



A VISION OF **RESILIENCE** 2.0

The Human Dimension

Working brief for discussion

"A Vision of Resilience 2.0: The Human Dimension" is a shared vision of civil society representatives. This document was produced in March 2025, at a time when Ukraine is fighting for victory and a just and sustainable peace in the Russian war of attrition against our country.

This document is based on expert discussions organized by the International Renaissance Foundation (IRF) and builds on the experience of civil society organizations. It contains proposals for solutions that can serve as the basis for recommendations for human capital development in Ukraine. We address the "Vision of Resilience 2.0: The Human Dimension" to the Government of Ukraine, local self-governance authorities and international partners.

This vision of a civic agenda does not seek to be comprehensive and does not reflect the position of the entire civil society. It does not contain an exhaustive analysis of the current situation or a complete overview of recovery areas. The document is also not intended for budget planning and does not contain financial calculations.

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The focus of this document is on people as the highest value and active participants in fighting for the future for Ukraine as a successful European democracy. Therefore, the document addresses the following areas:

- strengthening social cohesion in society, (in particular, the integration of internally displaced people (IDPs);
- access to the labor market, in particular for women, IDPs, youth, older people;
- improving the demographic situation, in particular the return of Ukrainians, supporting mobility, creating conditions for families with children;
- reintegration of veterans;
- gender equality;
- reconstruction of critical social infrastructure and improved access to services;
- inclusiveness and a barrier-free environment;
- supporting the development of culture and the protection of cultural heritage.

By human-centered recovery, we mean an approach that puts the needs, experiences, dignity and security of each person at the center. It involves active participation of citizens in planning, decision-making and implementation of policies, ensuring access to quality services and the development of human capital.

Resilience is understood as the ability of individuals, communities, and the state to withstand external shocks, adapt to changes, and maintain functionality in conditions of crisis. It encompasses both infrastructural capabilities and psychological readiness to overcome challenges.

Human capital is understood as a set of knowledge, skills, values, mental and physical health, which ensures a person's ability to actively participate in social and economic life.

The resilience of human capital is both a condition and a key result of an effective and human-centered recovery of Ukraine, as well as part of Ukraine's successful preparation for accession to the European Union. The resilience of human capital includes not only resistance to the armed aggression and adaptability to new conditions, but also the ability to learn, change and develop – in particular, in the context of Ukraine's future EU membership.

In the realities of martial law and changes in the world order, we formulate an optimistic vision of sustainability of human capital in Ukraine as follows: people can achieve their best in their own country; each and every one – regardless of their living circumstances or health conditions – is able to contribute to defending and strengthening Ukraine, its economic, social and cultural life; each and every one can take care of themselves and others and accept help when needed.

Such an understanding of human resilience enables us to formulate a vision of **a human-centered country and community**. It is a country and community where active civic participation is practiced freely at all levels, where security solutions are in line with people's needs and potential, where people are engaged in inclusive decision-making and enjoy barrier-free infrastructure, opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship, established support networks and cohesion mechanisms, and where sustainable institutional practices enable access to education, training, re-skilling, cross-sectoral cooperation and citizens' involvement in making and implementing decisions that affect their lives.

Key challenges and factors of resilience

Security

Despite the war, life goes on. Ukrainians have learned to live and work in the face of a constant security threat. Ukrainians create education spaces in shelters and build small protective structures on the streets of cities to counter drone attacks. While a large share of the state budget and international aid is spent on defense and security, the country still lacks air defense for community protection and critical infrastructure. Communities and the state as a whole still lack capacity to create a system of citizen protection that would correspond to the current level of threats. There is a lack of an effective and understandable system for prioritizing the construction of shelters and proper communication with residents regarding the arrangement of shelters in private houses. Despite the adaptability of the people, this situation can lead to both neglect of security measures and a reduction in social interactions and avoidance of public spaces. Security is a crucial factor for the return of people, enabling the operation of businesses, and the functioning of the economy.

Human rights, justice, and a human-centered approach

Successful recovery includes recognizing the inherent dignity, equity, and freedom of every human being, regardless of their background, status, gender, health condition, or life circumstances. In the context of human-centered recovery, this means recognizing the growing demand for justice in the society, developing policies focused on people's needs, creating conditions for participation in decision-making, transparency of state actions, and accountability of the authorities. An open society values pluralism of opinion, gender equality, inclusion and minority rights, supports freedom of expression and a culture of dialogue. Communities built on such foundations are more resilient: they are able to resist polarization, mobilize people around the values of solidarity and justice, and effectively protect the rights of the most vulnerable.

Governance and democracy

The key to sustainability is a political culture of governance based on interaction, engagement and cooperation. An effective model involves bringing together various actors, including representatives of service providers, business, defense, and civil society, into coalitions that also include vulnerable groups: people with disabilities, youth, women, IDPs, and war veterans.

Resilient democracy means, primarily, inclusiveness of the decision-making process and accountability of institutions. Ways to ensure inclusion involve participatory advisory bodies, such as IDP councils, youth councils, veterans advisers, and others. Accountability of public authorities is based on transparent decision-making procedures, informing residents and constant communication with them.

Institutional architecture

Resilience involves the balance between centralized and decentralized approaches to governance. Municipalities need more space for flexibility in decision-making and a clear division of responsibility for security and social infrastructure. Effectiveness grows significantly if there are platforms for cross-sectoral interactions that enable identifying the needs of various sectors, uniting their capacity to implement solutions and shaping consistent communication within and outside a community.

Self-reliance and social cohesion

Resilience is largely based on the ability of individuals, groups and communities to make their own decisions and ensure their own well-being. This includes developing sustainable horizontal links that allow for the exchange of experiences, knowledge, resources, and mutual support.

The communities' self-reliance also involves shaping an economic model of resilience built on local entrepreneurship with a full production cycle. Such communities are less dependent on external aid; they recover faster after crises and can better adapt to changes.

Proposed solutions for the human dimension of resilience and human-centered recovery

Strengthening social cohesion in society

- Develop **infrastructure and programs of psychological support, proper training of specialists in the field of mental health and related areas** (social work, primary medical care, educators), supporting them with evidence-based interventions that are based on neurobiology but at the same time do not require specialized medical or psychological education and, therefore, may be quickly scaled up (e.g., the Community Resiliency Model, CRM®). Identification of an individual's psychological status, body literacy, building self-regulation skills, and management of emotions should be integrated into the education system. Use evidence-based and accessible methods that have already proven their effectiveness in Ukraine.
- **Create and develop safe and inclusive public spaces for citizens' interaction. Strengthen the capacity of public institutions to recognize, moderate, and resolve conflict in a timely manner.** Create and support community centers, hubs, which will include educational, cultural and dialogue events, as well as provide opportunities to participate in recovery and volunteering. Such centers will provide a space for reflection and learning through practical activities, and enable people to gain agency and fulfillment. This is especially important for frontline and transitional communities.
- **Introduce mediation programs and train specialists to implement them.** Create an environment for dialogue, non-violent conflict resolution, inter-regional and inter-group understanding. This will help to avoid polarized attitudes, develop critical and strategic thinking.
- **Create programs for adolescents and young people** that include empowering young people, including them in the Ukrainian labor market, support for youth volunteering, participation in community-based reconstruction and recovery programs of communities.

- **Create an ecosystem for human development**, in particular through the expansion of opportunities for amateur culture as a source of resilience and a tool for building social connections. Provide equipment for hubs, cultural centers and community centers; support crafts; educate and up-skill cultural managers, teachers, educators who are able to bring a fresh impetus to art education in schools and work with adults. Create opportunities to participate in cultural life, as a way to contribute to strengthening local identity, the integration of IDPs, and rethinking of historical experiences, in particular those related to the war.
- **Enhance dialogue practices** through developing curricula, integrating them into education, changing approaches to teaching literature and language – not as technical absorption of books and rules, but as tools for comprehension and reflection. Strengthen systematic engagement with pedagogical educational institutions to train specialists.
- **Strengthen support for the teaching community as a critical resource for the resilience of students and their parents.** Such support should include: updating approaches to teaching technologies, supervision, implementing competency-based learning that includes practice-oriented tasks and modern methods of interaction, integrating mental health knowledge and project management tools into the professional development of teachers and school administrators, and creating a framework for training and retraining with adequate remuneration, which is a critical investment in the resilience of not only teachers but also young people.
- **Develop policies aimed at maintaining connection with the temporarily occupied territories**, including ensuring access to education and recognition of qualifications obtained in the occupied territories.
- **Create community-based social housing and housing support programs.** Housing is a basic need of IDPs. It will become even more relevant during the recovery period. People will work where housing is available to them. Support for inclusive audit of the housing stock, availability of housing, good governance, and increased transparency of the housing market will contribute to better integration of IDPs, job creation and better inclusion of people with disabilities through the expansion of the range of social services.

Access to the labor market, in particular for women,

IDPs, youth, senior people

- **Support and strengthen infrastructure and programs for adult education, re-skilling, as well as modernization of employment centers.** In particular, recovery plans should include opening and supporting re-skilling and adult education centers. Such centers can be created and equipped within existing educational institutions, such as vocational schools and colleges. Provide for up-skilling and support for adult education specialists; foster interaction between re-skilling centers, businesses, local employers and local self-governance bodies. The objective is to identify key competencies and launch short-term reskilling and up-skilling programs with a flexible schedule. Consultations with social workers are also necessary to involve people with disabilities and senior people in training and retraining.
- **Promote re-skilling courses for women** in professions that are traditionally considered as "male" and in which there is currently a shortage of workforce. Help reduce the impact of gender stereotypes regarding the employment of women in such professions.
- **Engage international partners** to use their experience and resources to create reskilling courses, in particular for women, migrants, youth, and people with disabilities.
- **Develop a career counseling system** covering young people and also all other age groups.
- **Invest resources in the development of social infrastructure**, especially child and elderly care services, to support and realize the right of women, in particular IDPs, to have employment. Social infrastructure should include improved access to preschool education, quality transport, day care and supported accommodation for people with disabilities, as well as social services provided by NGOs, charitable organizations and individual entrepreneurs, with the support of grant programs.
- **Develop and implement voucher training programs**, grant opportunities for women, youth and people 50+ to support those willing to start a small business.

- **Work with employers to make workplaces more inclusive:** create conditions that will help as many people as possible enter the labor market, provide support for programs for professionals who are able to adapt the workplace to the needs of people with disabilities, plan an inclusive workspace and purchase the necessary equipment.
- **Adapt legislation** to attract young people aged 15+ to the labor market in order to gain work experience. Inform employers on how to work with adolescents and young people.
- **Create opportunities for young people to succeed economically in Ukraine** through grant programs, mentoring, training, career counseling, partnerships with employers, and flexible schedules. Encourage businesses to invest resources in cooperation with universities to create relevant internship programs, or programs that include both study and work. Invest in vocational education institutions, make them more modern, prestigious and relevant to the needs of the market and recovery.

Improving the demographic situation, including the return of Ukrainians and migration

People will return to the communities of Ukraine from various places: from the war, from safe communities to the de-occupied areas, and from abroad. Communities must be prepared for each type of return. To facilitate that,

- **Implement a systematic and strategic approach to safety in communities:** determine the types of shelters needed, create safe public spaces for social interaction, ensure that the basic needs of local residents (energy, food security, water supply) are met, in particular in de-occupied communities, to enable the safe return of people.
- **Create opportunities for people in Ukraine:** support the system of life-long learning; encourage interaction with employers to understand their needs, such as housing, decent wages, on-the-job training, flexible schedules, and medical guarantees.

- **Do research and develop appropriate policies** aimed at improving the regulation of the immigration process, taking into account the needs and priorities of Ukraine's recovery.
- **Ensure the availability and support of social, educational and health care infrastructure.** Flexible and adaptable kindergartens and primary schools in multifunctional spaces, mobile social and health services are essential for improving the quality of life in remote and frontline communities.
- **Provide data and analysis** on structural unemployment, opportunities for retraining, involvement of citizens aged 50+, people with disabilities, and war veterans in economic activity. Resume the publication of unemployment data by the State Statistics Service.
- **Develop and implement programs for the return of students and young professionals,** in particular in partnership with universities and communities. This includes supporting the social mission of universities: to engage students in community work, form alliances of universities, improve access to funding, support universities to attract specialists from abroad, facilitate sharing of expertise and provide enabling funding for flexible solutions for sustainable development. Develop mechanisms that will enable children who took their school tuition abroad to access higher education institutions of Ukraine.
- **Formulate a policy to support families with children,** in particular, by financing an affordable care infrastructure, reasonable benefits (if necessary), development of infrastructure and services for children and families, decently paid jobs for parents, affordable reproductive health services, recruitment and support of foster families, and economic opportunities. Stimulate an equal distribution of responsibilities within a family.
- **Establish and strengthen communication between communities and their diaspora** – not only through centralized channels, but also by informing about opportunities in Ukraine and by disseminating examples of resilience.

- **Implement policies to support internal mobility of citizens.** People have the opportunity to live and work where there are jobs. This involves taking into account the needs of communities, the interests and culture of employers, the potential for local human capital development, the availability of housing in communities, functioning transport and social infrastructure.
- **Actively involve citizens in decision-making** – to ensure real democratic influence, openness and accountability of the authorities, transparency and overcoming nepotism.
- **Create an effective system for maintaining ties with Ukrainians abroad.** Each community can maintain communication with "their" people in order to better understand conditions for their possible return and create opportunities to attract voices in support of Ukraine. Support and introduce partnership mechanisms between communities in Ukraine and the EU member states.

Reintegration of veterans

The reintegration of veterans involves not only preparing society for their return, but also the ability to work with veterans, understand the sequence and mechanisms for meeting their needs, motivate them for active participation, and ensure that veterans have a proper quality of life after coming back from the war.

For the effective reintegration of veterans it is important to:

- **Ensure that there are clear policies, a management system, and capacity to work with veteran issues.**
- **Build a functioning system for training managers** to work and to effectively communicate with veterans.
- **Strengthen the capacity of public institutions and relevant CSOs to assess veterans' and their families' needs and to provide integrated and consistent support,** from recovery and rehabilitation to employment, in particular through mobile professional support groups.

- **Create an appropriate system of healthcare and medical rehabilitation**, including the availability of services through inter-municipal cooperation, regional and state programs.
- Prepare businesses to work with veterans, including by providing adaptive workplaces and work schedules, and updating corporate social responsibility programs.
- **Create and develop programs of psychosocial support** for veterans and their families.
- **Ensure inclusion of veterans into existing services**, including the unpaid legal aid system.
- **Strengthen the participation of veterans in public spaces** – in hubs, community centers, as well as in advisory bodies to the authorities.
- **Invest resources in the development and support** of veteran and veteran-family entrepreneurship.

Economic resilience

Ensuring Ukraine's economic resilience and recovery requires a strategic vision of the value of human capital and a systematic, integrated approach at all levels for sustainable economic development. To achieve this:

- **Support the development** of investment plans, proposals and opportunities, **improve access to resources** for starting a business, support entrepreneurial and creative thinking.
- **Enhance effective engagement with relocated businesses.** In many communities, relocation of enterprises has not brought the expected benefits. It is important to integrate businesses into the community, facilitate access to human capital and build the local economy.
- **Invest in platforms and opportunities to support small and medium-sized businesses:** business incubators, accelerators, access to low-risk loans, mentoring support, grants, and microloans to start a business.

- **Support the implementation of infrastructure projects**, such as industrial parks, that create jobs and provide access to production facilities (not just tax breaks).
- **Develop an effective and understandable public investment management system at all levels** to enable attracting financial resources, shaping policies for prioritizing investment projects, ensuring access to quality data and inclusive investment decision-making. Strengthen the capacity of communities and local self-governance bodies to formulate recovery and development strategies and plans, attract and effectively use the funding necessary for implementation.
- **Stimulate the development of a local business ecosystem** that covers the entire chain of economic activity – from production to processing, product marketing and consumption.
- **Use a cluster approach** to develop and maintain communities' economic capacity.

Equality and inclusion

Women, especially women aged 45+, are among the most vulnerable and at the same time a powerful and broad multifunctional social group that has a high potential for human capital for both economic and social activities. It is essential that society supports and develops the value of gender equality. In order to achieve that:

- **Support the implementation of gender-sensitive budgeting and policy analysis** through the lens of gender equality.
- **Enhance women's participation** in decision-making processes.
- **Improve access to resources and support for women's and family entrepreneurship** with the help of training, retraining, information campaigns, mentoring programs, grants and soft loans.
- **Invest in childcare infrastructure** (kindergartens, leisure centers, non-formal education), create safe spaces for women in communities.
- **Support** women's leadership development programs.

- Dedicate special attention and resources **to work with girls and youth**. Promote STEM qualifications among girls, counter gender stereotypes about girls in STEM.

Build adequate policies to support people with disabilities, including veterans:

- **Rethink the concept of health as an opportunity** for the holistic development of each individual, taking into account their needs – through information campaigns and engaging with employers.
- **Invest in the barrier-free** public infrastructure and jobs, adaptation of transport, and spatial planning.
- **Adapt services and public spaces** to the needs of people with disabilities.
- **Support inclusive decision-making practices**, in particular through the work of advisory bodies, advisors, develop competencies of local council officials to represent citizens and advocate for their interests.
- **Create conditions and make efforts to overcome cultural barriers**, in particular for the integration of people from outside the community. Pay special attention to national minorities as an integral part of the Ukrainian political nation.

Culture and Cultural Heritage

Cultural heritage is a source of identity and sustainability. However, for many communities, maintaining and developing it is a financial burden. Preservation of cultural heritage requires a strategic vision, as well as the state and international support mechanisms. To achieve this:

- **Preserve and secure cultural heritage sites**. Include the rescue of cultural heritage into strategic and operational security measures at the national and community levels.
- **Integrate knowledge about local cultural heritage** into the general education system.

- **Train cultural managers as co-creators of change**, support the creation of maps of cultural products, heritage sites, craftsmen and artists.
- **Invest in creation** of inclusive and accessible cultural spaces in communities.
- **Support the development of project and cross-sectoral cooperation** in the cultural sphere.
- **Provide support and resources for** research in the field of memory, the formation of new commemoration practices, in particular taking into account the experiences of war.
- **Foster interdisciplinary interactions** of urbanists, architects, historians, anthropologists, sociologists and culture actors.
- **Provide support and resources** to shape memory policies and strengthen institutions that preserve cultural heritage.
- **Ensure comprehensive implementation of *the build forward*** principle – communities need to see and shape their future through culture.
- **Integrate knowledge about Ukrainian cultural heritage into the European knowledge system** through international cooperation, research, academic courses and publications.

Solutions for Governance and Democratic Participation

- **Involve civil society organizations** in defining clear goals and key results, develop projects that combine "hard" and "soft" elements of recovery; invest in local project implementation capacity and ensure robust monitoring and evaluation within ongoing projects.
- **Create and support platforms for direct cooperation between Ukrainian communities and EU communities** (city-to-city, school-to-school formats, etc.); rethink twinning programs.

- **Disseminate successful practices of cooperation between municipalities;** create platforms for dissemination of such practices and exchange of learning.
- **Involve local specialists** in the provision of expertise and implementation of local projects, invest in the creation of a wide network of project implementation offices at the community level.
- **Establish a mechanism for assessing and building local capacity** to absorb significant national and international financial resources.
- **Use technical assistance resources** to ensure effective local governance and sustainability.
- **Support practical solutions and recovery projects adapted to the needs of specific communities and communities** that meet the needs and integration of several key groups at the same time: women, youth, veterans, local small businesses.
- **Implement modern tools for transparent and responsible communication** in communities, at the national and international levels.
- **Develop mechanisms of public-private partnership,** involvement of business in strategic planning and implementation of policies.
- **Invest in sustainable and environmentally friendly recovery,** in particular through implementation of energy-efficient projects at the community level, support and availability of resources for the transition to the use of renewable energy sources, including accumulation systems.
- **Strengthen conflict management skills** at the local level, identify and prevent tensions, invest resources in the development of social cohesion tools. Make decision-making inclusive and take into account the interests of all key social groups, including war veterans, IDPs, youth, and women.
- **Invest in development of strategic thinking and adaptive management:** communities must have a vision and development scenarios.

- **Enhance the adaptability of local governments to new conditions and response to crises** – through the practice of effective feedback mechanisms, training, flexible procedures, prompt and inclusive decision-making.
- **Strengthen the accessibility of basic social infrastructure** (education, healthcare, social services), especially in frontline zones – in particular, through mobile integrated services.
- **Support the creation of project offices and international cooperation departments in communities** for effective interaction with foreign partners, donors, investors.
- **Improve the access of communities and civil society organizations to various types of resources for recovery projects**, in particular through the creation of financial instruments that meet the needs of communities, the development of blended financing (grants, opportunities to generate income that will be reinvested in recovery work, incentives for private investors), the launch of public funding funds for communities in accordance with national priorities.



These proposals are an invitation to joint action for all those who create the recovery of Ukraine: the authorities, communities, public organizations, the private sector, and international partners.

We are building a country where human dignity is not a compromise, but the basis of resilience, successful recovery and future integration into the European Union.

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