAP)* as a framework guiding youth programming in the UN system⁸. The document aims for commitments in areas including; employment, entrepreneurship, protection of rights, civic engagement, political inclusion, education, comprehensive sexual health education, and health⁹. A more detailed description of these commitments can be found at the end of this section.

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IANYD efforts : poverty reduction, multisectoral programs human rights and fulfill the needs of adolescents and youth (including marginalized adolescent girls), strengthening capacities of national institutions and youth-led organizations full and effective youth participation in society and decision-making, in both rural and urban settings (including young people with disabilities, living with HIV, youth from minorities, as well as young migrants, refugees, IDPs and those affected by armed conflict).

In a world challenged by numerous conflicts, the role of youth in maintaining peace and stability remains crucial. This belief is reflected in numerous UN documents including *Guiding Principles on Youth Participation in Peacebuilding*¹⁰. This document emphasizes young peoples’ leadership and their role in preventing and resolving conflict, violence, and extremism and as rich resources that will be essential to achieving sustainable peace. The promotion of young peoples’ participation in peacebuilding, therefore, must be supported by: governments; United Nations entities, funds, and programs; local, national and international non-governmental organizations; civil society actors; and donors. Indeed, as young peoples’ participation is considered an essential condition for successful peacebuilding, the above entities should build upon young people’s diversity, experience, and sensitivity to gender dynamics, while simultaneously enabling young people’s ownership, leadership and accountability in peacebuilding, making sure to involve them in all stages of peacebuilding and post-conflict programming and also investing in intergenerational partnerships in their communities and, of course, introducing policies that address their needs.

Certain guidelines related to the role of youth in ensuring international stability and security are highlighted in the *Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security*¹¹ adopted in Amman, Jordan on 22 August 2015 at the Global Forum on Youth, Peace and Security. On this

8 2013. UNSCEB. UN system-wide action plan on youth. <https://www.unsceb.org/content/un-system-wide-action-plan-youth>

9 30 Apr 2013 UNSCEB. United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Youth. <https://www.unsceb.org/CEBPublicFiles/Chief%20Executives%20Board%20for%20Coordination/Document/Youth-SWAP%20commitments%20%26%20measures.pdf>

10 SFCG. 2014. Guiding Principles. https://www.sfcg.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Guiding-Principles_EN.pdf

11 UN. 2015. Amman Youth Declaration on Youth, Peace and Security. <http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/AMMAN%20YOUTH%20DECLARATION.pdf>





occasion, youth representatives expressed their commitment to live in a peaceful global society and to make efforts in the aim of achieving stability and security. Youth representatives noted the leading role of the United Nations Security Council in maintaining international peace and security in accordance with the *UN Charter*¹² and called on governments to recognize and support the role of youth in the implementation of the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG). The SDG's were defined by the United Nations in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and are dedicated to the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies through sustainable development, the provision of access to justice for all, and building institutions that are both effective and accountable at all levels¹³. Additionally, the SDG's referred to the need to ensure young people's participation and contribution to building peace, including in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The document also emphasized that although youth are actively engaged and committed to maintaining peace, security and stability, they are a demographic that remains vulnerable to emerging challenges, including refugees and IDPs. In this regard, adequate participatory and inclusive mechanisms and opportunities to partner with decision-making bodies are desperately needed at the local, national and international levels in order to increase visibility and recognition of the youth's efforts. Here, it is recommended that youth capacity is improved in tandem with the launch of various relevant policy dialogue processes, and peace processes – including formal peace processes. The SDG's also envisage necessity of creating mechanisms to ensure equality among genders as well as to address hardships that are gender-specific, and ensure action will be taken against any and all forms of negative gender discrimination. The Declaration also stresses the vital importance of economic

development to the potential of peace, and further highlights economic development as an important driver for peace and stability. In this regard, it has to be underlined once more that national governments must prioritize youth employment opportunities and inclusive labor policies, in both rural and urban locations. They must invest in building young people's capabilities and equip them with skills necessary to meet local labor demands.

It is also of note that the following declaration provisions have been considered by the UN Security Council. In its *Resolution 2250 (2015)*¹⁴ adopted on 9 December 2015 the Security Council urged UN Member States to consider ways to give youth a greater voice in decision-making at the local, national, regional and international levels in order to ensure youth's constructive role and to minimize youth susceptibility to radicalization. The Council also urged Member States to consider setting up mechanisms that would enable young people to participate meaningfully in peace processes and conflict resolution. The Council suggested that youth should be actively engaged in shaping lasting peace, and in contributing to justice and reconciliation, and further recalled that a large youth population presents a unique demographic dividend that can contribute to lasting peace and economic prosperity in places where inclusive policies are the norm.

12 UN. 1945. Charter of the United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/charter-united-nations/>

13 UN. 2015. Sustainable Development. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/>

14 UN. 2015. Security Council, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2250. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2015/sc12149.doc.htm>



.....

YOUTH - SWAP COMMITMENTS:

1. Enhance national capacity to develop gender-sensitive strategies to provide decent work for youth;
2. Support the improvement and enforcement of rights at work for youth and implement employment and skills development programs to ease the transition of disadvantaged youth to decent work;
3. Support institutional reforms for and in support of environments conducive to youth entrepreneurship, including access to markets, finance and other resources;
4. Strengthen mechanisms for promoting youth entrepreneurship, in particular for young women;
5. Support countries taking action towards safeguarding and promoting the human rights of youth;
6. Promote young people's effective inclusion in civic engagement at local, national, regional and global levels;
7. Support young people's participation in inclusive political processes and democratic practices;
8. Support young people's inclusion in decision-making, and in all levels of development processes;
9. Strengthen the capacity of countries to develop high quality inclusive education, learning and training policies and programs for young people;
10. Influence the global agenda to move toward inclusive, gender-sensitive and quality education for young people;
11. Support efforts to provide young people with evidence-based comprehensive sexual health education;
12. Support countries in developing and enforcing gender-sensitive laws and policies that promote and protect the health of all young people;
13. Support countries' efforts to improve the capacity of health systems to provide gender-sensitive and age-appropriate health services to all young people.



NATIONAL COMMITMENTS

In addition to the previously mentioned global commitments, Ukraine has made various commitments to its' youth in documents produced at the national level. In the Law of Ukraine¹⁵ "On Promotion of Social Formation and Development of Youth in Ukraine" inclusion, employment, young families, youth NGOs and training centers are highlighted as particular priorities. The State is entrusted with responsibility for encouraging the self-development and self-realization of youth. The Parliament is supposed to ensure sufficient funds will be earmarked in the budget for the social development of youth, as well as to support youth entrepreneurship, and guarantee their right to a decent place to live, as well as support their rights to education, cultural development and leisure, health care and legal protection.

Moreover, according to the *State Target Social Program "Youth of Ukraine for 2016-2020"*¹⁶, the State will provide opportunities for the political engagement of youth and youth cooperation with civil society institutions, ensure social guarantees for young people, and guarantee their access to education. Patriotic education, healthy lifestyles, informal education, employment, access to living space, support to the youth living in the occupied territories and young IDPs are each defined in the Program as being specific priorities.

Additionally, within the Ukrainian "*Pact for Youth-2020*"¹⁷, businesses, the government and the educational sector have each committed to provide entry-level employment and internship opportunities for young people. This is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Center for Corporate Social Responsibility, supported by UNFPA.

15 SCU. 1993-2017. On Promotion of Social Formation and Development of Youth in Ukraine. <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2998-12>

16 SCU. 2016. State Target Social Program "Youth of Ukraine for 2016-2020". <http://zakon0.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/148-2016-%D0%BF>

17 CSR Ukraine. 2016. The Ukrainian pact for youth-2020. <http://csr-ukraine.org/en/education/pact-for-youth-2020/>

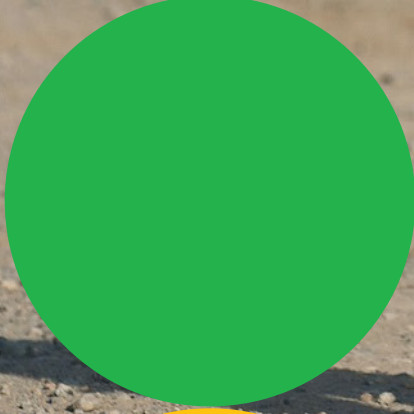
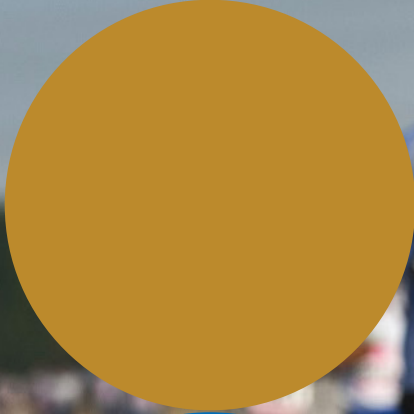
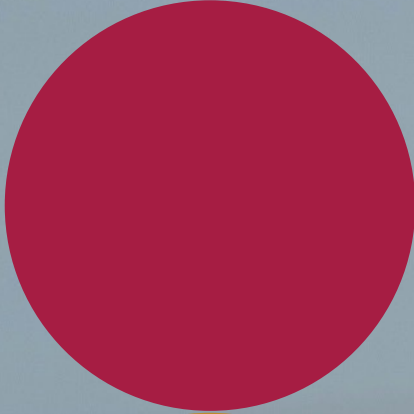




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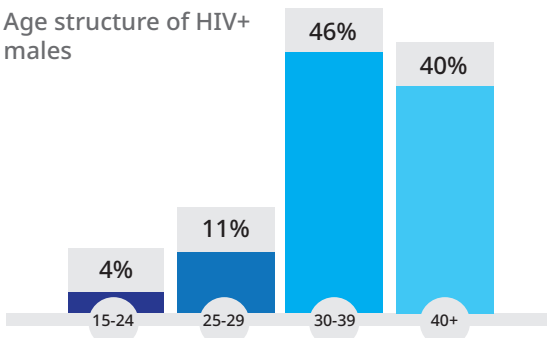
YOUTH HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



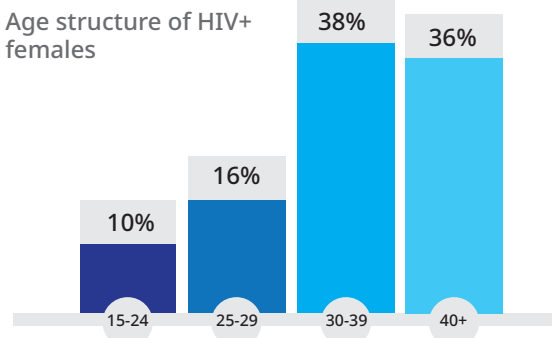


HIV epidemic among young

Age structure of HIV+ males

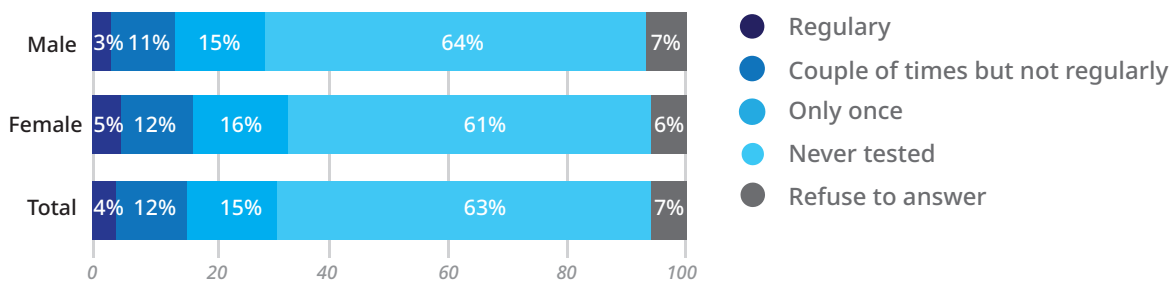


Age structure of HIV+ females



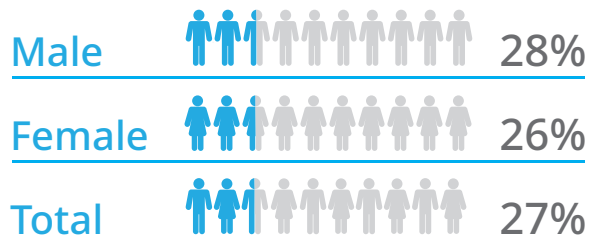
Source: Ukrainian Center for Socially Dengerous Disease Control of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine

HIV testing among youth aged 15-24



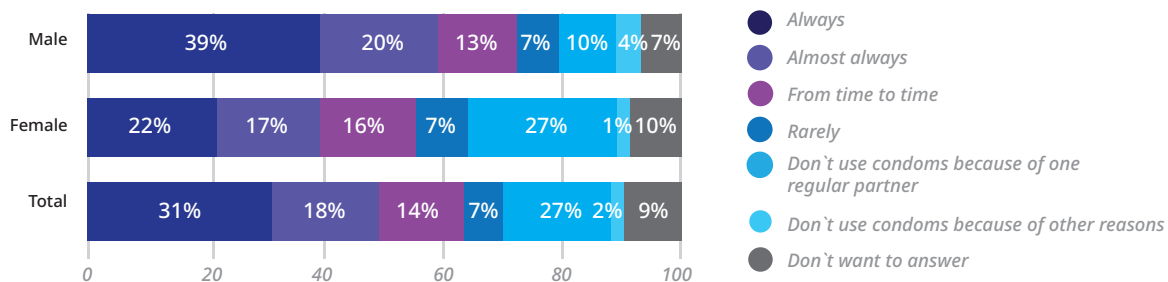
Source: «Public awareness of HIV epidemy in Ukraine 2017» survey conducted by GfK Ukraine for Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internatioale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Percentage of young people aged 15-24 who both correctly identify ways of HIV transmission and who reject major misconceptions about HIV



Source: «Public awareness of HIV epidemy in Ukraine 2017» survey conducted by GfK Ukraine for Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internatioale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH

Condom use among youth aged 15-24 during last 12 months



Source: «Public awareness of HIV epidemy in Ukraine 2017» survey conducted by GfK Ukraine for Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internatioale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

HIV/AIDS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

There have been several positive trends identified regarding HIV/AIDS in Ukraine in recent years. These are namely, a decrease in the percentage of new HIV infections among the 15-24 demographic (down from 16% in 2008 to 6% in 2017), as well as a reduction in the overall incidence of HIV in this demographic [13]. The trend of HIV prevalence among young pregnant women aged 15-24 is also going down (from 0.33% in 2013 to 0.25% in 2017) [13].

Overall, young women in Ukraine are more likely than men to be affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and are affected at an earlier age, this is reflected in the incidence of HIV among women aged 15-24 being estimated at 10%, while being estimated at only 4% for men of the same age. [4]. This remains the case even though young women have a higher level of knowledge on HIV prevention and are more aware of the availability of HIV testing services, a factor partially explained by mandatory HIV testing during pregnancy [10, 14]. Regarding testing services available to young people, 34% of adolescents reported that HIV testing was not anonymous, 30% did not receive pre-testing counselling, 27% did not receive post-testing counselling and 6% did not receive testing results [10]. Lastly, at least 41% of young people reported that they do not always use condoms with a further 9% declining to answer the question, while only 33% reported always using a condom. [10].

The level of knowledge on HIV prevention among adolescents is very low. Illustrating this, it was found that only 12% of adolescents between the ages of 10 and 17 in 2018 had a full and correct knowledge of the mechanisms of HIV transmission [14]. This falls far below the 95% target for awareness among youth set by national and international standards. Overall,

Ukrainian adolescents have low levels of knowledge regarding health behaviors and practices, as well as on where and how to access services and counselling for the issues that most affect them [14].

Differential analysis of age groups among key populations shows that younger demographics are consistently less affected by HIV than older groups. For example, in 2017, MSM aged 15-24 years accounted for just 23% of the new HIV cases among MSM or suspected MSM, and the same pattern is observable among FSWs. [13] Additionally, PWIDs show a decreasing rate of prevalence [15].

On average, young men in Ukraine become sexually active at an earlier age than do young women. [2,14]. A survey of males and females aged 17, showed that by this time 40% of males and 28% of females had already engaged in sexual intercourse [14]. Unfortunately, sexually active girls of all age groups do not use condoms often, with surveys covering school-aged children (16-17 years old) showing that girls use condoms at a lower frequency than boys [14]. It is important to highlight that this difference may come in part from the fact that a higher percent of adolescent females' report ceasing condom usage because they have only one regular and trusted sexual partner [10]. Lastly, according to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine adolescent birth rates have been decreasing since 2008, as has the abortion rate among girls under 18 years old: over the period 2001-2015, abortion rates among girls 15-17 years old have been reduced by 4.5 times (Statistics of MOH Ukraine).



MAIN NCD RISK BEHAVIORS

The main NCD risk behaviors are low physical activity, being overweight, having an unhealthy diet, smoking, and consumption of alcohol or drugs. In Ukraine at present, schoolchildren show a worryingly low level of participation in regular physical activity. [9]. A quarter of young Ukrainians indicated that they have not participated in any sporting activity or physical exercises in the last 12 months [8]. Additionally, sedentary behaviors are showing increasing prevalence among 15-year-olds: more than half of girls and boys in this demographic report watching television for at least two hours on weekdays.

Looking in turn at BMI, 15% of 15 years boys and 6% of girls are overweight or obese based on their self-reported height and weight; while 27% of 15-years girls and 5% of boys were engaged in weight-loss behaviors [11].

In 2017, 18.7% of 15-24 years old were current tobacco users¹⁸, with the majority of this group (14.2% in total) reporting daily tobacco smoking¹⁹ (boys report consistently higher rates of tobacco usage than girls do). Examining when young people start using tobacco, one in ten students have smoked a cigarette by age 11, and one in three will have tried tobacco in some form prior to completing secondary school [9]. Compared to other age groups, individuals aged 15-24 showed a higher proportion of use of e-cigarettes and water pipes with tobacco (hookah or shisha). It is concerning that only half of respondents surveyed believed that smoking tobacco in a water pipe could cause serious illnesses [12]. It is further important to note that members of the demographic aged 15-24 noticed tobacco advertisement, sponsor-

ship and/or promotion at a higher rate than did those in the 25+ demographic [12].

Additionally, although alcohol consumption is a well-known NCD risk factor, 10% of boys and 6% of girls have tried alcohol by the age of 11 [9], while 3% of young people aged 14-34 report consuming alcoholic beverages on a daily basis [8]. Up to 15,000 children and adolescents aged 10-18 reported using or having used injectable drugs. [1]. Further, 11.3% of students aged 15-17 years reported usage of any kind of illicit drug in their life. (Ukrainian Monitoring and Medical Center for Alcohol and Drugs of the MOH)

HEALTH SYSTEM

The legislative framework in Ukraine pertaining to youth health is outlined as follows. The MOH has adopted 10 standards of medical care for adolescents and young people (orders No. 383 “On Improvement of Medical Care Organization for Adolescents and Young People”; No. 382 “On Approval of the Standards of Medical Care for Adolescents and Young People”). Additionally, the following laws have been passed by the Government of Ukraine concerning the rights of children and youth: “Fundamental Legislative Principles on Healthcare in Ukraine”, “On Child Protection”, “On Social Work with Children and Youth”, “On Social Services” [5]. Further, the MOH decree #423 “On improving of procedure for comprehensive health care for women with unwanted pregnancy, registration forms and instructions for filling them out” and the MOH decree #1177 “On approval of clinical protocol comprehensive care during unwanted pregnancies” allow pregnancy termination for girls above 14 years old without parental consent; although this

18 Current smokers are defined as those who smoke on a daily or less than daily basis.

19 There is no available data on successful cessation rates among tobacco users in this age-group.



allowance directly contradicts other regulatory documents requiring parental consent for all medical assistance and procedures for minors under 18 years old.

Regarding the availability of integrated youth-centered health services, as of January 1, 2016, 142 Youth-friendly Centers (YFC) were in operation in Ukraine. Of these centers, 87.2% have received certification following an assessment conducted in line with the established standards and indicators for YFCs [5] [7]. These YFCs provide a variety of services; 92.2% of YFCs provide HIV testing and counselling according to MOH protocols. Of those young people who access “on-site” treatment of STIs at the two thirds of YFC’s that currently provide this service 35% are male and 65% are female. More than 240 healthcare providers from various regions of Ukraine have been trained in working with MARA during training sessions and workshops in 2016. The same year, YFCs provided services to 12,530 adolescents and youth at risk of HIV infection (out of the estimated 129,000 population). However, approximately 57% of potential YFC clients remain insufficiently aware of YFC activities, which is a major barrier to the success of the program [7].

Ultimately, regarding access to medicine, devices and technologies, the majority of young people aged 14-34 are satisfied with the services provided by medical institutions, with private medical institutions receiving higher satisfaction rates than state/municipal medical institutions. However, 14% of those who applied to State or municipal medical institutions in the last 12 months indicated that they faced the demand for a bribe. Additionally, there is an urgent and widespread problem of patients who lack sufficient money to buy medicines or pay for treatment – 34% of all respondents indicated that they had experienced this problem within the last 12 months [8].





IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND GAPS

HIV/AIDS and reproductive health

1. Current legal and regulatory acts do not adequately prescribe the character and content of information that should be provided to adolescents during HIV pre- and post-testing counselling [3].
2. Legal and regulatory barriers to the provision of quality HIV counselling and testing stemming from a legal uncertainty of the key concepts “adolescents” and “most-at-risk adolescents”(MARA) and the specific age group of adolescents covered within the relevant scope of legal rights and obligations [3].
3. A biased attitude among specialists towards HIV/STI testing of adolescents resulting in a lack of youth friendly services, and low levels of trust in existing services. This particularly affects MARA (including young PWIDs, MSMs), aged 14 and older due to lack of knowledge about the legality of their professional actions and of adolescent rights [3].
4. A lack of comprehensive and coherent national regulatory documents and policy concerning sexual and reproductive rights, particularly for youth.
5. Too few adolescents are reached by the preventive messages.
6. Insufficient level of knowledge among adolescents about HIV and condom use.
7. Contraceptives and pregnancy tests can currently only be accessed in private clinics [7].

Main NCD risk behaviors

1. There are no legislative restrictions on the selling of e-cigarettes and their cartridges in Ukraine.
2. Over 20% of young people reported noticing cigarette advertising in stores, despite a ban on the advertising of tobacco products having been in place since 2012 [12].
3. Easy access to alcohol beverages by those under 18 years of age.
4. Harm reduction services are widely available in Ukraine but are usually adult-focused, meaning support for children and adolescents is severely limited.

Health system

1. There are no specific policies, strategies, or plans for “adolescents”, “youth” and “young people,” and further these terms lack clear definition.
2. YFCs are the only available and functioning network of age-appropriate and relevant HIV prevention services for adolescents in Ukraine [5]. The barrier to access to services for MARA means that most of the existing prevention programs were designed for adults.
3. Unauthorized disclosure of patient information was reported [7].



RECOMMENDATIONS

HIV/AIDS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The following steps are recommended in order to address the gaps identified within the HIV prevention system and reproductive health provision for youth:

1. Step up primary prevention measures in order to mitigate high-risk behaviors among adolescents and youth.
2. The government should explore the possibility of implementing specific policies that address the needs of youth populations classified most 'at risk', especially the problem of intravenous drug use - in a more comprehensive manner. These should not be restrictive laws, as these functions in contradiction to harm reduction measures designed to curb the spread of HIV.
3. Service providers should be served with relevant instructions, methodological recommendations, and additional training on HIV counselling and testing for underage clients, taking into account peculiarities of all age groups, adolescents rights, the possibility or non-possibility of carrying out HCT in the presence of parents/legal representatives of the underage person, and further prescription of ART in the case of positive HIV test result.
4. A curriculum of formal and informal education focusing on reproductive health rights should be developed and launched within the broader New Ukrainian School reform.
5. Condoms, and other types of contraceptives as well as confidential and affordable HIV/STI testing, treatment,

and support should be made widely and easily available.

MAIN NCD RISK BEHAVIORS

The following steps are recommended to decrease the number of young people who consume tobacco products:

1. Adopt a legislation regulating e-cigarette sales, advertising and promotion.
2. Strengthen the enforcement of existing tobacco control policies.
3. Introduce measures designed to encourage current smokers to quit, and discourage non-smokers from beginning to use tobacco:
 - prohibit flavored cigarettes (incl. menthol) as they are the most attractive to young people;
 - introduce large graphic health warnings on cigarette packs and rotate them regularly;
 - increase the price of cigarettes annually in order to decrease their affordability;
 - implement tobacco awareness campaigns aimed at young demographics;
 - develop accessible smoking cessation services to support those who would like to quit.

HEALTH SYSTEM

The following steps are recommended to address the gaps regarding existing policies and strategies:

1. Investment in adolescent health will be much stronger if needs are correctly estimated. Therefore, any strategy for scaling up available services for adolescents on a national scale should be accompanied by a detailed cost plan and budget, in order to help policy makers and PHC managers to forecast correctly, and use the available resources rationally.
2. Within the MOH, strong leadership for adolescent health is needed, in order to manage collaboration between different departments and to ensure a focus on adolescent health during the reform and financing of the healthcare system.
3. Decision makers must continue to be sensitive to the benefits that universal access to health care services give adolescents. This should continue to be encouraged through adolescent-centered advocacy efforts.
3. YFCs should make sustainable efforts to ensure that the services they provide and the standards of quality of their work are widely known, especially to potential clients. Information should be readily available with location details, opening hours, and the type of services provided. To generate demand for these services among young people, youth organizations, families, media and schools can work at a local level to ensure this information is disseminated to MARA/young people.
4. Community involvement must be strengthened in order to raise awareness among young people who are not using health services. The relevance of these services to MARA/adolescent needs, as well as the community support surrounding their usage should be advertised.

The following steps are recommended to improve the reach of integrated, youth-centered health services:

1. Services should continue to focus on key and most at-risk populations, simultaneously not neglecting the needs of the general adolescent population.
2. Adolescent health should continue to be mainstreamed in local and national



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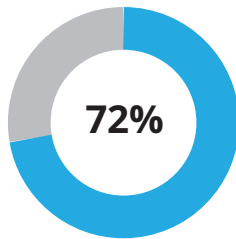
YOUTH EDUCATION



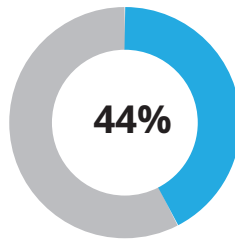


Satisfaction with education youth aged 14-29

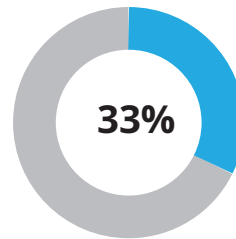
Satisfaction with education



are satisfied with own education

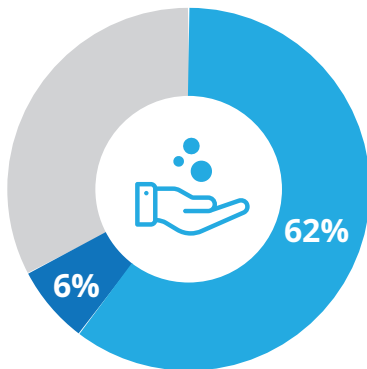


are satisfied with quality of education



agree that education system meets demands of labour market

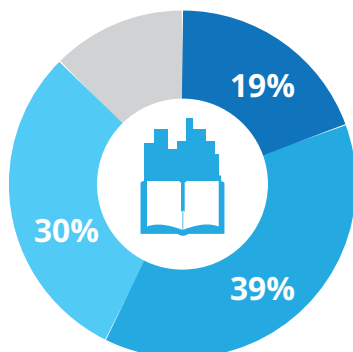
Perception about corruption



«There are cases when grades and exams are 'bought' in institutes/universities»

- agree
- disagree

Perception about the level of stress in education process



«What is everyday life in your school/university like?»

- very/quite hard and stressful
- hard and stressful to some extent
- easy and not stressful

Source: «Youth of Ukraine 2017» poll conducted by the New Europe Center, Friedrich-Elbert-Stiftung(FES), GfK Ukraine



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

In the Ukrainian educational system, education is compulsory at primary, secondary and high school levels. The youth literacy rate in Ukraine is high (99.76%) [8], and the net enrollment in secondary schools is 85.65% [7]. Nearly half of Ukrainian youth aged 14-34 have completed higher education or are in the process of completing a course of study in higher education [1]. According to the Global Competitiveness Index 2016/17, Ukraine ranks 11th out of 144 countries in tertiary education enrolment rate. However, only 44% of youth aged 14-29 are satisfied with the quality of the education system and only a third agree that the system is adapted to the job market in 2017. More than half agree “there are cases when grades and exams are bought in institutes/universities in Ukraine” and that their everyday life in school/university is stressful to at least some extent [2]. U-report data (2016) showed that nearly a quarter of respondents aged 15-19 and 45% of respondents aged 20-24 claim that the knowledge acquired in their course of study is not enough to perform their work, while 81% use non-formal education opportunities to compensate for this [10].

Consequently, Ukraine has begun to reform its educational system, developing the “New Ukrainian School” concept. This promotes competencies-based teaching and learning, a focus on pupils’ needs and on student-centered learning, and partnerships between teachers, students, and parents. It also aims at a fair allocation of public funds ensuring equal access to quality education for all children. Recently Ukraine adapted its Education Law to reflect

the New Ukrainian School concept, and future aspirations for the education system.

Ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine continues to impact the educational situation. Approximately 200,000 children, youth, and educators need safe schools in which to learn and recover. Since the start of 2017, at least 55 educational facilities have been directly impacted by the continuing hostilities, negatively affecting the education and well-being of thousands of children. The schools damaged in 2017 are in addition to the more than 700 education facilities that have been damaged since the start of the conflict, some of which are still not repaired. Further from, the ‘conflict line’, an estimated 648,000 students and teachers in more than 3,400 educational facilities continue to suffer from the widespread and cumulative impacts of the conflict. These impacts include significant gaps in learning, reduced school hours, lack of specialized teachers, psychosocial impacts, and the inability of families to meet education costs and continue to contribute to the deterioration of the quality of their education [3]. The Government of Ukraine is seeking to address these and other issues raised by attacks on education in the Donbass and is considering the endorsement of a Safe School Declaration (SSD).





IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND GAPS

1. Quality of education remains an issue. Ministry of Education and Science of identifies the quality of education as one of the primary goals of the curriculum reform. Another issue lies in the discrepancy between graduates' current job and their field of study: 51% do not relate [5]. Overall, adolescents are not engaged in the planning and evaluation processes of education in Ukraine.
2. The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine has created extraordinary challenges to the fulfilment of the rights of adolescents and youth, especially in Eastern Ukraine. Conflict-affected youth are in danger of not being able to access education. 42,389 children and youth attend educational facilities along the contact line (15 km), with 15,000 attending facilities 5km or less from the contact line, and over 4,900 attend facilities in settlements that were shelled at least twice a week during October and November 2016 [9]. Many students in NGCA fear that graduation certificates issued by de facto authorities will not be widely recognized, inhibiting their ability access to higher education or receive certification for the studies they have already completed [3]. Overall, it is clear that the conflict in Eastern Ukraine significantly impairs educational processes. These devastating impacts have been documented in a recent report by Human Rights Watch (2016). Related to the conflict, a lack of life skills, especially Mine Risk Education, also impacts the safety of students and professors. Data from the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported 477 casualties from explosive remnants of war (ERW), booby traps and IEDs during the period 12 February 2015 – 15 February 2017.
3. An important aggravating issue – which can also be linked to the conflict - is the weakening of adolescents' and youths' resilience, due to a dearth of "safety nets" and under-developed key life skills and competencies (clear communication, appropriate assertiveness, empathy, cooperation, problem-solving, conflict prevention, conflict mitigation, conflict resolution, negotiation, mediation, reconciliation, respect for human rights, gender sensitivity).
4. Bullying has been jointly identified by MoES and Ukraine's Ombudsperson for Children's Rights as a key challenge to address. The global U-Report of May 2016 showed a staggering 89% of Ukrainian youth felt that bullying was a problem in their school. It is of great concern that only 4% of respondents said that they would report bullying to a teacher, illustrating low confidence in the ability of schools to address the problem. A recent survey of 2,000 Ukrainian youth and adolescents by TheRespo survey revealed that 24% had been victims of bullying in months prior to the survey. The key drivers of bullying are poor social skills and low family income. Although TheRespo's showed little difference between the incidence of bullying in eastern Ukraine and other regions, adolescents and youth who have moved out of the NGCAs, tend to suffer from bullying 20% more frequently than non-displaced children, regardless of where they have gone within Ukraine.
5. Meanwhile, access to education for the most vulnerable groups of youth remains an important issue. Half of Roma children do not attend school regularly, and only





20-30% finish primary school [6], while only 10% of children with special needs have access to inclusive education [4]. As noted by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, there is little reliable data on children and youth with disabilities, nor is there data available that is disaggregated by impairment group, age, gender and sector. This constraints any analysis on inclusive education.



RECOMMENDATIONS

THE FOLLOWING STEPS ARE RECOMMENDED TO ADDRESS GAPS IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM:

1. The new Ukrainian School reform process should address the quality gap. Key competences development and capacity building for teachers are important components for reducing this gap. The PISA evaluation planned for Ukraine in 2018 will be key for baseline evaluations and in planning for improved quality of education going forward. However, the most important factor for progress will be engaging young people in educational decision-making processes.
2. Youth particularly affected by the conflict in Ukraine should be provided with the key life skills and competencies they need to live peacefully within their host and returnee communities, as well as with psychosocial support to strengthen their resilience.
3. Adolescents and young people should be supported to meaningfully engage in shaping the future of their communities, and encouraged to participate in public matters. The solutions developed as a result of these young people's initiative, resilience, and creativity should be promoted and supported across all communities. In that regard, the new education reform plans to support the development of civic activism among youth, hopefully becoming a model for child-centered, active and participatory learning processes and motivated teaching.
4. Building of an inclusive education system accessible to all vulnerable young people including those with special needs, people from minorities, conflict affected persons etc.
5. Piloting and implementation of the Safe School concept is recommended in order to address the safety gap. This should include: better management of education policy and planning processes; life skills education; mine risk education; sports programs promoting development and social cohesion; disaster and risk reduction education; anti-bullying programming; education to prevent or minimize risk of physical violence, sexual assault, and violence in schools; psychosocial support; rehabilitation of damaged school facilities in compliance with national safety standards and building codes; and protecting education facilities from attack.
6. More specifically, the Government of Ukraine should particularly seek to address safety related issues stemming from attacks on education in the east. Endorsement of The Safe Schools Declaration would precipitate changes that will better safeguard the civilian character of educational facilities, and, by extension, enhance their protection from attack. This would better protect students, teachers, and schools during times of war, and limit military occupation and use of schools.



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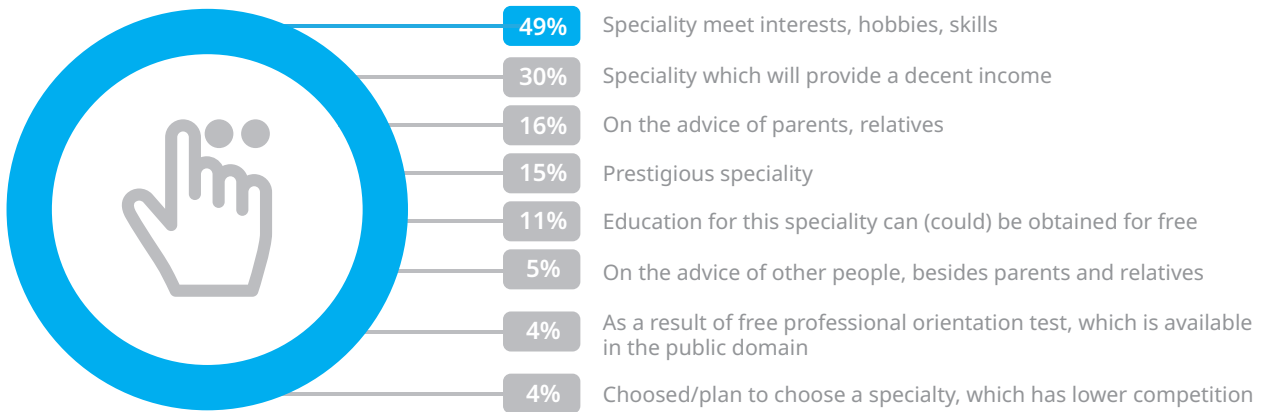
YOUTH EMPLOYMENT



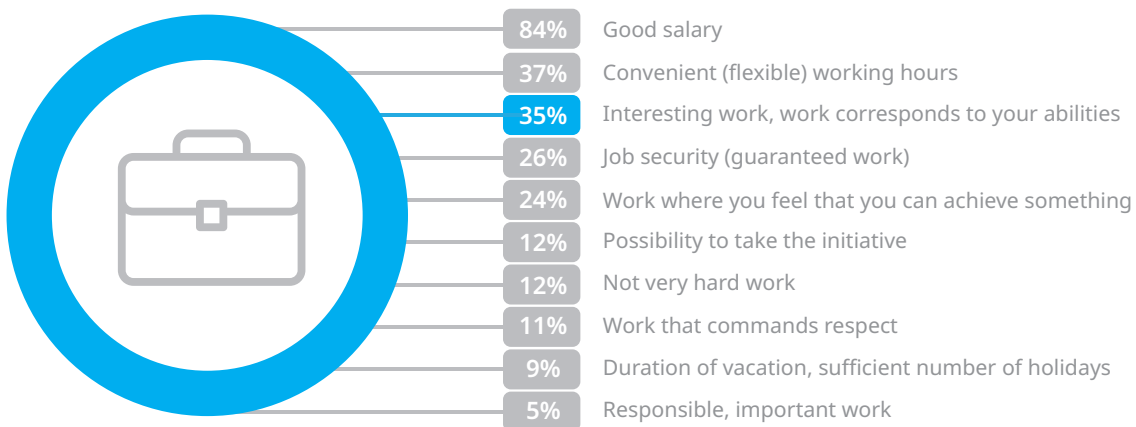


Reasons for choosing speciality and job youth aged 14-34

«How are you going to choose your speciality/ How have you chosen your last speciality?»



Most important things for young people when choosing a job



49% DON'T WORK IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR SPECIALITY

Reasons for not working in accordance to speciality



Source: «Youth of Ukraine 2015» poll conducted by GfK Ukraine, Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine with the financial support of the UN organization



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

In 2015, 11.6% of youth in the labor force were actively searching for employment but were unable to find work. More specifically, slightly more than half of young people aged 15-29 were employed, while 6.8% of them were unemployed. The employment rate for young men at 60.1% was considerably higher than the rate for young women (43%) and the employment rates for older demographics (25-29) were higher respective to younger demographics (15-19). Across the board, youth living in rural areas faced a higher risk of unemployment than those in urban and suburban areas.

In 2015, 3.4 million Ukrainian youth remained outside of the labor force (inactive). There are a number of factors that help to account for the highest share of these being adolescents aged 15-19, namely the inability to work while studying and motherhood.

Young workers are primarily concentrated in the following industries: state and social services; wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles; construction; and commercial sector services. Most young Ukrainians work in occupations that are mid- to high-skill intensive, and a further 21.8% of youth work in technical or production occupations. Concerning the type of employment, around 50% of young employees worked in private enterprises, and a further 39.7% work in the public sector, broadly reflecting the distribution of the total working-age population. The share of youth in self-employment is very small, although it is becoming more popular among the younger demographics, and is more common among young men than young women (except for contributions to family work).

Happily, the majority of young employees have a written contract (81.2%)²⁰. Young female workers are more likely to have a written contract than young men and the likelihood of having a written contract increases with age. Consequently, young adolescent males (15-19) are the most vulnerable exploitation as a consequence of working without a written contract or agreement. In terms of contract length, although almost all young employees (94%) had labor agreements of unlimited duration, youth aged 15-19 were the most likely to have contracts with a duration of less than 12 months.

Regarding salaries, overall young men earn more than young women do: the average wage of a young employee is UAH 2,767; however, young men earn UAH 3,087 on average, while young women earn only UAH 2,343. Self-employed youth earn a higher monthly income than those drawing a wage or salary. Across all employment sectors, it appears that the highest wages go to individuals who have completed secondary general level²¹, followed by those with vocational training. The high earning potential of vocational education could be used as an incentive to attract additional students, if properly advertised.

Informal employment remains an area of concern in Ukraine. In 2015, the informal employment rate was 58.3%. Adolescent workers (aged 15-19) were the most likely to be engaged in informal employment (87.1%) followed by young men (58.9%) and those living

20 The written contract does not necessarily mean formal employment, for example, some part of the salary or wage can be paid informally. The data on informal employment is presented below.
21 Education in the Ukraine is compulsory from age 6 to age 15. The first four years are at the elementary younger school; lower secondary middle school is for scholars aged 10 to 15. Thereafter 3 years may be spent at secondary school (starsha serednia shkola) or upper secondary school leading to a matriculation school certificate or atestat. In the process, school students take a series of independent government tests, culminating in a final one that examines their /knowledge of Ukrainian language and literature, English / German / French / Spanish, as well as biology, chemistry, geography, mathematics and physics. Source: <https://www.scholaro.com/pro/countries/Ukraine/Education-System>





in rural areas (60.9%). Four out of five young people engaged in informal employment have an informal job in the formal sector, rather than working in the informal sector. This confirms that at least some employers are failing to comply with the requirement that social security and benefits be provided to all employees. The number of youth working informally exceeds the number of formal workers in 12 of 20 key economic activities [1]. The largest shares of informal employment (excluding domestic activity) exist in agriculture, forestry and fisheries sector; construction; information and telecommunications; wholesale and retail trade; and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles.

There is a significant mismatch between young people's interests and skills, their education and their occupation. When planning for their future only 49% of young people aged 14-34 stated that they chose a field of study that corresponded to their interests, hobbies, skills, and further, only 51% work in a sector related to their field of study. The most prevalent reasons for this are the absence of vacancies and insufficient salaries or wages offered by employers [2].

Only 33% of youth aged 14-29 believe that the education system is adapted to the job market. Slightly over half of young Ukrainians have jobs that require a certain level of education, while one in five young Ukrainians is overeducated [3]. Less than half of the respondents had participated in workshops or internships during their studies.





IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND GAPS

The following key issues can be highlighted as the most threatening factors for youth employment:

1. Ill-considered choice of career path and, a related underutilization of the vocational education system. This problem arises as a consequence of insufficient attention on career counselling activities from government bodies, educational institutions and employers, especially at secondary general schools. This is compounded by social norms dictating which occupations are perceived as prestigious, the low value attributed to self-employment, and limited educational opportunities for young people from lower-income households creating more complicated pathways to stable and secure jobs.
2. Low numbers of skilled workers and junior specialists trained by vocational schools and higher educational institutions of the I-II accreditation grade, despite the high earning potential of workers with vocational training. For many Ukrainians, the main reasons for not seeking out vocational training are the low social status of blue-collar jobs, limited contribution of vocational education to the development of universal human values, and the persistence of primitive and unsafe blue-collar workplaces.
3. The unreasonable promotion of higher education institutions which continue to push for increased enrolment, and within higher education a focus on fields such as “business and law” which exceeds labor demand.
4. Obstacles to obtaining work experience and the decline of work-based learning mechanisms. This has been primarily due to the erosion of practical training facilities, resulting from inadequate financing and a lack of employers interested in providing such facilities. Internships should be more widely considered as a beneficial experience, as to date despite current provisions in the employment law, there is very low participation.
5. Ineffective mechanisms for easing the extant skill mismatch. This results in part from the absence of a system for forecasting labor demand, as well as inadequate employer involvement education and training systems. Unfortunately, at present employers’ role in this process is limited to some joint activities with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and primarily entails setting basic knowledge and skills requirements in certain fields for the vocational schools and educational institutions. In higher education, there is very little dialogue between employers and educational institutions regarding the hard and soft skill requirements expected from recent graduates. Employers are also not actively engaged in setting up apprenticeships or other work-readiness programmes.
6. Under conditions of limited financing, there is little fiscal space to continue or expand the services of youth-targeting institutions (youth employment centers, youth business incubators, youth job fairs, experience and innovations clubs, etc.). There has also been a decline in national investment in active labor market programmes, such as State support to finance youth entrepreneurship and enterprise development.





7. Social protection for young workers is inadequate. Ukrainian youth are exposed to high rates of informal employment, and even in the formal sector, there are flagrant violations of legislative norms regarding working hours and contracts. Low wages are an additional challenge for young workers. The Government, employers and workers must continue their dialogue and work towards developing more effective mechanisms to ensure decent employment for youth.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations should be understood in the context of the EU Association Agreement, and are contingent to the implementation of the associated social and economic reforms, which should form an integral part of the renewed youth employment policy. Ukraine should adhere to the main goals determined in the EU Youth Strategy 2010–2018 and EU Council Resolution 2009/C 311/01 dated 27 November 2009, which are to ensure wider and more equal opportunities for youth in terms of education and employment; and to encourage young people to be more active in public life. This will allow the Government to focus on implementing the following measures: providing support to youth initiatives; encouraging non-formal education; providing support to volunteer and outreach programmes for youth; creating suitable conditions for enhancing youth mobility and awareness; and mainstreaming inter-sectoral initiative campaigns, which will aid youth through the development, implementation and assessment of youth policies and actions in related areas, such as education, employment, health care and wellbeing.

Consideration should also be given to the Youth Guarantee Recommendations adopted by the EU Council on 22 April 2013. The Recommendations envisage the strengthening of public employment services and streamlining of investment in activation strategies to target the most vulnerable youth and attract EU finance.

Additionally, Ukraine should persevere in implementing the EU youth policy priori-

ties in order to ensure equal opportunities for youth in education and employment. Specific consideration should be given to further development of non-formal education mechanisms. The EU Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning 2012/C 398/01 of 20 December 2012 stipulated the participation of all stakeholders - specifically employers, trade unions, employment services, youth organizations and civil society organizations – as imperative, in expanding opportunities for non-formal and informal learning. This will provide for the development of a national system that will recognize non-formal and/or informal learning and will include elements such as specification, documentation, assessment, and certification of learning results.

In consideration of the key national and European documents, the following measures should be implemented to support and facilitate youth's transition into the labor market:

1. Upgrading governmental regulations of the vocational education system by improving (through amendments) all relevant normative and legal documents.
2. Adopting the Law of Ukraine “On vocational guidance of the population”; putting into place an effective organizational and management structure within the vocational guidance system.
3. Developing a multi-unit vocational guidance network to facilitate outreach to youth, and upgrade the skills of relevant specialists. One example of such a successful measure, employing innovative

approaches aimed at achieving higher quality in the provision of vocational guidance services, is the launch of the vocational orientation web-platform “My Career”.

4. Supporting the growth of youth entrepreneurship through improvements to the relevant normative and legal bases, as well as prioritizing services for young entrepreneurs and promoting entrepreneurial skills of young people. Signing the Ukrainian Pact for Youth 2020, which is aimed at promoting the dialogue between the private and educational sectors, and will ensure 10,000 internship openings and entry-level jobs for youth before 2020.
5. Encouraging the organization and self-governance of civil society institutions; supporting the spread and engagement of youth volunteer movements.
6. Increasing the capacity of the non-formal learning system. This includes integrating the non-formal learning system into the education system and expanding the application of non-formal systems, such as “civil society institutions”.
7. Encouraging youth participation in the implementation of projects financed by the EU and other countries, in particular, the Erasmus+ programme²².

²² Answering a question about the EU youth program ‘Erasmus+’, the majority of the respondents aged 15-34 (86%) said that they knew nothing about this program (GfK Ukraine, 2015).



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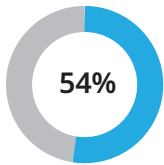
YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AND POLITICAL LIFE



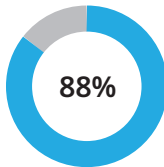


Youth participation in public and political life

Participation in public life among youth aged 14-34

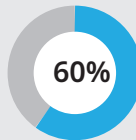


took part in at least one of the civil initiatives during the last 12 months (by directly participating or supporting it financially)

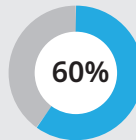


indicated at least one of the civil initiatives in which they haven't participated, but were interested to take part in

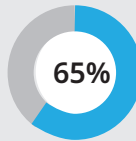
THE MOST POTENTIALLY INTERESTING INITIATIVES



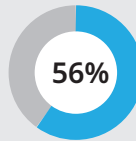
assistance to children in crisis situations



actions to protect rights and interests that directly affect young people or their families and friends (for example, against illegal construction)



fighting against corruption



actions aimed at infrastructure development in their residential area

Source: «Youth of Ukraine 2015» poll conducted by GfK Ukraine, Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine with the financial support of the UN organization

Participation in local community life among youth aged 14-34



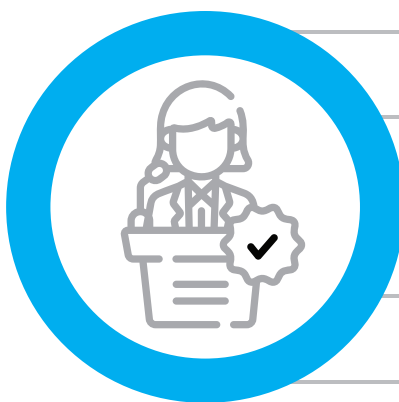
take part in public life of local community



are ready to take part in public life of local community

Source: «Youth of Ukraine 2017» poll conducted by Center for Independent Sociological Studies «OMEGA», Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine

Participation in political life among youth aged 14-29



4% 14%

Sign a list with political requests/ Support an online petition

4% 14%

Participate in a demonstration

3% 16%

Participate in volunteer or civil society organization activities with political purposes

3% 10%

Participated in political activities online/in social networks

2% 10%

Work in a political party or political group

do would like to do

Source: «Youth of Ukraine 2017» poll conducted by New Europe Center, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung(FES), GfK Ukraine

ONLY 34% of youth aged 18-29 took part in parliamentary election in 2014

Source: Balakireva O.M., Bondar T.V., Dmytruk D.A. Electoral orientations and vote's behavior during the elections of people's deputations of Ukraine on October 26, 2014 in «Ukrainskyi Sotciuum», issue 4(51)



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

Currently, Ukraine does not collect any unified statistical data on youth participation in public and political life. This indicator may be assessed indirectly through official statistics on youth non-governmental organizations, as well as through data from opinion polls conducted during the recent years with the support of the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine, as well as donor organizations. The discrepancies between youth willingness to participate in public and political life and actual levels of participation are summarized below.

PARTICIPATION LEVELS

According to a U-Report poll [13], 94% of respondents said that the opinions of young people and children should be taken into account in decision-making processes. The same poll showed that most young people believe that children and adolescents are able to participate in decision-making processes through membership in NGOs (68%). Almost half of respondents believe that there is a need to establish consultative bodies of children at both national and local levels. However, only a third of young people surveyed felt that the government adequately supported youth. Most of them are from Kyiv and Western Ukraine, aged 20-24. [4]. Moreover, another U-Report poll showed that the awareness of governmental activities for youth was quite low among their target demographic.

Positively, another poll [9] revealed that more than half of young people have ideas on how

to develop their communities, with young men slightly more likely than young women to report that they have ideas about community development. Among those who have such ideas, 62% are ready to pursue them, 25% are already working on realizing them, and 13% are still developing these ideas.

Nearly half of Ukraine's young people believe that young people should be involved in solving youth problems in the country. In that regard, young people believe that public youth associations (19.7%) and central and local executive bodies (8.8%) may be useful in solving youth problems [3]. Additionally, 60% of young respondents of different ages stated that they would be willing to participate in shaping youth policies [12]. Those in the age demographic 15-19 years old exhibited the highest level of willingness to participate.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S MEANS AND WAYS TO GET ENGAGED

According to a poll conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine in 2015 [2], 54% of young people aged 14-34 had taken part in at least one civil initiative over the past 12 months, either directly participating or providing financial support. There is no statistically significant difference in the level of participation between young men and women in this area. Most often, young people took part in: initiatives supporting the Ukrainian Army; infrastructure development in their residential area; the provision of assistance to displaced people and/or victims of the conflict; providing assistance to children and adults in crisis situations (not including assistance for IDPs); political actions; and environmental activities. Unfortunately, according to the same poll, over a third of those interviewed did not know about





the presence of youth civil society organizations or their activities in Ukraine, and a further 21% knew about the youth organizations from mass media, but had not attended any related events. Effectively, only 7% of Ukrainian youth attended the events of such organizations with any regularity, and 2% were members of such organizations.

The types of initiative most frequently attended over the past 12 months were, in decreasing order of attendance, civil society organizations' activities, volunteer initiatives, charitable or humanitarian organizations' initiatives, and sport or leisure organizations. According to recent research conducted by the Ministry of Youth and Sports, 21% of youth had participated in the activities organized by public organizations

Overall, slightly more than one third of young people reported having volunteered at least once in their life, and 88% indicated interest in participating in at least one civil initiative but had not yet done so. The initiatives which showed the most prospective interest were: assistance to children in crisis situations; actions to protect rights; and interests that directly affect young people or their families and friends (for example, campaigning against illegal construction); actions aimed at infrastructure development in their residential area; and fighting against corruption.

So, why does one see such low levels of participation in civil activities among young Ukrainians? 33% of those surveyed indicated that long working hours resulted in a lack of time for such activities. Other respondents did not believe their participation would make a difference, or reported that there were no trustworthy organizations or actions that they supported in their community. Only a small number indicated that there was nothing preventing them from participating in civil activi-

ties. More specifically, U-report respondents associate barriers to participation in civic activity with a lack of organizational skills, time, opportunities, and other likeminded youth. Girls and young women were more likely to state that there were not enough opportunities for public activities (26% versus 17% accordingly) [10].

Most survey respondents indicated youth clubs, centers or hubs as their preferred place for developing skills, with more than half saying that they would attend youth clubs on a weekly basis, if there were one in their area, and 25% are willing to pay for some activities organized in these clubs [11]. Training courses, hobby clubs, national patriotic organizations, and child organizations were also frequently mentioned [10]. However, less than a quarter of young people reported being aware of the activities of youth centers in Ukraine, with the highest levels of awareness among young people from Eastern Ukraine and Kyiv.

YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL LIFE

According to research by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine [2], 23% of Ukrainian youth aged 14-34 consistently monitors Ukrainian politics. Another 41% pay attention to the main events in political life, but pay little attention to other political news. 21% of youth report they are rarely interested in politics, and 12% say they are not interested in politics at all.

Thus around third of young people in Ukraine are not interested in politics, and another third shows only low levels of interest in political affairs [3]; political interest appears to increase with age, as the 14-19 demographic is least interested, while the 25-29 demographic shows the highest level of interest. The people aged 30-34 most often claim they are always interested in national political





affairs. Compared to young people living in Central Ukraine, young people living in the Northern and Southern parts of the country less likely to be interested in political affairs.

In the past three years, only 57.9% participated in elections. In comparison, according to research [15], the average voter turnout in EU countries varies from 55% to 70%. There has been a long-term downward trend in voter turnout among Ukrainian youth, observed since 2006 when 57% of this age group voted in parliamentary elections, declining to 47% in 2012, and further to 35% in 2014 [14].

The overall level of trust of Ukrainian youth in political parties is low, as is the percentage of the respondents who were members of political parties, or were involved in paid activities in support of some such organization (under 5%).

According to the survey “Youth of Ukraine – 2017,” 87% of young people do not participate in any activities related to the life of their community, but half of respondents would be willing to engage in community initiatives. According to the respondents, the participation of young people in the activities of the united territorial communities should primarily involve creating youth initiative groups or organizations and subsequently developing and implementing youth-led projects and initiatives.

ENGAGEMENT AND MEMBERSHIP IN NGOS

Overall, this type of engagement is not very popular. According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine, there were 5,450 officially registered youth NGOs in 2015 (7.8% of all NGOs). Further, in 2016 youth and children’s civil society organizations initiated and implemented 273 projects engaging 689,045 young people. Out of them, less than 5% were funded by the State.





IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND GAPS

1. The inclusion in the national legislative framework of youth engagement into the decision-making processes does not translate into meaningful youth participation in policy development at the regional or local levels. With further rollout of the decentralization process in Ukraine, the regional and local authorities responsible for the implementation of youth policies will have better financial opportunities for the implementation of programmes aimed at youth. This creates a favorable environment for the implementation of active youth policies at the local level, as the process of decentralization transfers power from the central authorities to the local government bodies and amalgamated communities, and provides an opportunity to transform the approach from “work with youth” to “youth participation”.

At the same time, the configuration of work envisioned with youth at the local level is not clearly defined in the strategic documents related to decentralization reform. Regional and local administrations and municipalities may initiate the creation of public youth councils under general laws regulating the participation of civil society in decision-making processes; however, there is no existing special legal framework for youth councils.

Newly established amalgamated communities also need guidance and technical support to develop their own communities as the simultaneously struggle with setting up all public administration processes and developing sectoral policies.

2. The level of participation of young people in youth civil society organizations is low. As shown by recent sociological surveys, young Ukrainians prefer engaging in civic activities not as part of formally registered CSOs, but rather as individuals and/or as part of non-formal associations (labor and educational groups, initiative groups formed with friends, neighbors, relatives). Today, the prevailing manner in which young people participate in civic activities is through non-formal channels.

Contrary to the recent increases in civic action among young people, their participation in youth civil society organizations remains very low. Thus, youth civil society organizations do not represent the consolidated power of youth in their communities.

Survey results also show that limited availability of information is a significant barrier to the effectiveness of the activities of youth civil society organizations, and contributes to the low level of young people’s involvement in their projects. Additionally, because of existing legal barriers to the formal engagement of young people as volunteers for civil society organizations, their level of volunteerism in the civil society sector remains low.

Moreover, child and youth participation is often manipulated, and there are cases of like-participation of youth for the sake of a ‘good picture’.

3. Young people are not active politically, skip elections, and are not interested in political parties.
4. Young people are motivated to act in their communities, but they lack skills, time and supporters among their peers and adults.



They do not feel empowered by the government and further, are not aware of opportunities provided by the government.

5. The State Youth Policy lacks a unified approach to youth engagement in public and political life.

There is no comprehensive National Youth Strategy in Ukraine. The main strategic issues on youth engagement are covered by 3 documents: 1) the *Strategy of Development of National Youth Policy till 2020* [7], 2) the *Roadmap for Reform: Youth Policy in Ukraine* [5] and 3) the *Concept of the State Target Social Programme "Youth of Ukraine" 2016-2020* [1]. They are assessed in turn hereafter.

The *"Strategy of Development of National Youth Policy till 2020"* [7] was adopted in 2013. It is designed as a brief political statement rather than as a strategic policy paper. In 4 pages, the document declares that sufficient legislative basis for youth policy is available and defines the following challenges in the field of youth: access to education; employment; physical and mental health; housing; and lack of knowledge of foreign languages. This omits important issues relating to youth participation in public and political life. Additionally, the rights and responsibilities of young people who participate in the implementation of this youth policy are not clearly defined in the document.

In the context of the reforms launched in Ukraine in 2014, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, in cooperation with civil society partners from the Reanimation Package of Reforms Coalition and the Centre for Reforms, drafted *"Roadmap for Reform: Youth Policy in Ukraine"* [5] covering the period 2016-2020. According to the roadmap, re-

form is to be focused on the development of an active youth sector and increasing youth participation and engagement in line with European standards. The European standards should be clearly defined in the new Law "On Youth", which began to be drafted in 2015. This Law should guarantee: the rights of young people including to civic engagement; sufficient institutional framework for non-formal education and youth work, including youth centers; support for vulnerable youth; and should implement the main principles of the *Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life* [6].

The Concept of the State Target Social Programme "Youth for Ukraine" 2016-2020 indicates the main priorities, measures, tools and expected outputs. It defines the development of an active citizenship among young people and a national-patriotic upbringing as key priorities. Large parts of the programme are devoted to citizenship and national-patriotic education, whereas the attempt to position civic education and national-patriotic education as one integral component of the reform is controversial and often brings the two into conflict with each other.

6. The evidence-based approach used to define problems and develop solutions in youth policy is rather ad-hoc and dependent on international technical assistance. Until 2015, thematic research in the area of youth participation was fragmented. Some advancements in this approach are detailed below.

In 2015, the Ministry of Youth and Sports committed to conduct a comprehensive annual research on the youth agenda with the support of UN Agencies in Ukraine. The





survey «*Youth of Ukraine - 2015*» [2] includes an analysis of; the state of youth, mechanisms of inclusion of young people in social processes and public life, and activities of youth organizations. It also examines social challenges faced by youth, including the financial security of young people and their families, youth employment, access to high-quality education, housing, reasons for asocial behavior, health and healthy lifestyle practices. The survey conclusions informed the development of the “Youth of Ukraine” State Targeted Programme.

In 2016, the survey “*Values of Ukrainian Youth*” [3] explored the issues of social development of young people, the mechanisms of their self-realization, participation in civil society organizations, civic values, healthy lifestyle practices, as well as challenges they face in terms of access to education, labor markets and housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following steps are recommended to facilitate youth participation in public life:

1. Mainstream the priorities of youth policies into all state strategic policies and concepts, especially those related to decentralization reform, the facilitation of civil society development, and civic education.
2. Improve the legal framework for the operationalization of concrete mechanisms for youth participation, ensuring that young people have the possibility to participate in decision-making at all levels in a sustainable and effective manner.
3. Develop the capacities of state authorities, local governments and amalgamated communities at the subnational level to apply the existing mechanisms of youth civic engagement to ensure more inclusive development of their communities. Create opportunities for adolescent and youth participation in policy development and governance at the local levels; involve youth community leaders and representatives of youth non-governmental organizations in the development and discussion of regional and local development policies.
4. Create opportunities for adolescents and youth to participate in settings and areas of practices that they experience on a regular, day-to-day basis, including at schools and in their communities.
5. Enhance civic literacy among young women and men through formal and non-formal civic education to empower them to engage in public and political life at all levels, and build the skills and capacities of adolescents, young people and stakeholders to encourage their meaningful participation.
6. Raise awareness on the right to participate and popularize youth civic engagement and youth participation in community life through the involvement of adolescents and youth in awareness raising campaigns.



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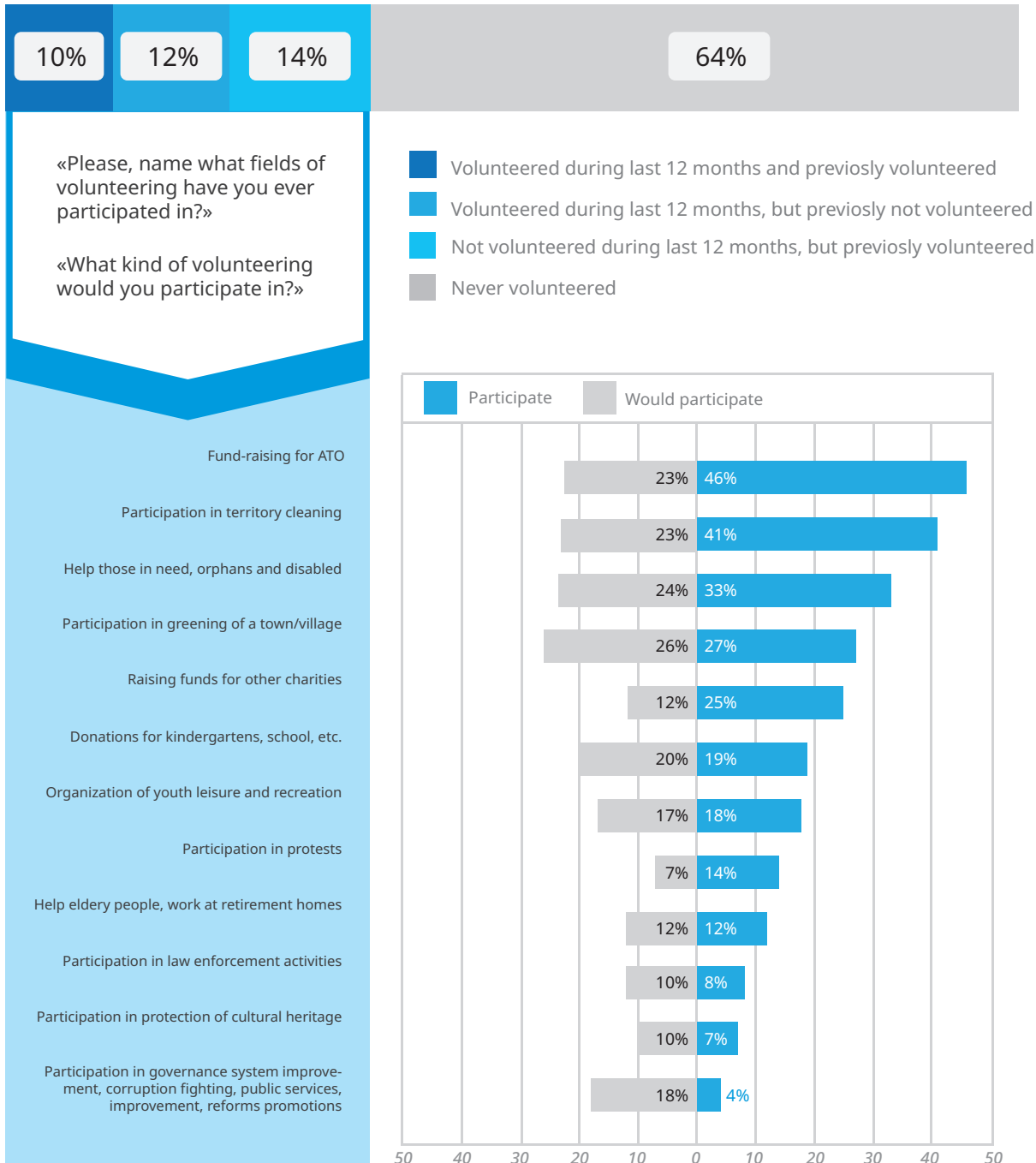
YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM





Volunteering of youth aged 14-39

«Volunteering is a form of citizens' activity that is carried out voluntarily for social well-being, when money payment is not the main motivation. Volunteering does not imply money contributions, only spending of own time and efforts. Have you ever taken part in volunteering?»



Source: «Youth of Ukraine 2015» poll conducted by GfK Ukraine, Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine with the financial support of the UN organization



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

Volunteering is recognized in the National Target Program of the Youth of Ukraine 2016-2020 as a key tool to promote informal learning, active citizenship and youth involvement; and is one of the most beneficial and efficient directions for youth related activities at the local level [9]. Ukraine’s developments in the last three years have provided opportunities for various forms of civic activism, including volunteering. While young Ukrainians constitute the majority of those who volunteer, their engagement is still underutilized and their understanding of various opportunities to volunteer are limited.

Currently, Ukraine does not have any unified statistical data on youth volunteerism creating some potential contradiction between figures from different surveys. Nevertheless, there are a few trends observed across recent research and surveys that will be discussed below.

Similar to global trends, youth represent the majority of those engaged in volunteer activities in Ukraine; however, their participation is less frequent than in most European countries. In surveys conducted by the United Nations and the Ministry of Youth and Sports of Ukraine in 2015 and 2016, only 36% and 13.4 % of young people respectively claimed to have volunteered at least once in their life [17]. The significant difference in results returned can be explained by the fact that in the first poll the definition of volunteering was provided to the respondents while in the second poll it was not (this also shows that many Ukrainians are already engaged in volunteer activities without realizing it) and/or by differences in survey method²³. Overall these figures correlate with others polling Ukrainians engaged in volunteering (16%) [16],

and suggest that the level of volunteer engagement still lags behind those in Europe [4]²⁴.

At the same time, public interest in civic activities increased significantly from 26% in 2013 to 48% in 2015. While in 2015, only 22% of Ukrainians reported their increasing readiness to volunteer, some general tendencies still illustrate potential for greater participation in volunteering [1]. The most popular volunteer activities among youth aged 14-34 are fund-raising for military operations in the Eastern Conflict Areas (46%), followed by participation in (environmental?) clean-ups (41%), help to vulnerable groups, i.e. orphans and persons with disabilities (33%), and participation in planting trees and flowers in residential areas (27%). These are also the four areas in which the greatest potential interest is shown among youth.

Looking at the motivation and values linked to volunteerism, the U-Report poll on Volunteering dating from 2016 offered five options to define volunteering, for which 41% of the respondents chose the option “all of the above-mentioned variants”, meaning voluntary, selflessness, public usefulness, non-profit and free of charge, to characterize volunteering. When asked to decide between respective options, the respondents found “voluntary” and “public usefulness” best reflected the essence of volunteering. The primary motives identified for potential involvement in volunteer activities, with 83% of respondents choosing them were additional knowledge, abilities and skills²⁵.

23 The online interview method used in 2015 better reaches active young people who are difficult to reach at home using face-to-face methods.

24 Based on EU research, over 100 million people in Europe are volunteers, 3 out of every 10 Europeans claim to be active in voluntary activities, and nearly 80% of European citizens feel that voluntary activities are an important part of democratic life. http://ec.europa.eu/citizenship/pdf/volunteering_charter_en.pdf

25 U-Report poll on Volunteering, conducted December 5 through December 14, 2016, based on the answers of 4291 U-reporters at the age of 14 to 34 years. Data is presented in percentages, among those respondents who replied to questions. Data is not representative because the socio-demographic characteristics of registered U-reporters do not reflect the general characteristics of Ukrainian youth.





Lastly, surveys show an increasing social trust towards volunteers in 2017 (among all social institutions only the church and the Ukrainian army have the similar level of trust while the trust to the government is much lower [3]).

Looking at the environment in which volunteerism takes place, Ukraine does have a tradition of youth engagement on a voluntary basis. Although the term volunteering has only recently begun to be used, Ukrainian society has traditionally relied on social work, mutual help, neighborly care, altruism, and various forms of charity in the religious or patriotic spirit.

Volunteer engagement is also considered to be one of the most effective expressions of Ukrainian civic activism in the past three years. During the Maidan Revolution in 2014, various volunteer groups emerged to mobilize and coordinate the self-defense forces, medical staff, lawyers, and food distributors that were helping the protesters and assisting the wounded. The volunteer upheaval gained another dimension shortly afterwards, as volunteer groups were mobilized to supply soldiers and help civilians after the outbreak of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

Recent institutional developments have made it easier for young Ukrainians to engage in volunteer work. The Law on Volunteering, adopted in 2011, was amended in 2015 to remove a number of legislative barriers that had previously restricted volunteerism in Ukraine [6]. Youth are now allowed to engage in volunteering activities from the age of 14, and this has become a priority area of Ukraine's State Programme for Youth Development 2016-2020 [8].

ORGANIZATIONAL LEVEL

Ukrainian civil society organizations increasingly engage youth volunteers in their activities. A survey conducted in 2016 among Ukrainian non-profits shows high levels of interaction with volunteers: over 24,000 volunteers were engaged by Ukrainian non-profits in 2015, which was 30 times more than the number of their actual staff [12]. Among them, a large number of organizations engage young volunteers to assist others in their development, social development, and integration into society. Research conducted in late 2016 showed that most of them engage volunteers in social services, cultural events, education and scientific activities, as well as in the support of internally displaced people, the army and victims of the ongoing conflict [10]. For example, the Ukrainian Red Cross Society in 2016 utilized over 17,000 volunteer-hours to organize camps to increase the capacity of Ukrainian youth to work with vulnerable populations [11]. Another example comes from the youth movement "Let's do it Ukraine," which in 2017, managed to engage about one million Ukrainians all around the country in clean-ups and other events raising environmental awareness [7].

International mobility has become one of the key features of youth volunteer engagement among organizations based in Ukraine. One of the most frequently utilized opportunities is the European Voluntary Service (EVS), which sends Ukrainian youth between the ages of 16 and 30 to volunteering projects around Europe and brings young Europeans to volunteer in civil society projects across Ukraine. As of October 2017, there were 47 organizations accredited in Ukraine to provide EVS opportunities and 77 EVS projects abroad accepting Ukrainian citizens [18]. Along similar lines, AIESEC, the world's largest non-profit, youth-run organization organizes exchanges allowing





university students to work with civil society and businesses. In 2016, AIESEC recorded that 256 Ukrainians participated in their Global Volunteer Program abroad, and 672 foreigners coming to Ukraine as Global Volunteers [19]. Ukraine is also supported by more than 300 Peace Corps Volunteers who work with their communities on projects in youth development, education, and community economic development [20].

Kramatorsk are successful examples which are multiplying in the East, attracting young people who want a place where they can create, contribute, and initiate, sharing friendship and ideas together [23].

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

The presence of youth volunteers in regions can significantly contribute to the country's social cohesion. In the context of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, a number of initiatives have sought to unite young people from the East and West of Ukraine and promote the idea of active citizenship. The "Here and Now" initiative supports projects, jointly organized by the volunteers and community members, by engaging Ukrainian youth in cultural exchange, teaching youth leadership and the principles of active citizenship by providing practical input and promoting sustainable development in communities. To better understand the realities of life in different parts of Ukraine and break down stereotypes, young leaders from the East travel to the western regions to volunteer in local communities and vice versa [22]. Another very successful model is the L'viv Educational Foundation's (LEF) "Building Ukraine Together" project, which brings together western and eastern youth to work on renovation projects in their towns, which in turn grows the voluntary and civic spirit among them, and encourages and supports the launch their own voluntary groups and youth initiative platforms. These platforms receive some funding and support from LEF for an initial period. Teplytsia in Sloviansk and Vilna Khata in





IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND GAPS

1. Young Ukrainians still have low awareness of volunteerism. Despite the concepts of “volunteer organization”, “volunteerism”, “volunteer movement” becoming more widely known in Ukraine, indicating their importance to society, there is still a degree of ambiguity regarding people’s understanding of what these terms mean. Consequently, many young Ukrainians are already engaged in volunteer activities without realizing it. Indeed, volunteering only became an acknowledged term in Ukraine in the 1990s and was officially recognized by the Ukrainian Government in 2003 [15]. Ukrainians, including youth, mainly associate volunteering with supporting the army, a product of the ongoing conflict [1]. According to the national survey “Charity and volunteering in Ukraine” conducted in November 2015, only 10% of Ukrainians volunteered in 2012. However, a slight change to the wording of the question provides significantly different results; 69% of citizens in 2014 helped others or did social good in their spare time compared to just 54% in 2011. [1]

Only 5% of young Ukrainians were members of organizations which carried out projects or other activities to create positive social change in their communities and sought to build their skills to create and manage change in the process. 30% of the remaining population occasionally participated in volunteer and self- or community-development activities. It is important to note that a significant portion of those who were not active in civic organizations expressed concern for their community/

country and interest in possibilities of being active. It would thus be accurate to describe them as “not yet engaged,” rather than “passive” [2].

2. A lack of volunteer opportunities is observed outside big cities. Volunteering is the most widespread in Kyiv, where 20.9% of respondents reported having already volunteered [14]. Comparatively, youth outside of major cities like Kyiv, L’viv and Kharkiv, have considerably fewer opportunities to engage in volunteering on a weekly or monthly basis. Recent research conducted by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, found that 90% of people aged 14 - 29 from south Ukraine had no volunteer experience whatsoever [13]. National level volunteer organizations are, however, beginning to appear in Ukraine. The Federation of Regional Initiatives (FRI), is one such youth organization with branches all across Ukraine and it supports young people who engage in volunteer activities for their own development, including sports, music, intellectual interests, etc. [24]. One of the most successful models of community volunteering is the Hub Volunteer Service, a vibrant community of active and inspired young volunteers, which was established alongside the Impact Hub Odesa, a center of social initiatives and creative space in the heart of Odesa [25]. The project has recently been scaled up and is now the Ukrainian Volunteer Service, seeking to promote volunteerism for young people in other regions as well [26].

RECOMMENDATIONS

Three sets of recommendations were developed promoting in turn volunteerism at the contextual level, the organizational level and the individual level.

Recommendations for enabling the contextual level:

1. Support a common understanding of the meaning of volunteerism and a shared appreciation of its value through consistent collection of disaggregated data about youth volunteering as evidence for advocacy, practices and tools for replication, knowledge sharing and learning.
2. Encourage substantial stakeholder consultations to strengthen cross-sector national ownership and operationalize the government's commitment to promoting youth volunteerism.
3. Conduct targeted public awareness campaigns for Ukrainian youth to promote various dimensions of volunteering and a culture of systematic volunteer activism, i.e. non-formal education and skills development, and active citizenship at all levels which will strengthen social cohesion in the country.

Recommendations for enabling the organizational level:

1. Support closer collaboration between civil society organizations, universities and youth centers to generate more youth volunteering opportunities and promote awareness of the variety of volunteer activities.

2. Encourage local authorities and civil society to create more volunteer opportunities for youth at the regional and community levels to support decentralization processes and encourage local ownership and activism in the future. Organize in-country volunteer exchanges as an investment in society's social cohesion.
3. Develop the capacity of Ukrainian organizations to diversify their approaches to mobilizing, facilitating, and managing youth volunteers and align these with international best practices.

Recommendations for enabling the individual level:

1. Conduct capacity building and awareness raising activities for youth to increase their motivation and ability to volunteer.
2. Create opportunities for youth to volunteer on a regular basis in their communities.
3. Empower youth volunteer activists and representatives of the youth volunteer movements to further promote the culture of volunteerism among their peers.



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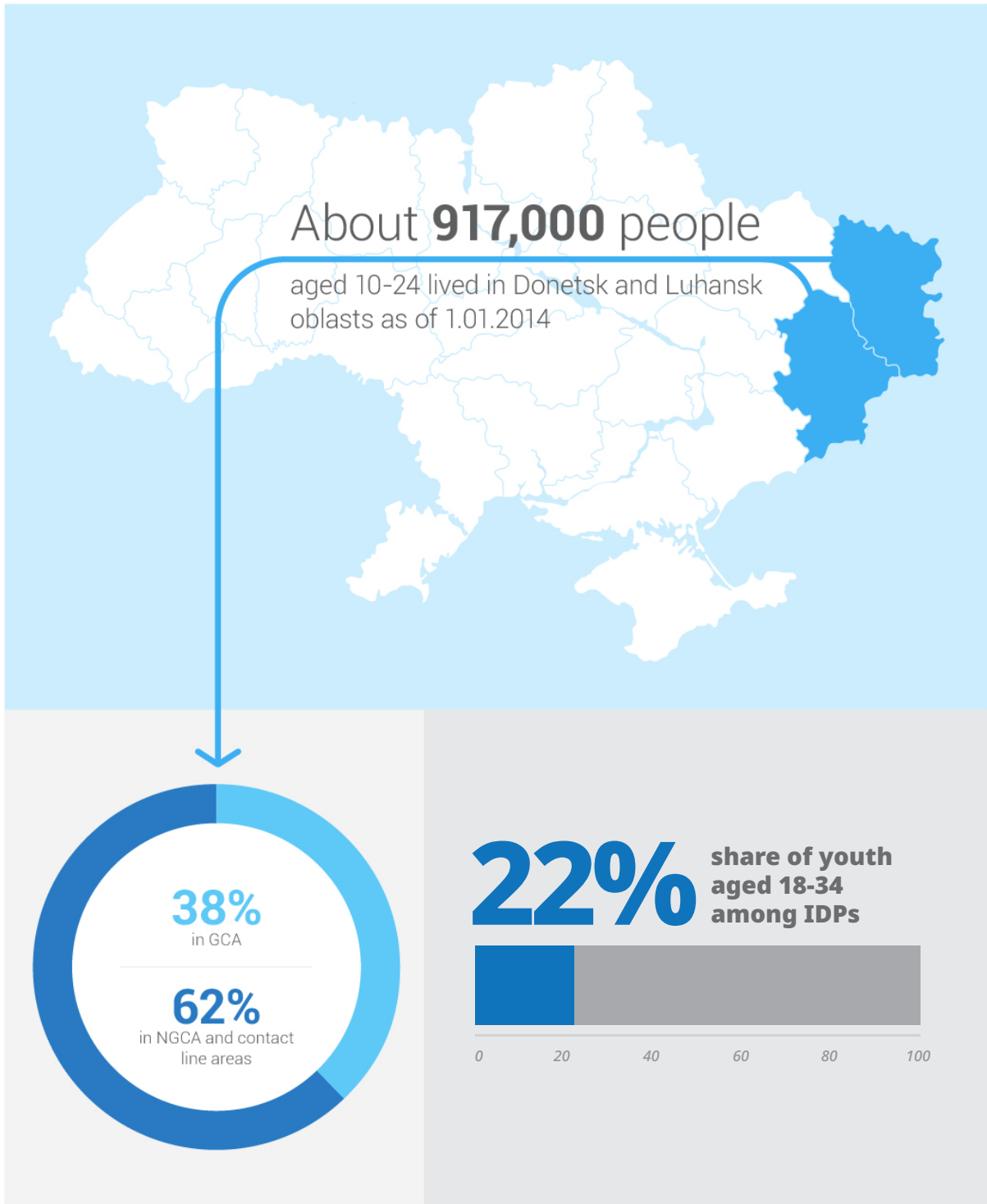


YOUTH AND THE ARMED CONFLICT





Youth directly affected by the armed conflict



Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, GfK Ukraine estimations according to the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution № 1276-p as of 02.12.2015 which defines settlements of GCA and NGCA, National monitoring system report on the situation of internally displaced persons as of June, 2017 (the project is funded by EU and implemented by IOM).



BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

According to the State Statistics Service of Ukraine as of January 1, 2014 about 917,000 people, aged 10-24 lived in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. According to data gathered by GfK Ukraine, 38% of them live in settlements which are now part of the GCA and 62% live in settlements which are currently NGCA or are on the contact line (the demarcation points distinguishing government-controlled areas (GCA) from non-government controlled areas (NGCA))²⁶. Youth aged 18-34 constitute 22% of all IDPs in Ukraine²⁷.

According to the latest thematic report produced by the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) to Ukraine, published in February 2017, the ongoing hostilities infringe on the living conditions of civilians, particularly youth, on both sides of the contact line. Factors impacted include access to; adequate housing, safe drinking water, energy for cooking, heating, lighting, and access to essential medicines and basic health services, including psychological support. Civilians residing along the approximately 500-kilometre-long contact line are significantly affected by the hostilities including the presence of state and non-state armed forces, and the use of heavy weaponry in or near their villages, cities and towns. Additionally, due to the disregard of international human rights and the rules of international humanitarian law, the civilian population, including young people is significantly impacted.

The most vulnerable young people and children in this conflict are those residing closest to the contact line, where access to the rest of the population is hampered by ongoing military activities. As observed by the OSCE SMM, damage to essential infrastructure such as water supply, water treatment facilities, electrical infrastructure and supply networks, as well as the occupation of homes, schools and hospitals and presence of mines and unexploded ordnance (UXO) in agricultural lands have inflicted heavy losses and significant sufferings on the conflict-affected civilian population in this area. Furthermore, the established contact line has isolated and divided communities, distanced residents from public services, disrupted trade and forced young people to relocate in order to continue their studies, find employment, or access basic social, administrative or health-care services [7]. Provision of any services to young people along the contact line is understandably difficult and frequently disrupted, and is not a small-scale problem. On the government-controlled side alone, there are over 54,000 children living within 15 kilometers of the contact line.

Unfortunately, there is no comprehensive data available on the number of young people residing in the area, particularly in NGCA zones. However, with the presence of heavy artillery and UXO these children and young people are exposed to the danger of armed conflict in ways that anyone living beyond this zone do not normally face. In most GCA settlements within five kilometers of the contact line, people are at risk of shelling. Access to underground shelters during shelling varies greatly from location to location, and while most educational facilities in the 5-kilometer zone have basements for children, youth and staff to take shelter; over 20% do not [12].

26 These estimations are based on the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution № 1276-p as of 02.12.2015 which defines settlements of GCA and NGCA.

27 National monitoring system report on the situation of internally displaced persons as of June 2017 (the project is funded by EU and implemented by IOM).



However, it is not only direct exposure to violence that distinguishes this area from territory further from the contact line. Previously mentioned factors stemming from isolation, such as the de facto barrier to movement between the GCA and NGCA, damage to transportation infrastructure and lack of financial resources to flee significantly isolated settlements compound the presence of continuing violent conflict, infrastructure damage, and mined farmland to dramatically increase unemployment among parents and young people. Many settlements now have practically no opportunities for employment outside of government institutions such as schools and medical facilities, as industries have been forced to close. The loss of economic opportunities has continued to disproportionately affect civilians living along the contact line. Damaged or destroyed business buildings and infrastructure, staff layoffs, delayed payment of salaries, combined with a shortage of new employment opportunities has resulted in diminished purchasing power in conflict-affected communities, and especially young people [7]. This high unemployment has deepened monetary poverty and consequently heightened the vulnerability of civilians and young people living along the contact line.

Although a significant number of schools remain closed as a result of the conflict, nearly 15,000 children attend educational facilities within five kilometers of the contact line²⁸. The presence of military installations near schools is of concern, as they may become targets, butting children in constant danger while they are at school [12]. The number of young people who cross the contact line for purposes of education significantly increases during late spring and early summer. Students who study

remotely and reside in NGCA have to cross the contact line to take school exams and independent tests or get their high school diplomas. Based on the experience of those interviewed, it takes more than one trip to complete all the necessary testing [11]. UNICEF assessment identified six different locations where at least 55 children have used unofficial crossing points to cross the contact line in order to access education. The majority of these cases are children crossing from NGCA to GCA, but the opposite also occurs. Most of these routes put children at risk of explosive remnants of war because they pass areas that see frequent shooting and shelling. The second option for children from NGCA to obtain GCA schools' diplomas is to register "externat": a kind of distance enrollment. Through "externat", children are registered with a GCA school and cross the line to take final exams, most notably the university entrance exams [12].

The emotional wounds and trauma of living through more than three years of conflict are an everyday reality for hundreds of thousands of children and teenagers in eastern Ukraine. Due to insufficient financing from the local budgets, the closing, or merging of non-school educational facilities has become more frequent. It is also to be noted that there are no such extracurricular facilities in united territorial communities in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Luhansk oblasts [5].

Indeed, in addition to the aggravating elements already mentioned, young people do not have any decent places to spend their leisure time. They are also unable to access psychological or psychosocial assistance, as the services are not available or accessible in remote areas. Settlements within the five-kilometer zone, especially those that suffer from the ongoing threat of conflict and economic devastation, need safe places for children and

28 More data on the number of educational facilities, children, youth, educators impacted by continuous hostilities can be found in Chapter 2



youth to spend time. Teens are particularly vulnerable in these situations as they are more likely to interact with the military, visit dangerous areas (an increase in risk-taking behavior among teens has been noted by psychologists in all heavily conflict affected areas), and resort to alcohol or substance abuse. Despite this, most communities in this zone have no safe place for adolescents to be, outside of home or school. Interviews with school psychologists and psychologists showed that many children and young people residing in the proximity of the contact line present symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder. Moreover, along the contact line the phenomenon of parents leaving children with grandparents has increased due to the conflict and poverty [12].

Health infrastructures remain largely intact, however, the quality of medical care has deteriorated due to the conflict. Problems include the separation of GCA facilities from major NGCA health centers, isolation of communities from emergency medical treatment, limited access to preventative medicine including vaccines, a precipitous drop in access to HIV testing, a lack of key HIV diagnostics capacity, the reduction of available care at contact line facilities, a small number of facility closures, lack of access to pharmacies, and increased distances and travel times to maternity facilities. These issues have been compounded by environmental changes that put children and their families at greater risk of health problems, ranging from traumatic injuries to infectious diseases such as tuberculosis and influenza. These changes also include physical dangers from the ongoing conflict, damaged heating and water systems, reduced calorie intake and a lack of nutritious food, increased monetary poverty, emotional and psychological trauma and stress, increased prostitution and children and families spending more time in cold, damp, poorly ventilated basements during shelling [12].

In general, the situation in the conflict area is very disadvantageous towards civilian population, particularly young people, residing there. Young people continue to experience undue suffering stemming from violence, insecurity, and imposed restrictions, leading them to become engulfed in poverty and lack access to personal and professional development opportunities.





IDENTIFIED ISSUES AND GAPS

1. One of the main problems identified impacting young people living along the contact line is high unemployment and extreme monetary poverty, which increase their level of vulnerability.

Referring to data produced by the State Employment Service of Ukraine, unemployment among economically active populations is the highest in Donetsk (14.5%) and Luhansk (16.6%) regions (in Ukraine in total it constitutes 9.6%) [8]. No precise data on youth from the Eastern Conflict Area is currently available. According to a survey conducted by GfK Ukraine²⁹, 23% of youth in GCA of Donetsk oblast, and 19% of youth in Luhansk oblast aged 18-34 are forced to economize on food, while in other East and South oblasts these figures constitute 4%-14% [4].

For some young people, this vulnerability has resulted in highly damaging coping mechanisms including reduction in calorie intake, begging, increased alcohol intake and engagement in sex work.

2. Sex work is widespread and cases involving the sexual abuse of schoolgirls under age 18 and even under 16 (the legal age of consent in Ukraine) have been reported by employees at several schools close to the contact line. It is difficult to discuss this issue with school employees and it was only approached in interviews where a degree of openness had already been reached. Of 17

interviews at different schools where this question was raised, eight responded that some of their female students were engaged in such activities. Five other schools said that sex trade involving the sexual abuse of schoolgirls does not occur, but that a few of their older students do have intercourse with soldiers. The most commonly reported locations for such encounters (whether money was involved or not) were near checkpoints and other military installations as well as at local saunas. The most important factors in predicting prevalence appear to be the degree of economic hardship in a given location and the proximity and quantity of military installations. Given the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Donetsk Oblast (especially among sex workers) and the lack of sexual health education in the region, these women and girls are particularly vulnerable and require specialized protection [12].

3. The rate of HIV transmission has also increased as a consequence of growing levels of sex work and displacement among young people. Based on 40 structured interviews with young IDPs (18-24 years), residing in Donetsk and Kyiv regions, the College of Global Public Health found that 20% of interviewed men were HIV-positive. The research also revealed that 30% of women had exchanged sex for goods/services, and condom use rates were low (50% among males and 30% among females). The survey also indicated high rates of PTSD, or PTSD symptoms, among both young men (46%) and women (81%) [1].

²⁹ The presentations and datasets are available via link: <http://imi.org.ua/monitorings/analysis-of-the-media-situation-in-the-southern-and-eastern-regions-of-ukraine-2017/> 2



4. A critical gap lies in the lack of available and accessible psychological and psychosocial services for young people. As mentioned above, PTSD is present among both young women and men. Frequently mentioned sources of trauma among these populations include being in or near explosive blasts, being wounded, seeing dead or badly injured bodies (including those of acquaintances or family) and family separations during evacuations. Commonly reported symptoms include anxiety, night terrors, increases in risk taking behavior, aggression, social withdrawal, depression and panic triggered by being startled by loud noises or unexpected touch (such as a tap on the shoulder) [12].

Those young people who fled from their home and still experienced the effects of the hostilities (shelling, long queues in the checkpoints, witnessing dead or wounded bodies) are considered to go through “double trauma”. First, they have to overcome stressful events, which they experienced when they were living in the conflict-affected areas, and secondly, they accumulate stress, associated with the need to adapt to a new environment [10].

5. The lack of necessary measures to prevent, detect, and respond to children’s involvement in hostilities as well as the lack of procedures for monitoring and allocating responsibility (both in the educational system and in security and law enforcement agencies) have been established as a significant risk factor. At the same time, nearly 40% of students and 72% of teachers reported that they are aware of the participation of persons under 18 in hostilities, 27% of students reported that they would agree to take part in hostilities and 8% of the inter-

viewed representatives of security and law enforcement agencies said they would not prevent the children from becoming involved in the hostilities [2].

Another serious issue, which was observed by the international community and non-governmental organizations, particularly in 2015-2016, was the use of military-patriotic rhetoric to obscure the recruitment and preparation of children and young people into paramilitary troops. Analysis of sources available on the internet suggest that various measures have been taken to promote military-patriotic movements, whose activity is publicized as “the implementation of the state youth policy.” Those processes have become considerably more widespread in the NGCA, however the number of organizations engaged in military-patriotic education has increased in GCA too. In October 2015, the decree of the President of Ukraine approved the Strategy of National-Patriotic Education of Children and Youth for 2016-2020. Besides this, the “Azov Battalion” has established a “Civic Corps” for which teenagers are actively recruited [3]. Furthermore, the OSCE SMM in Ukraine reported that children as young as 15 continue to take part in active combat as part of the combined Russian-separatist forces. Children aged 15 to 17 are actively recruited to participate in militarized youth groups that teach children to carry and use weapons, and those who excel in this training were encouraged to form their own reconnaissance and sabotage groups and begin to fight. A Ukrainian government official reported that one children’s battalion associated with this training program, the St. George the Victor Battalion, may include children as young as 12 [9].





6. Finally, it is important to understand that young people, residing in the eastern conflict area very often lack not only professional and educational opportunities, but also find it difficult to access social, administrative, and healthcare institutions, and they do not have space where to spend leisure time. With the presence of mines and unexploded ordnance in the forests and fields, they cannot simply spend time outdoors. “With only one café, one Wi-Fi place, and not a single cinema, shopping mall, or nightclub, in Shchastya they live like teenagers did 20 years ago” observes a photographer documenting the life of adolescents in the conflict zone [6].



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following measures are recommended for conflict-affected areas:

1. Establishing a monitoring, referral and support system for young people suffering from the conflict. A close monitoring system should be put in place to reveal violations of children's and human rights and a response mechanism (which will include both referral and assistance components) should be introduced. Necessary specialists (social workers, psychologists, police officers, healthcare specialists, other community members) should be trained properly and a joint database for the case management system should be established.
2. Networking, knowledge sharing and cooperation opportunities should be introduced for the most affected young people through their increased involvement in non-formal education opportunities, grant applications, social and business project management and introduction to best practices for youth involvement through travel to neighboring regions of Ukraine.
3. Information campaigns and sensitization sessions about the health of young people should be further conducted. Sensitization sessions about HIV and protected sexual behavior with accurate data on the current state of affairs in Eastern conflict area should take place.
4. Mine risk education sessions should be continued. In addition, it is essential to conduct a campaign on the prohibition of the recruitment of adolescents under 18 to the military. Sensitization sessions should be conducted specifically for teenagers on this topic, as very often they do not know about grave violations against children.
5. Lastly, every school, technical school, and university should have trained specialists who can competently work with young people experiencing psychological trauma or other problems as a consequence of direct or indirect exposure to the conflict,



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