



**USAID** | **UKRAINE**  
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# UKRAINE CONFIDENCE BUILDING INITIATIVE

**SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT  
AUGUST 2015 – JANUARY 2016**

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# ACRONYMS

ATO	Anti-Terrorist Operation
AUC	Association of Ukrainian Cities
CEUME	Consortium for Enhancement of Ukrainian Management Education
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DPR	Donetsk People's Republic
EU	European Union
FMR	Final Monitoring Report
FPEC	Free People Employment Center
GCAs	Government-controlled areas
GOU	Government of Ukraine
GDP	gross domestic product
GMU	grants management unit
IDP	internally displaced person
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT	information technology
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine
MP	Member of Parliament
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NGCAs	non-government controlled areas
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
SBI	State Bureau of Investigation
SBU	State Security Service of Ukraine
TEC	Territorial Election Commission
UCBI	Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative
UCSD	Ukrainian Center for Social Data
UKROP	Ukrainian Association of Patriots
URC	Union of Responsible Citizens
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHRMMU	United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched the Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI) in July 2014 in response to the socio-political upheaval facing the country in the wake of the Euro-Maidan Revolution, Russia's attempted annexation of Crimea, and the mass displacement of people caused by a Russian instigated armed conflict in the country's East. Given this context, the Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI) was established to complement ongoing USAID efforts to support a successful democratic transition and promote national cohesion in the wake of the conflict in the East.

During the period of August 2015 – January 2016, UCBI maintained the same geographic and operational footprint, continuing to operate in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kyiv, and the liberated territories of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts, supported by three GMUs, two based in Kyiv and one based in Kharkiv. This fall, UCBI conducted geographic assessments of three locations: Mariupol, Odesa, and liberated areas of Luhansk. Based on this assessment, UCBI plans to initiate new programming in Mariupol and southern Donetsk and ramp up efforts in Luhansk, using existing GMU resources, in the coming year.

UCBI assistance comes in the form of small, in-kind grants (goods, services, and technical support) and fixed amount awards to a range of partners, including national and local civilian government entities, civil society organizations, and community leaders. UCBI provides targeted assistance in order to:

- Strengthen capacity of vulnerable local communities to manage tensions exacerbated by the conflict in the East;
- Increase constructive engagement between government and citizens in vulnerable communities;
- Promote resilience to divisive and biased information by improving the reach and capacity of regional media.

### UCBI Program Areas

As a result of the Strategic Review Session (SRS) conducted by the project team in October 2015, UCBI updated and streamlined its strategic framework in order to incorporate lessons learned and remain responsive to evolving contextual needs. During the reporting period, the revised framework served as basis for program level analysis, monitoring, and evaluation. The framework prioritizes the following program areas by region:

- Reduce tensions and frustrations around limited resources in conflict-affected communities (*Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv*)
- Promote unity and productive engagement between citizens in divided communities (*Luhansk, Donetsk, Mariupol*)
- Promote social inclusion of vulnerable groups in conflict-affected communities (*Dnipropetrovsk*)

- Support members of local government to demonstrate reform (*Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk Luhansk*)
- Increased civic engagement in issues of local governance and implementation of national reform processes (*Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Mariupol*)
- Increased consumption of diverse and balanced sources of information (*Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv, Mariupol*)
- Increased capacity of regional media to produce useful, demand-driven news and information for local audiences (*Kharkiv, Northern Donetsk, Luhansk, Mariupol*)

## UKRAINE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COUNTRY CONTEXT

### *Constitutional Reform*

Constitutional amendments promoting decentralization by increasing regional and local authority were adopted at the first Parliament reading on August 31, 2015. The amendments provide for the transfer of authority and greater autonomy to the non-government controlled areas (NGCAs) of Donetsk and Luhansk. The decentralization legislation will create a special law on local government in these territories. This provision triggered deadly clashes near Verkhovna Rada (Parliament), in which three national guardsmen died and approximately 100 members of the police and National Guard were injured. The implementation of this decentralization law was a key element of the Minsk II Peace Agreement. The final adoption of the law requires a constitutional majority of MPs (at least 300 votes) at the second reading, scheduled for after the October 25, 2015 local elections.

### *Local Elections on October 25, 2015*

On October 25, 2015, local elections were held across Ukraine. The elections were not conducted in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol, and NGCAs of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Results indicated that the parties currently in power have lost ground; meanwhile, opposition forces, including members of the pre-Maidan political elite, are slowly regaining their positions. The governing coalition had a strong electoral showing in western and parts of central Ukraine. Voters in southern and eastern Ukraine showed robust support for the Opposition Bloc, which includes former members of the Party of Regions. Voter turnout was lower than in the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) underscored “the complexity of the legal framework, the dominance of powerful economic groups, threats and physical attacks against candidates, and the fact that virtually all campaign coverage in the media was paid for” as factors demonstrating that further electoral reform in Ukraine is needed. Overall, the OSCE indicated that the election process was “respected.”

### *Ceasefire & Implementation of the Minsk Agreement*

On August 26, 2015 the Government of Ukraine (GoU) and leaders of the separatist forces agreed to implement a ceasefire. In October, OSCE monitors confirmed that both sides were withdrawing smaller weapons and tanks as well as heavy artillery. The fragile ceasefire was broken in November when fighting was reported in the Donetsk region, despite claims from both sides of withdrawing weapons. During the latest talks in December 2015, leaders from Russia, Ukraine, Germany, and France agreed to extend the deadline for the implementation of the Minsk Agreement into 2016. On January 18, 2016 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine (MFA) issued a statement that despite the cease-fire agreed to during the recent meeting of the Trilateral Contact Group, the number of armed provocations against Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) forces along the contact line continues to grow.

## **Dnipropetrovsk**

### *Local Elections: Opposition between former Party of Regions and Pro-Kolomoiskii Powers*

Dnipropetrovsk was one of the most contested areas in the 2015 local elections because of the clash between Oleksandr Vilkul, leader of the Opposition Bloc (former Party of Regions), and Borys Filatov, one of the leaders of the Ukrainian Association of Patriots (UKROP) party. Voters were divided almost equally between the two candidates, who are well known in the region. During the first round of elections, Mr. Vilkul was favored with a 2 percent

advantage; however, Mr. Filatov won the second round with 53 percent of votes. The Dnipropetrovsk City Council, composed of an equal number of pro-democratic and opposition party members, challenged Mr. Filatov's victory. While the elections divided the electorate, the new mayor and his team have reached across the divide in an effort to implement future key reforms.

## **Zaporizhzhia**

### *Separatist Activity*

During the reporting period, some incidents of separatist activity were reported in Zaporizhzhia city. In September, Zaporizhzhia entrepreneurs declared their support for special ecological status of Zaporizhzhia as in recognition of the region's polluted environment. Currently, a significant portion of the ecological tax paid by enterprises for pollution goes to Kyiv. With the special ecological status, Zaporizhzhia will be able to retain 70% of ecological tax proceeds in the local budget. Journalists reported the participants of public gatherings to support special status of the city were paid for taking part in the event. Moreover, the same demonstration near Verhovna Rada was organized by a pro-Russian activist. The Zaporizhzhia Oblast Council appealed to the President and Parliament to give special status to the region in connection with the environmental situation. Some saw these events as attempts to establish Zaporizhzhia People's Republic. Petro Poroshenko denied Zaporizhzhia special status as it is not allowed by the Constitution.

## **Kharkiv**

### *Incumbent Mayor Wins Local Elections After Contentious, Unpredictable Campaign*

The incumbent Kharkiv Mayor, Gennadiy Kernes, and his Vidrodzhennia party won elections for the mayor's office and city council. Mr. Kernes, a controversial figure who is embroiled in allegations of corruption and a criminal case alleging human rights abuses during the Maidan protests, won the election in the first round with 60 percent of the votes. In the lead-up to the election, there were several incidents and provocations, in which far-right groups that oppose Mr. Kernes disrupted public events and city council meetings.

## **Donbass**

Voter turnout for the local elections GCAs of Donbas was low in comparison to other regions. Representatives of old guard politics won mayoral and city council elections in most locations. Representatives of reformist parties also gained some key council seats. Elections in Mariupol and Krasnoarmeysk were postponed due to controversies in printing of ballots and the inability of local election bodies to overcome party disputes.

The United Nations Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (UN HRMMU) reported 178 civilian casualties (47 deaths and 131 injured) between August and November 2015. The ceasefire that went into effect on September 1, 2015 has brought relief for civilians in areas close to the 'contact line,' both in government and non-government controlled areas. They continue to experience limited access to basic services, movement restrictions and severe security concerns. Social payments and banking services have been disrupted since November 2014 as a result of government decisions.

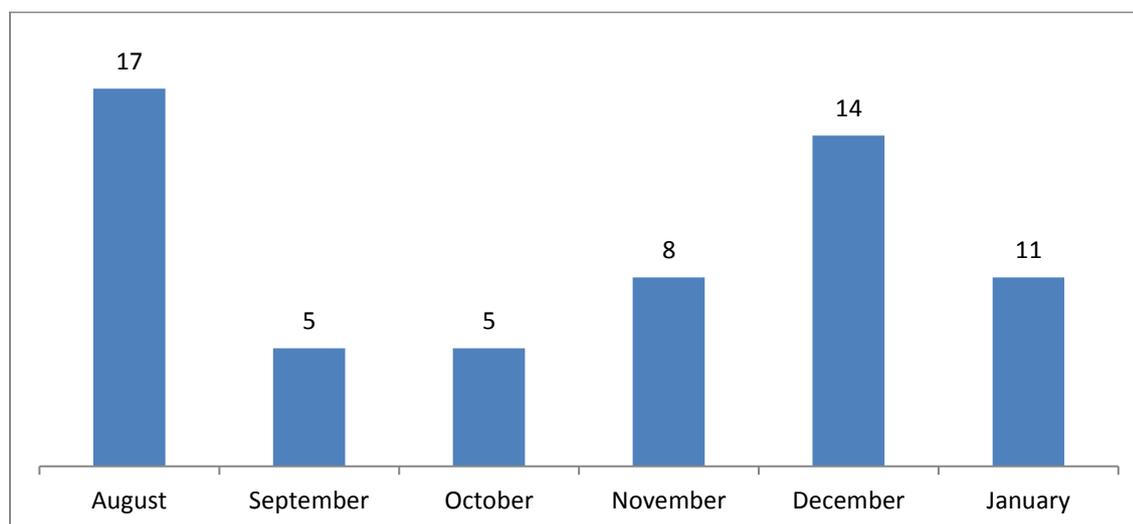
In November 2015, it is estimated that 550,000 people crossed the 'contact line' through five official checkpoints. The number of reported crossings increased to nearly 700,000 in December. While the GoU has enacted measures to deal with the IDP crisis, such as setting

up an electronic system for IDPs to obtain passes, increasing the number of staff, and expanding some of the crossing points, the situation remains critical.

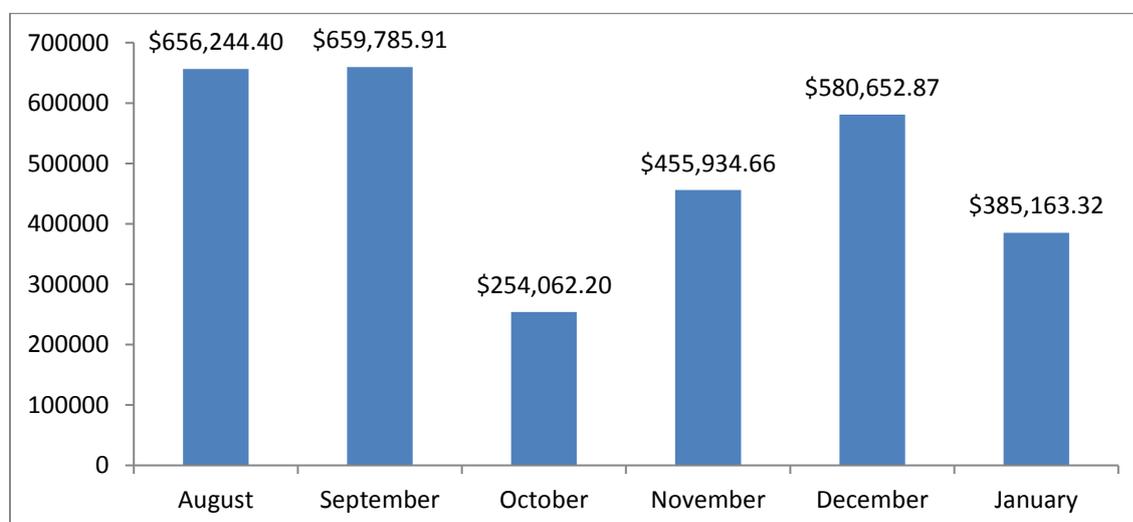
## GRANTS SUMMARY

Between August 1, 2015 and January 31, 2016, UCBI funded a total of 58 activities, including cleared and completed grants, short-term technical assistance (STTA), and direct distribution of goods and services (DDGS), for a committed total of \$3,071.806.36

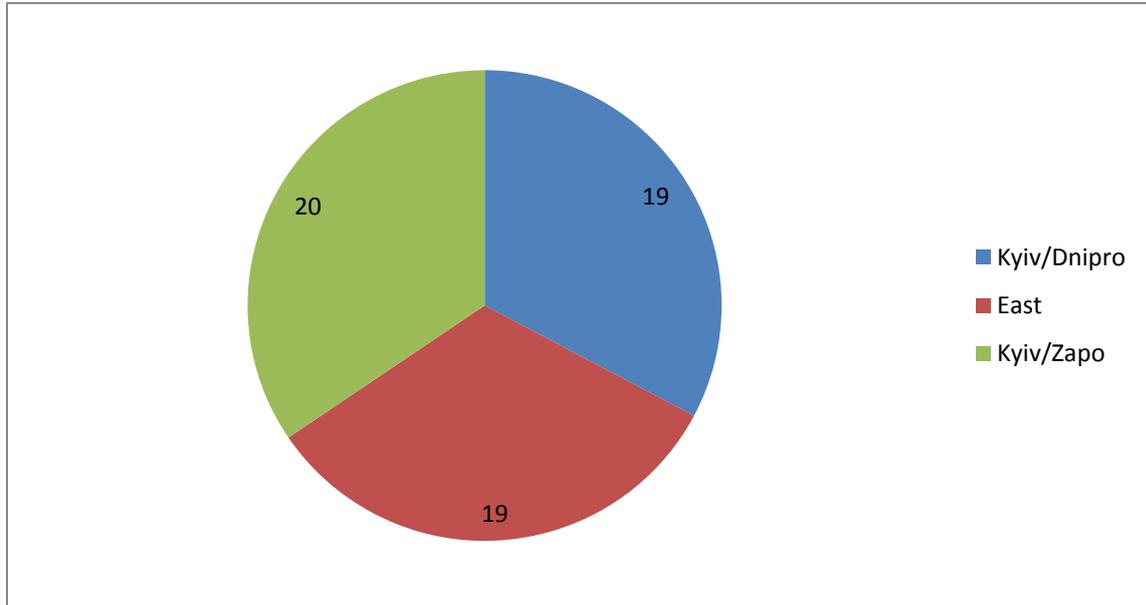
### Number of grants cleared during August 2015 - January 2016



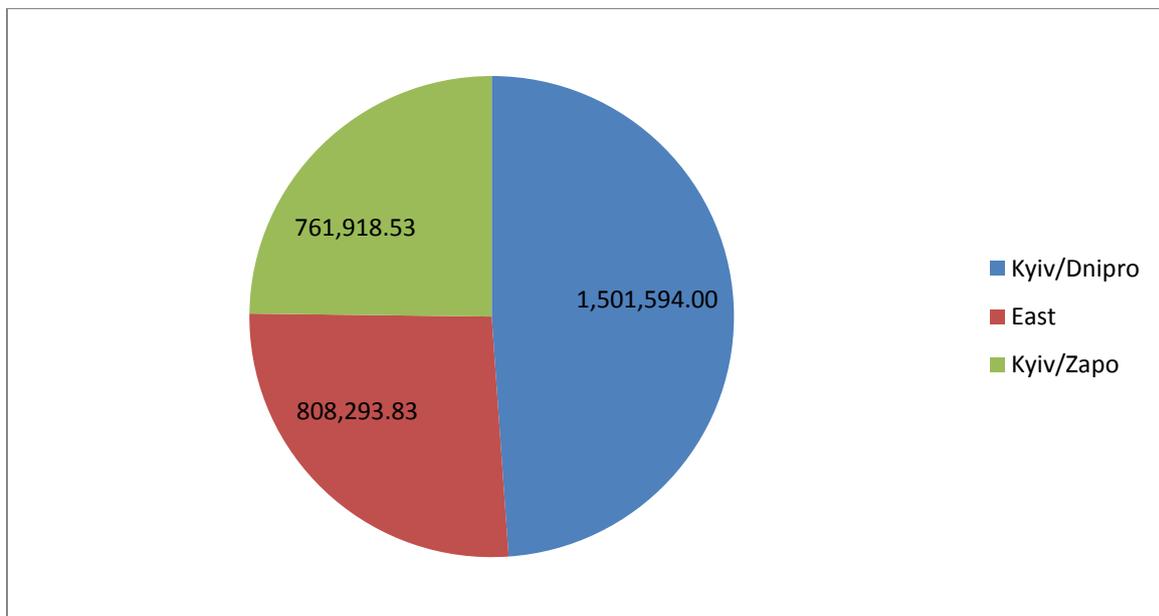
### Dollar amount of grants cleared per month, August 2015 - January 2016



**Number of grants cleared by GMU, August 2015 - January 2016**



**Dollar amount of grants cleared per month by GMUs**



## ACTIVITY HIGHLIGHTS

During the reporting period, UCBI continued to address the ongoing political crisis through the design and implementation of strategic assistance and partnerships at the local and national levels. UCBI works in Eastern Ukraine, focusing on population centers in the regions close to the conflict area, which have been targeted by external aggression. The program continues to implement activities in Kharkiv Oblast, the liberated areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, and Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia Oblasts. During the reporting period, UCBI issued grants to 58 partners – NGOs, civic initiatives, state and local authorities, community leaders – at the international, national, and local levels. UCBI activities illustrating its impact under the program’s three objectives are highlighted below.

### **Objective 1: Increased capacity of vulnerable local communities to manage tensions exacerbated by the conflict in the East**

Long standing political and cultural tensions continue to be exacerbated by the ongoing conflict and reform process. Local elections revealed pro-reform groups are still in the minority in much of the East, and the large number of IDPs hosted in regions bordering Donbas threatens to create social instability, upset the political balance and create resentment toward the state. To mitigate these threats, UCBI has implemented activities to enhance unity and increase the social, economic and political inclusion of people who have been affected by the conflict.

*Promoting economic integration.* Regions like Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia are hosting large numbers of displaced persons and have been affected by the negative economic downturn caused by the conflict. Lack of economic opportunities creates frustration among residents makes it difficult for IDPs to integrate into host communities, creating social distance between and potential community tensions.

In close cooperation with two co-working centers in Kharkiv, UCBI held basic and advanced courses in web design and computer programming for more than 100 IDPs in an effort to improve their employability. In addition, UCBI supported the establishment of two computer labs and a training space strengthening the centers’ capacity to conduct IT training and offer free courses to IDPs and ATO veterans.

UCBI’s support to a co-working center in Kharkiv helped provide opportunities for IDPs to build capacity in entrepreneurship, business development and IT and gain access to a computer lab and information resources. Assistance provided to the center targeted 300 IDP entrepreneurs, ATO veterans businesses and activists to strengthen their resiliency and promote community cohesion. Beneficiaries gained access to employment opportunities at the computer lab and participated in cultural events held at the center.

In an effort to improve the social environment in one of the cities affected by conflict, UCBI assisted a grantee in December 2015 to establish a center in Zaporizhzhia where citizens can pursue professional development and receive specialized training, coaching, and mentoring. The direct beneficiaries, including start-up leaders and IDPs in Zaporizhzhia, will participate in a series of training programs and networking events aiming to enhance employment opportunities, small business development, business/community networking, and entrepreneurial activities. This space will help build the participants' capacity to secure

employment, foster civic activism, and generate interest in pursuing small business opportunities.

*Social and political inclusion of conflict affected groups.* As discussed, the inability of IDPs to productively participate in political and social life of their new communities also creates potentially destabilizing tensions in the vulnerable communities in which UCBI works. To mitigate these challenges, and support active citizen efforts, UCBI aims to professionalize and sustain IDP-support organizations. Over the course of reporting period, the project successfully launched cooperation and continues to support NGOs, professional associations, and public sector initiatives that work to support IDPs.

Project support to the Kharkiv branch of an NGO, provided from September to December 2015, resulted in the delivery of a series of trainings on eleven subjects for 30 volunteers and other IDP service providers, including ten constant and ten rotating trainees from Kharkiv NGOs and initiative groups. Training participants were dedicated IDP service providers, who face emotional stress while working in difficult conditions with people at the front line and vulnerable groups with psychological traumas. The aim of training program was to equip them with the knowledge and skills to not only recognize and care for symptoms of emotional burnout and other psychological effects, but also aspects of work efficiency and knowledge sharing. UCBI outsourced experts to deliver trainings on the following topics: effective communication, emotional intelligence, tolerant communication, time management and self-organization, emotional burnout and ways to overcome it, effective team building, networking, work with victims of violence, anti-discrimination, assertive behavior, and management of volunteer organizations. Representatives of five NGOs and initiative groups throughout Kharkiv had their experts trained and certified in peer-support and mentorship.

A UCBI grantee delivered Do No Harm<sup>1</sup> (DNH) training in January 2015 and developed a pool of 25 master trainers on peace building approaches in eastern Ukraine. The political and cultural differences of volunteers and the people they are helping, often intensify the community tensions UCBI is working to address.

The 75 trainees increased their knowledge and developed skills necessary to mitigate violence and influence attitudes and perceptions about people on either side of the conflict in accordance with the Do No Harm approach. Key stakeholders working in UCBI's target regions participated in the training during the period of August 2015 – January 2016.

As the promotion of a consolidated program of coordination, assistance and information sharing to promote the social and political inclusion of IDPs was a priority for UCBI during this period, the program supported the establishment of a nation-wide IDP service hub. UCBI and a coalition of organizations created a 'one-stop-shop' for IDPs in Kyiv. The IDP Hub provides a common platform for post-Maidan volunteer organizations and the Ministry of Social policy of Ukraine to consolidate and coordinate efforts to ensure quality and rapid assistance to IDPs.

UCBI's contribution to the establishment of the IDP Hub continued with a provision of capacity building activities and a mentor program for IDP small business, as well as

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<sup>1</sup> Beginning in the 1990s, a number of NGOs began to look at the best practices and pitfalls of delivering assistance in complex conflict environments, where help was often used to pursue political and/or military advantage. A series of principles, which came to fall under the label of "Do No Harm" were developed recognizing that "assistance can have important effects on inter-group relations and on the course of inter-group conflict. These principles provide a series of guidelines and best practices that help local or international NGOs deliver assistance in a more effective and responsible manner and interact with their beneficiaries in a way that reduces, mitigates or shortens conflict between groups.

procurement and delivery of equipment to operationalize everyday work of the Hub. At the official opening of the IDP hub on August 18, 2015, one of the participants stated, “The IDP Hub is a dream come true for our organization. Now, because of this coordinated effort, all participating organizations can provide diverse assistance to IDPs from one location, making it much easier for those in need to get the help efficiently.”

*Building unity and providing opportunities for productive engagement.* Political divides in Eastern Ukraine continue to undermine local cohesion and erode confidence in the reform process. To address these political divides, UCBI provided opportunities for citizens in divided communities to engage with or define a common identity, to unite people around a locally defined identity and promote a more vested stake in Ukraine’s future.

In August 2015, UCBI partnered with a local NGO to hold a two-day music festival in Kharkiv, which attracted a diverse group of over 10,000 citizens. The festival featured an exhibition of Kharkiv civil society organizations and an information campaign on unity, tolerance, volunteerism, and partnership. Local and national media coverage of the festival, and information materials disseminated by Civic Forum provided opportunities for the public to engage with a unifying, local interpretation of Ukrainian identity.

From August to November 2015, UCBI assisted the NGO to conduct 24 public performances, a two-day hip-hop/breakdancing festival, and a graffiti art campaign, as well as produce a 30 minute documentary film promoting messages of peace and national identity. Approximately 150 competitors, professional MCs, DJs, and dancers gathered IDPs, local youth, and their families in Kharkiv to boost morale, national unity, and a modern identity.

During October 16 – 18, 2015, over 6,000 people in Zaporizhzhia attended a Book Festival organized by UCBI’s local partner. The festival provided a space for free discussion of art and culture moderated by Ukrainian writers and activists who encouraged participants to think about how modern culture should be transformed as well as how people suffering from the conflict can become a driving force for progress. The festival also featured a book fair with more than 30 Ukrainian and foreign publishing houses, book presentations, contemporary theater performances, and activities, such as writers’ reading, discussion spaces, forums and roundtables. The large number of participants indicates that UCBI has tapped into a growing demand to connect with modern Ukrainian culture in this vulnerable region.

During the reporting period, UCBI continued to work to support the establishment of a network of active citizens from small towns and rural areas in twelve Zaporizhzhia rayons and engage them in activities implemented by regional and national civil society organizations. This oblast-wide education program included civil society coordination seminars and two rounds of awareness raising, mobilization, and action planning events in target areas of Zaporizhzhia. The activity will continue into March 2016 and is expected to reach approximately 1,860 beneficiaries, including host community members IDPs, social workers, volunteers, and local authorities as well as 5,000 media participants. During the seminars, civil activists share information and successful experiences for uniting communities and mitigating destabilizing effects of the conflict.

The “From a Country to Ukraine Festival” visited 18 small towns in Eastern Ukraine over the course of the summer, attracting over 40,000 participants. Many came for the performances and classes, but for some, the festival served as an opportunity to connect with Ukrainian literature. A 16 year-old attendee stated, “I have decided to borrow a Ukrainian language

book. I would like to know more about history of the country I live in,” she continued, “our town is very small and these kind of opportunities are very rare.”

The festival was also an opportunity for local activists and artists to display their work and connect with peers from other regions. In the town of Energodar in Zaporizhzhya, a local art group teamed up with volunteers to create a short-film about local support to IDPs and ATO veterans. The film was shown on the main stage during a performance of popular Ukrainian bands. One resident of Zaporizhzhia reflected on the festival, "It is very important to teach children how to love their country. That's why I brought my grandson here. Who knows, maybe, if we had had such events 5 years ago, the war would not have started.”

**Building relationships over the Summer Holidays.** Summer provided a unique opportunity to promote the social inclusion of conflict affected groups, and during the reporting period, UCBI supported local efforts including summer camps, cultural programs, and inclusive celebrations reaching over 50,000 beneficiaries.

UCBI and its local partners held 8 summer camps this year, with over 1,300 participants in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhya Oblasts. Participants, both long-time residents and newly displaced Ukrainians, engaged in cultural and arts activities as well as conflict mitigation and confidence building seminars aiming to build relationships and equip children with tools to integrate into their new environments during the school year.

One such camp was held in the Azov coast town of Prymorsk, where 300 children from

“Many of the boys were interested in learning to fight, but we turned those conversations into improving inner strength. Many of the boys realized that they all faced similar problems at home and gained a better understanding of each other’s perspective.”  
-- Prymorsk camp counselor

Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhya, and Donetsk, had the opportunity to spend a week with their peers near the sea. Participants included members of host communities and those who were recently displaced by the conflict. While the agenda was similar to an agenda of a typical camp, with participants engaging in activities such as dancing, handicrafts, arts, pottery, sports, and the occasional concert, the organizers also provided opportunities for children to start to recover from the trauma they faced as a result of the conflict.

This camp also provided an opportunity for parents of both, displaced and local children, to engage with each other and play a positive role in their integration. One of the participants, who fled her home in Donetsk, has been unable to find a position in the medical field in Zaporizhzhya. When she started at the camp, she noted, “at first it was very difficult to work with children in this camp, because the program is very intense. I had doubts about whether I am able to do it.” But as time went on, she built relationships with the volunteers and campers, which helped break down any negative preconceived notions about each other. “It got easier, and my family and I built many new friendships.” Because of her participation, she is an active volunteer with ongoing local programs that provide educational and cultural opportunities for displaced children. Many other parents who got involved with the camp, have followed her example, which helped build a strong local volunteer base of both local and displaced parents, who now regularly meet in Zaporizhzhia to plan activities for their children.

“While we come to this park regularly, today’s fair is a great opportunity to bring together local and displaced children.”  
--Local mother

During the first weekend of September 2015, just as her children were going back to school, a mother and her daughter visited Zaporizhzhia’s central park “Dubovy hay” to enjoy the end of summer at a fair

with over 4,000 other families. Both children and parents enjoyed the games and activities organized by a local organization, with support from UCBI. These events were particularly valued by some of the displaced families who are still struggling to make ends meet. A sixty-year old resident from Donbas lives with her 8-year old granddaughter at a local IDP group center. According to this resident, “while it was not easy to come to today’s event, it is important for my granddaughter to participate. I don’t have the ability to send her to such activities, and it is important for her to make friends here.” This early September event was the last in a series of seven community fairs held in neighborhoods of Zaporizhzhia with high concentrations of IDP residents. Overall, 6,000 native and displaced children and family members in Zaporizhzhia had the opportunity to build relationships at these events.

During the reporting period, UCBI coordinated with a Kharkiv-based NGO and theater troupe to implement a series of interactive theater performances using the “play-back theater” methodology. The troupe’s 16 performances reached over 600 IDPs this summer. One of the participants, was displaced by the conflict from Luhansk over a year ago. She has since lived at a group home in Kharkiv, where she works with an NGO. The transition has been hard for her as she experienced depression and made few attempts to start her new life in Kharkiv. She stated, “Before play-back theater started at the group center, I was having a very hard time adapting to life in Kharkiv. Every little thing seemed impossible.” Participation in the interactive theater activity led by the theater troupe helped her realize that her challenges were neither unique nor insurmountable.

## **Objective 2. Increased constructive engagement between government and citizens in vulnerable communities**

UCBI activities under this objective aimed to support members of local government to demonstrate reform as well as increase civic engagement in issues of local governance and implementation of national reform processes.

As a result of subversive terrorist attacks over the past year, the Kharkiv State Emergency Service faced growing demand to enhance their capacity to properly respond to safety and security needs. Public fears of terrorism and emergency situations caused by the armed conflict in the neighboring oblasts were growing, however, critical resources for emergency equipment, such as self-contained breathing apparatuses, were unavailable. UCBI sought to alleviate this issue by supporting the delivery of technical and material assistance to the agency. The two-pronged approach consisted of providing support to outreach activities and the procurement of safety equipment in an effort to improve the capacity of staff to effectively respond to growing demand as well increase the public’s confidence in local government response. “Over time we witnessed how many lives these brave people can save. In order to work with hazards and disasters they need updated modern equipment. Today, there is a deficit for such equipment in Ukraine that is why provision of these self-contained breathing apparatuses by USAID are vital for the State Emergency Service. They will save many lives,” stated one employee of the State Oblast Administration.

Additionally, UCBI utilized strategic communications experts to provide public outreach training for State Emergency Service employees. This activity aimed to improve local government response in crisis situations and increase the confidence of Kharkiv residents in the ability of local emergency service to keep them safe during potential terrorist attacks.

Slovyansk was a key center of pro-separatist activities in late spring 2014. The city was significantly affected by the conflict, both in terms of physical damage to infrastructure from

the fighting as well as social damage leading to a breakdown of trust between the local administration and citizens. During the summer 2015, the city received a new wave of IDPs fleeing the conflict. The Department for Social Protection of Slovyansk City Administration currently serves approximately 31,200 registered IDPs in addition to its usual client base of vulnerable citizens requiring social assistance. The department receives about 60-80 requests for assistance from IDPs on a daily basis. The department lacks sufficient resources to respond to these requests effectively.

UCBI worked with the Department for Social Protection to increase its capacity to deliver services and conduct data collection, outreach, and communications activities as well as help prepare for increased demand in the event of further violence in the conflict zone. UCBI support included the provision of customer-care and organizational management training for 20 department staff. Additionally, UCBI equipped 26 working spaces for employees in the Department for Social Protection who serve IDPs and vulnerable community members. At the request of the city mayor, UCBI will support the Social Protection Department to establish, manage, and equip a one-stop-window within the main city administration building where IDPs and vulnerable people can receive assistance from six representatives of several key departments (pension, migration, social services) in one space. These initiatives seek to enhance customer experience with the Department of Social Protection, in this way, promoting inclusive civic participation and constructive engagement between government and citizens in divided communities.

UCBI also partnered with local civil society organizations to advocate for reform and include citizens in decision making through activities like roundtable discussions, trainings, and informational campaigns.

For example, UCBI worked with a membership organization that unites cities across the country in an effort to advocate for the development of local self-government, as well as to build the capacity of local government representatives. During the reporting period, UCBI supported the organization to establish a platform for dialogue through a series of 12 roundtables in target cities across Luhansk Oblast. The roundtables brought together representatives of government, civil society as well as IDPs from six cities in GCAs. Topics of discussion included conflict-related issues, such as access to objective information and support for IDP populations. The roundtables will continue to be conducted through March 2016 and will reach 300 planned participants.

October's local elections presented an opportunity to involve new stakeholders in civic engagement and mitigate potentially destabilizing election results. In August 2015, UCBI worked to improve government-citizen interaction and citizen participation in local elections on October 25, 2015. UCBI assistance helped promote transparency during the election process in order to help dispel allegations of fraud, abuse, and unrepresentative results. UCBI supported the development of a website for the civic territorial election commission (TEC) and trained 200 political party and other observers on how to upload observer information on elections day and during the counting process. Trained observers worked in Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, and Berdyansk during the elections. In addition to collecting independent election data to bolster confidence in the fairness of the elections, UCBI supported outreach campaigns to inform voters about their rights, encourage participation in the election process, and inform citizens about tracking the election process online.

Additionally, UCBI supported the electoral system in Ukraine by engaging youth in the election process. In partnership with an NGO that grew out of the student mobilization

initiative during Euromaidan, UCBI conducted public 'get-out-and-vote' campaigns targeting student youth in three regional capitals – Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhia. These campaigns created mobile public spots in each of the participating cities, where a series of panel discussions, lectures and art performances were held in advance of the elections to emphasize the importance of local elections. These public events were led by prominent national opinion leaders and groups. Eight hundred volunteers distributed printed promotional materials, viral videos, and social media content targeting youth activists. On the day of the elections, campaign volunteers trained by professional sociologists conducted exit polling.

Finally, the legally mandated process of de-communization, where local communities need to remove or change public symbols or monuments from the Soviet regime, took place in UCBI's target regions during the reporting period. The process has led to community tensions across Ukraine, as citizens and government debate new names for streets and the fate of controversial statues. UCBI conducted three-day-long seminars and workshops as well as art exhibitions for local culture activists, experts and local authorities. The events focused on promoting promising practices for the implementation of de-communization laws in Mariupol, Slovyansk, and Severodonetsk in order to help mitigate tensions around the adoption of these laws. As a result, citizens groups worked with local government to propose new, innovative solutions for de-communization.

### **Objective 3. Increasing citizen resilience against divisive and biased information**

The media environment in eastern Ukraine is dominated by politically aligned media outlets, which often provide manipulative and biased information without addressing key topics. Access to credible information about political and current issues, such as local politics, the effects of the crisis, and the downturn in the economy is limited. Activities under this objective assisted local initiatives, media outlets, and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the eastern and central regions of Ukraine to provide critical information about the conflict and conflict-affected communities.

UCBI's initiatives to increase consumption of diverse and balanced sources of information include support to local media outlets to produce objective news content, provision of training to journalists, and promotion of professionalism in reporting.

During the reporting period, UCBI continued its commitment to addressing challenges of IDP integration by countering negative perceptions and stereotypes in the media and increasing IDP access to information about resources available to them.

UCBI supported the development of a bi-monthly independent print newspaper in Kharkiv oblast. The newspaper aims to provide accurate, unbiased information about the conflict, local government and civic initiatives as well as critical reforms in order to raise awareness about key issues affecting Kharkiv oblast residents. The publication is distributed free of charge to government representatives, civil society organizations, universities and individual residents, increasing access to alternative information and, in this way, reducing citizen vulnerability to manipulation by political propaganda.

In coordination with a US-based NGO, UCBI supported existing media outlets in target program areas as well as partners in Kyiv to produce "news-you-can-use" content. This is achieved by providing conflict-sensitive reporting training to local journalists so they can better understand and analyze conflict dynamics in their communities; supporting journalist

initiatives in eastern Ukraine with stipends; and assisting in the production of programs that increase awareness about the IDP crisis.

Increased citizen access to credible information is reinforced by stronger capacity of regional and local media outlets to produce quality reporting on key issues in eastern Ukraine oblasts. UCBI's activities within this program area support new and ongoing journalist initiatives in conflict-affected communities.

Kryvyi Rih, a city in Dnipropetrovsk oblast that is located close to the conflict area, lacks an independent platform to amplify the voice of community representatives who are able to unite people with different views and provide credible and unbiased information. From June to November 2015, UCBI worked to develop an oblast-wide media outlet to cover issues related to the conflict, local government, policy reform, critical events, and other issues in the region. The media platform includes a TV production studio, internet television, and news and journalism website in Kryvyi Rih. The media outlet engaged independent journalists, media-production personnel, local civil society leaders, and young people, including IDPs, to implement the media project in accordance with BBC standards. Content produced by the outlet highlights civic initiatives and efforts of public organizations, activists, local business, and authorities. UCBI's support included the provision of media production equipment, furniture and office IT equipment, web-portal and graphic style development, media promotion and poster printing as well as coverage of transportation and communication expenses for four months. This activity helped enhance the media outlet's professionalism, develop a media concept as well as an editorial policy, establish a supervisory board, and launch a website.

UCBI's supported broadcasting, production, capacity and editorial quality of a local branch of an Internet television station. Under this activity, the station produced four episodes of a program series that focuses on critical local issues. The episodes featured stories about IDPs and the economic problems of rural communities; promoted volunteerism and individual social responsibility; and explored cultural and natural sites of the region. This activity aimed to improve the reach, effectiveness and influence of independent media in Zaporizhzhia and sought to enhance the media's capacity to increase awareness of key issues affecting the region.

## **PROGRAM EVALUATION**

UCBI continues to focus on active program learning through its M&E processes. To this end, UCBI has implemented a number of activity and program M&E exercises. At the activity level, the UCBI team continues to hold monthly M&E meetings where the program and leadership team discuss the results of activities and lessons learned. These discussions help guide decisions about follow-on grants, and ensure that lessons learned are incorporated in real time. In the past six months, UCBI used this method to do a deep dive of 20 selected activities. The M&E meetings have also been incorporated into UCBI's activity closeout process, and to inform the development of Final Monitoring Reports (FMRs) for activities.

A number of activities implemented over the course of the past six months included research components, providing UCBI with important data on activity outcomes and information about the external environment.

- As part of activities that aimed to improve economic opportunities UCBI conducted surveys among IDP job seekers and participants in employment skills training courses to identify trends among this stakeholder group. These surveys indicated that a

significant number (1,432 in total for two activities) of trainees gained the skills needed to adapt to their conditions.

- IDP integration activities conducted research into the specific needs and challenges of displaced persons, and found a significant interest in social and cultural integration activities, and also confirmed positive trends with regards to relationships between IDPs and host community members.
- Summer cultural and social events, confirmed that UCBI identified and supported a significant community of pro-reform Ukrainians in some of the most isolated and vulnerable communities in Eastern Ukraine and that the program is meeting an expressed interest by providing opportunities for civic engagement and interaction with Ukrainian culture.
- Pre-election activities, conducted research that both provided key data to civil society and feedback on the various approaches taken. For example, the organizers of the youth ‘get out the vote’ campaign surveyed voters, finding areas where voter turnout among youth had increased. Also, research found that over 90 percent of users of a parallel vote online tool believe that it made elections more transparent.

UCBI commissioned a number of stand-alone, third party studies to help gauge the effectiveness of its program and further refine its objectives. These include monitoring of media produced by UCBI grantees. In the spring and summer, 2015 UCBI conducted independent monitoring of three of its media outlet grantees. This monitoring assessed the content produced and whether it corresponded to internationally-recognized journalistic standards, as well as its reach and reception. The study found that UCBI’s grantees were overall fair and unbiased, adhering to journalistic principals, and while they had sizable audiences, it is difficult to ascertain their overall reach.

While UCBI’s initial media monitoring activities helped to learn about the environment and build key relationships, the program commissioned Media Consumption to conduct quantitative and qualitative research on the local media situation and media perceptions in Kharkiv, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipropetrovsk, and GCAs of Luhansk and Donetsk. Results of this study will be available in early February 2016 and will help to determine future media activities.

One of UCBI’s activities measured motivations and perceptions in IDP host communities. Findings indicate that host communities demonstrate largely positive attitudes towards IDPs, representing a positive change among community members. The study also examined factors influencing decisions made by IDPs to return home. The cessation of hostilities and combat operations, as well as restoration of job opportunities are among key motivation factors for IDPs to return home.

One of UCBI’s most significant M&E activities in the past months has been the launch of Analyze This! Outcomes Evaluation and Perceptions Survey. This activity is an outcome evaluation and snap perceptions/survey data mechanism for the program that can be utilized to support M&E per clusters of UCBI grants in its target areas. During its first two months, 60 participants of UCBI activities were interviewed, and 10 site visits and 6 focus groups were conducted. In addition, two telephone surveys were conducted to identify significant changes that can be attributed to UCBI programming.

UCBI also implemented a localized version of the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) index, an international tool to identify the root causes of social tensions that has been used in Bosnia, Cyprus, and Nepal. During this reporting period, a team of consultants

visited Kyiv to work with a local research firm to plan nationwide field surveys that will be conducted in January and February, in every region of Ukraine and will include a sampling of communities with high IDP populations. Survey results will be released in spring 2016.

Finally, at the program level, UCBI continued to strengthen its cluster level evaluations. In September, the team developed a series of cluster evaluation plans. These plans envision a number of external evaluators to conduct field and desk research and assess outcomes of each of UCBI's clusters. While identifying local evaluators has been a challenge, the program conducted the first cluster evaluation in January 2016. Additional cluster evaluations are ongoing.