UKRAINE CONFIDENCE BUILDING INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT

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ACRONYMS

ASC Administrative Services Center
ATO anti-terrorist operation
BUR Building Ukraine Together
NSCD National Security and Defense Council
OTI Office of Transition Initiatives
SCORE Social Cohesion and Reconciliation
UCBI Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative
PROGRAM DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGY

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) launched the Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI) in July 2014 in response to the socio-political upheaval Ukraine was facing in the wake of the Euromaidan Revolution, Russia's annexation of Crimea, and instigation of armed conflict in the country's East. In this context, UCBI was initiated to complement ongoing USAID efforts to support a successful democratic transition and promote national cohesion in Ukraine.

UCBI programming expanded visible and tangible public service delivery improvements in eastern Ukraine, helped quicken reform, and made local government decision-making more transparent and inclusive. UCBI helped citizens embrace a new Ukrainian civic identity by providing them with opportunities to play a more productive role in their communities. This was accomplished by supporting civil society’s efforts to hold government accountable and by using media as a platform to better disseminate balanced information and to increase public awareness of reforms. This approach required significant and ongoing dialogue with host authorities and communities in Kyiv and in other regions. UCBI assistance came in the form of small, in-kind grants (goods, services, and technical support), direct distribution of goods and services, stand-alone short-term technical assistance, and cash grants (fixed amount awards and standard grants) to a range of partners, including national and local civilian government entities, civil society organizations, and community leaders.

During the early phases of the project, UCBI assisted the government of Ukraine and civil society with strategic communications and supported conflict mitigation efforts. From 2014-2016, the program had three main objectives:

• Increase constructive engagement between government and citizens at the local level
• Manage tensions exacerbated by the conflict in the East
• Increase citizen resilience against divisive and biased information

As a result of political and social volatility in eastern Ukraine and the slow pace of reforms, UCBI adjusted these objectives over the life of the project, prioritizing efforts to demonstrate reform and promote national identity in Ukraine’s Donbas region. To advance the project goal of enabling vulnerable eastern communities to actively participate in, benefit from, and advocate for Ukraine’s transition to a prosperous, unified, and democratic state, UCBI shifted to two objectives and associated sub-objectives to target critical areas in which OTI had a comparative advantage among existing international donors in 2016:

• Increase support for and participation in the development of an inclusive Ukrainian identity
• Increase citizen confidence and engagement in the reform process at the local level

This shift came as a result of ongoing analysis of the political situation, and helped UCBI address an evolving environment and prioritize local efforts to mitigate effects of the crisis. For example, the community cohesion situation with internally displaced persons stabilized in UCBI’s last year of operation, enabling the project to focus on supporting the rollout of
national reforms in eastern Ukraine and renewed efforts to build an inclusive national identity. Throughout implementation, UCBI helped shape an appropriate response to citizen desire for reform and greater participation in decision-making. The maps and diagrams below present all five of UCBI’s objectives throughout the project’s implementation.
Map 1. UCBI Programming by Objective
Map 2. UCBI East Programming
UKRAINE NATIONAL AND REGIONAL COUNTRY CONTEXT

In late 2013, large protests broke out in Kyiv after the government of Ukraine reversed plans to sign an Association Agreement with the European Union. Then President Victor Yanukovych fled the country in February 2014, paving the way for the formation of an interim government focused on political and social reform. Unrest in southern and eastern Ukraine quickly followed the transition and lead to the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia and the start of an armed conflict in the Donbas region between the government of Ukraine and armed separatists.

Following the start of this conflict, the elected government pushed for a solution to the crisis in the East to bring peace and enable the country to move forward on a path toward democracy and economic recovery. However, the reform process has faced significant challenges and an end to the conflict has remained unattainable. The paragraphs below present a summary of critical events that significantly impacted UCBI’s strategic focus.

2014 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

On May 25, 2014, Ukraine held an early presidential election after former President Yanukovych fled. The election marked a unique moment for Ukraine as it resulted in a first-round win for Petro Poroshenko, who won 54.7 percent of the vote in all oblasts across Ukraine where voting took place. No voting occurred in the occupied Crimea and only limited voting took place in Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk regions), where only 3.2 and 4.8 percent of registered voters, respectively, received ballots. The Central Election Commission reported voter turnout at more than 60 percent in most of the other regions.

ANTI-TERRORIST OPERATION

In 2014, Russia made several military incursions into Ukrainian territory. After the Euromaidan protests and the fall of President Yanukovych, Russian soldiers took control of strategic positions and infrastructure in Crimea. Russia then annexed Crimea after a disputed referendum. Subsequently, demonstrations by pro-Russian groups in the Donbas region escalated into armed conflict between the Ukrainian government and Russian-backed separatist forces of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. In August, Russian military vehicles reportedly crossed the border at several locations in the Donetsk oblast. Armed separatists held local referendums and declared portions of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts as the Donetsk and Luhansk People’s Republics. The government launched a full-scale military anti-terrorist operation (ATO) against the separatists in the occupied territories. Ukrainian forces liberated the cities and surrounding areas of Slovyansk and Kramatorsk by early July 2014. The government retained control of many population centers, however separatist counteroffensives, emboldened by Russian support, advanced in August and September 2014, resulting in a stalemate along the “contact line” running down the middle of the Donbas.

On August 26, 2015, the government of Ukraine and leaders of the separatist forces agreed to work on implementing a cease-fire, known as the Minsk Agreement. Both sides agreed to withdraw small weapons (i.e., small-calibre mortar shells and rockets) from the contact line. The fragile cease-fire deteriorated in November 2015 when fighting was reported in the Donetsk region, despite claims from both sides that weapons were withdrawn. Leaders from Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France agreed to extend the deadline for the implementation of the Minsk Agreement into 2016. Later, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine issued a
statement that said despite the cease-fire agreement, armed provocations against ATO forces had grown along the contact line. Militants repeatedly shelled ATO positions and civilian infrastructure throughout 2016 and 2017. According to the UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, by 2017, more than 10,000 people had died and more than 23,000 had been wounded in the conflict.

**INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS**

In 2017, the conflict in eastern Ukraine had entered its fourth year. Thus far, the conflict has taken a large toll, resulting in hundreds of thousands of people fleeing their homes in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions for neighboring regions in Ukraine, Russia, and other countries. By March of 2017, nearly 450,000 Ukrainians had sought asylum in neighboring countries, with the majority going to the Russian Federation, Poland, and Belarus. An additional 1.3 million sought other forms of legal residency in these same countries. By the end of 2016, European Union countries had received 9,625 applications from Ukrainians seeking international protection. As of April 25, 2017, Ukraine counted nearly 1.6 million persons registered as internally displaced and 3.8 million people in need of some form of humanitarian assistance. Meanwhile, life for civilians in non-government controlled areas became increasingly difficult. Much of the population in these regions had limited access to basic products and services, such as food, hygiene products, clean and safe drinking water, medicine, and medical services. In 2017, internally displaced persons were concentrated in three regions: Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kharkiv oblasts.

**TRADE BLOCKADE BETWEEN UKRAINE AND RUSSIAN-CONTROLLED AREAS OF EASTERN DONBAS**

In March 2017, the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) of Ukraine stopped movement of goods across the armed conflict line following an escalation in fighting and seizure of Ukrainian enterprises in the occupied territories. This NSDC restriction on movement of goods was intended to continue until paragraphs one and two of the February 2015 Minsk Agreement — complete cease-fire and withdrawal of weapons from the contact line — became fully implemented. By mid-2017, the blockade had amplified social and economic isolation and disconnect between Ukrainians living on each side of the contact line.

**E-DECLARATION: HISTORIC MOVE TOWARD TRANSPARENCY AND ANTI-CORRUPTION**

By 2017 and for the first time in Ukraine’s history, more than 100,000 top government officials, including the president of Ukraine, cabinet of ministers, members of parliament, judges, prosecutors, and civil servants declared their assets under the government’s new e-asset declaration system. The release date of the system was postponed several times due to political pressure, technical glitches, hacking attacks, and a missing certification. Nevertheless, the system went live on September 1, 2016 with a total amount of declared wealth of approximately $387 million and about 70 percent of that in the form of cash. E-declarations represented a crucial step in preventing government corruption. In addition, the nascent National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine and the National Agency for Prevention of Corruption began to establish rules for a new, more transparent political culture in Ukraine.
NATIONAL LAUNCH OF PROZORRO, THE E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM

In 2015, Ukraine launched an electronic public procurement system for government procurement tenders, ProZorro. On August 1, 2016, purchasing through the ProZorro system became required for all public institutions and companies. To date, ProZorro has serviced 258,000 procurements saving nearly $228 million in additional oversight and regulation fees. The system received international accolades, winning the World Procurement Awards in 2016, and recognition as a “Technology of the Future” in Communication on Top - Davos and Open Government Awards in 2016. UCBI assisted in launching ProZorro in the eastern regions of Ukraine.

DECENTRALIZATION PROCESS

In 2017, constitutional amendments to implement political decentralization remained blocked in Parliament because they included controversial provisions for political autonomy of Donbas, based on the 2014 and 2015 Minsk agreements. At the same time, strong consensus on the need for decentralization reform resulted in effective administrative and fiscal decentralization progress. The Rada, or the Ukrainian parliament, approved critical legislation allowing settlements to join established hromadas (communities) as well as the formation of hromadas across current administrative boundaries. By the end of 2016, 366 new amalgamated communities were formed from smaller administrative districts and elected village heads and councils. As a result of fiscal decentralization, 159 amalgamated communities formed in 2015 and increased their budget revenues by 49.5 percent. Decentralization impacted the education and healthcare sectors positively; access to and quality of services improved and spending became more efficient. Decentralization reform received broad support from international donors. In 2016, the European Union, Germany, Switzerland, the United States, and other bilateral donors launched their technical assistance projects to help implement these reforms.

SUMMARY OF RECENT ACTIVITIES (FEBRUARY-JUNE 2017)

From February to June 2017, UCBI implemented eighteen new activities. The project focused on increasing citizen support for and participation in the development of a modern Ukrainian identity and increasing citizen engagement in the reform process at the local level.

The narrative below describes key activities implemented during this reporting period, grouped by project objective and sub-objective.

INCREASING CITIZEN SUPPORT FOR AND PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A MODERN, INCLUSIVE UKRAINIAN IDENTITY (OBJECTIVE 1)

Under Objective 1, UCBI assisted partners to establish new coworking spaces, youth platforms, and national networks of civil society organizations. From January to June 2017, UCBI implemented community-oriented initiatives and projects focusing on entrepreneurship and cultural and urban development in the eastern oblasts of Ukraine.
BROADENING ACTIVIST NETWORKS TO CONNECT TO LARGER NATIONAL MOVEMENTS AND MODERN UKRAINIAN CULTURE. A UCBI grantee received support in early February 2017 to bolster the work of local activists organizing city-wide cultural events in Pokrovsk, Mariupol, and Severodonetsk. This activity provided tailored training and mentorship that empowered and enabled grantee alumni groups to better manage public events promoting a modern Ukrainian identity. The grantee teams received training on event planning, implementation, and management by experienced partners, resulting in a marked increase in organizational capacity among teams.

This activity resulted in three cultural events being held in March 2017: a literature festival in Pokrovsk, a tourist festival in Mariupol, and a theater festival in Severodonetsk. More than 9,000 people attended, including well-known cultural personalities, who gave positive feedback on the events and noted their support for future events.

UCBI integrated many local civil society organizations and movements into national networks. Supported activities included creative and social camps that broadened activist networks, citizen-driven urban planning initiatives, development of a new history exhibition in two museums in Slovyansk and Lysychansk, and collaborations between the local government and activists in Donbas on urban development initiatives.

HELPING CITIZENS PLAY MORE ACTIVE ROLES IN THEIR COMMUNITIES BY EXPANDING YOUNG REFORMER NETWORKS. From February to June 2017, UCBI cooperated with a Lviv-based grantee to establish three youth platforms in Severodonetsk, Kostiatynivka, and Rubizhne. These youth platforms cultivated informal networks to serve as platforms for local civic activism and national youth movements. Grantee staff worked in close cooperation with local teams and provided them with supervision, coaching, and consultations. Two in-house and numerous online consultation sessions helped the local teams develop short- and long-term development and sustainability strategies, a public relations strategy, activity plans, and an extended partner contact database. The platforms received materials and equipment to conduct basic renovations and prepare locations for their operations, holding a total of 170 events attended by 663 citizens. The platforms then started working on larger community projects and initiatives, in particular in Kostiantynivka. For example, one platform developed plans to organize two festivals and revitalize a local park. Another platform cooperated with a service camp to create an outdoor venue for summer events the platform organized. Finally, a third platform began developing an extensive cultural and education program. The platforms received recognition and positive feedback from local authorities and city council representatives who attended events. Kostiantynivka City Council initiated negotiations to open an additional platform space in a remote area of the city. This activity expanded and institutionalized opportunities for youth engagement, activism, and innovation in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. UCBI’s work broadening activist networks facilitated connection of these networks to larger national movements and encouraged their sense of integration into modern Ukrainian culture.

FOSTERING MORE ENTREPRENEURIAL MINDSETS AMONG CITIZENS OF UKRAINE’S EASTERN REGIONS. UCBI assisted a Kharkiv-based NGO with the creation of a coworking space and platform for engineers, to employ technology to help foster a more entrepreneurial mindset among young Ukrainians in target oblasts. More than 300 people attended the opening event for the platform, which received local, regional, and national media coverage, including
coverage from online Radio Skovoroda, a popular Ukrainian online radio and Nakipelo Media Center. The NGO established a number of strategic partnerships with various organizations, such as Amnesty International Ukraine, AIESEC (one of the world's largest non-profit youth-run organizations), IT companies, educational establishments, and media partners. Establishing these partnerships and recruiting for a residency program for the technology coworking platform spearheaded networking that will ensure sustainable development of the organization. The residency program received 90 applications in two months. It accepted 30 residents with specific expertise to work on projects and participate in community life. The rest of the applicants received invitations to join educational courses hosted by the organization. The NGO’s technology coworking program became the first well established program of its kind in eastern Ukraine.

In 2016, UCBI collaborated with a coworking space and tech education center to conduct a series of interactive “brain ring” competitions in Kharkiv aimed at generating interest in careers in the tech economy. Brain ring competitions target school-age children, aiming to help them understand IT and encouraging them not to be intimidated by it. In 2017, UCBI partnered with the center to reach out to more cities in eastern Ukraine, specifically Mariupol, Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, and Severodonetsk, by implementing brain ring competitions in 256 schools during the 2016-17 school year and assessing the potential for technology education and business development in those cities. The brain ring activity exposed a significant part of the population of these cities to new economic potentials. Local partners and UCBI used the resulting relationships and information to develop new programs aimed at increasing support for a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship in Ukraine. The center used the opportunity to build relationships with stakeholders in Mariupol and assess the feasibility of establishing an IT training school and coworking center in the city. UCBI’s work with the tech education center resulted in a solid plan to establish a Mariupol center and a large roster of schools and teachers for potential partnership in other parts of the region.

UCBI also worked with groups of entrepreneurs and professional freelancers in Kramatorsk to expand their already established business incubator and provide services, support, and information to residents attempting to start small, creative businesses in their free time. Improving the coworking space in Kramatorsk allowed for establishing a small business incubator and training center with numerous additional services, such as seminars, consultations, and training courses. In 2016, the center welcomed 522 visitors and 100 users of the coworking space. In addition, 25 people opened their own businesses, 27 submitted requests for funds to international donor organizations, and 16 launched online shops. The interest in the center demonstrated a need in Kramatorsk for additional creative spaces to engage young people. UCBI’s work launched initiatives with power to attract youth to stay in Kramatorsk, and to connect the city with a culture, creativity, and innovation associated with a new, European-leaning Ukrainian identity.

**INCREASING CITIZEN CONFIDENCE AND ENGAGEMENT IN THE REFORM PROCESS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL (OBJECTIVE 2)**

UCBI assisted its partners to expand opportunities for inclusive, constructive citizen and government decision-making and tangible service delivery and reform implementation. The project also supported efforts of civil society activists to hold the government accountable and
used media as a platform to disseminate balanced information to amplify awareness of reforms and their impact at the local level.

SUPPORTING LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO BE MORE INCLUSIVE IN DECISION-MAKING, MORE TRANSPARENT, AND MORE EFFECTIVE IN SERVICE DELIVERY. UCBI worked with several cities to implement e-democracy initiatives and transparency activities, and helped establish innovative practices in public administration. In November 2016, a UCBI-commissioned-assessment of Luhansk local government identified two concrete areas in which UCBI could work with local governments to demonstrate improved service delivery: 1) improvements to administrative services centers to strengthen the quality of service delivery for citizens registering their place of residence; 2) improvements to departments of social protection to bolster the quality of service delivery for housing subsidies, including water, utilities, and garbage disposal services. Based on this assessment, a team of experts provided direct technical assistance to one selected administrative services center and one department of social protection in government-of-Ukraine-controlled Luhansk oblast to optimize the delivery of one critical service and to provide a replicable model for other local administrations in Luhansk oblast. UCBI’s assessment and assistance supported local government to be more inclusive in decision-making, more effective in service delivery, and more transparent, and helped to increase citizen confidence and engagement in the reform process at the local level.

To help citizens navigate new reforms, UCBI partnered with a Dnipro-based NGO and worked with key reformers in the Dnipro City Council to develop existing housing associations and create new ones. The NGO conducted educational seminars, established hotlines, and organized advocacy campaigns with five city councils in the Donbas region. During a five-month period, UCBI supported the creation of 16 housing associations and helped 146 housing associations apply for city co-funding to repair or upgrade their houses. As a result of this activity, citizens communicated and advocated for the development of housing associations in their cities. Additionally, the grantee conducted field-trip presentations in Mariupol and launched an informational e-newspaper covering housing association issues, published regularly as of March 2017.

EMPOWERING CIVIL SOCIETY TO ADVANCE KEY REFORMS AND HOLD LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE. UCBI worked to get citizens more involved in local decision-making. The project partnered with an NGO to develop an online text messaging application (app) called Vasha Dumka (your opinion) (https://vdmk.org/). The app enables citizens and special interest groups to promote and contribute to key reforms, making government more accountable. Ukrainian citizens and local authorities began using Vasha Dumka during town hall meetings, public discussions, roundtables, and large presentations to gauge public opinion on certain issues. Using the app, more diverse groups of stakeholders directly engaged in public dialogue about polices and government priorities.

Although local engagement and citizen activism grew in popularity in eastern Ukraine during UCBI’s implementation period, in 2017 local government remained neither open nor transparent. In 2015, a national-level NGO launched the Strong Communities of Donetsk Initiative to foster civil society in liberated areas of the Donetsk region. With UCBI’s support, the organization increased community involvement in decision-making processes as well as in
oversight of local government through a series of community assessments, ‘watchdog’ training sessions, and education and advocacy activities in 10 cities in Luhansk, Donetsk, and Dnipro oblasts. The NGO conducted an assessment that measured the openness, transparency, and efficiency of city government communications with the public. This encouraged local officials to communicate with the public and activists in a more transparent manner and to be more proactive in engagements with local authorities.

UCBI also supported this NGO in the first quarter of 2017 to work on increasing civic engagement in local governance and reform in Donbas and Dnipro oblasts. Using a unique methodology consisting of 132 criteria, the organization analyzed 11 cities in the Donbas region, and after public consultations in those 11 cities, the NGO proposed specific ways to improve transparency and citizen engagement. Local governments in each city received collective community appeals concerning openness, transparency, and efficiency of communications. As a result of advocacy campaigns, some cities decided to implement specific recommendations in their daily operations. For example, the Dobropillia city council launched online broadcasts of the city council sessions. With assistance from UCBI, the NGO continued to support ten communities and expand its activities to six new locations in eastern Ukraine. Additionally, with UCBI support, the NGO worked in the Donetsk, Luhansk, and Dnipro regions implementing an activity to improve the initial assessment and advocacy methodology to leverage civil society impact on local government effectiveness, transparency, and accountability in eastern Ukraine. After the assessment, the NGO educated about 100 activists from target communities on government watchdog and advocacy tools to increase the impact of key reforms at the local level. The NGO conducted 18 round tables, eight seminars, drafted articles, and coached core groups of activists during four training sessions. In addition, it conducted more traditional advocacy and information campaigns, such as advertising online and in public spaces and distributing newsletters and booklets.

ENSURING LOCALLY RELEVANT, OBJECTIVE INFORMATION ABOUT KEY REFORMS REACHES CITIZENS. UCBI researched the media environment in southeastern Ukraine, supported an assessment on the media landscape in Ukraine, and conducted TV and social marketing training for regional media in Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, and government-controlled areas of Luhansk and Donetsk oblasts. UCBI’s work on the media environment aimed to contribute to developing a comprehensive media strategy to address the information needs of citizens in the East and South of the country.

UCBI partnered with a Kramatorsk-based media organization to produce and promote a series of live talk shows broadcast on social media. The shows enabled hosts to answer questions in real time from Ukrainians in the occupied Donbas territories who had become increasingly disconnected from Ukrainian political and social life. The series also set the stage for future efforts to strengthen an inclusive Ukrainian identity and Ukraine’s transition in Donbas. Additionally, UCBI provided a package of mobile video editing and production equipment to the Slovyansk city website and other trustworthy websites in Donetsk and Luhansk. This equipment complemented training provided through another UCBI grant and enabled these popular local news outlets to more effectively reach and expand their audience through social media. UCBI support enabled three waves of training for local journalists and the creation of 107 videos.
about local news and journalist investigations. The number of monthly visitors to the Slovyansk website increased from 49,000 to 65,000 during the activity’s period of performance.

OVERALL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

UCBI addressed the political, social, and economic crisis in Ukraine through the design and implementation of strategic assistance and partnerships at the local and national levels. The project devoted special attention to eastern Ukraine, focusing on populations in regions close to the conflict area that had been targeted by external aggression. UCBI issued grants to NGOs, civic initiatives, state and local authorities, and community leaders at the international, national, and local levels. Project activities first focused on bolstering Ukraine’s civil society response to the displacement crisis with the aim of preventing destabilization of additional communities. Since large scale displacement had an adverse impact on governance, UCBI then adjusted to seek opportunities to build stabilizing networks between communities and government, particularly in eastern Ukraine. These opportunities included expanding visible and tangible service delivery and reforms and promoting the social, political, and economic integration of displaced communities. The project worked with its partners to identify and leverage key opportunities for citizens to play a productive role in their communities, supporting efforts by civil society activists to hold the government accountable, and using media as a platform to better disseminate balanced information and amplify public awareness of the impact of reforms.

UCBI launched and implemented 265 activities with a total value of $11.2 million between July 2014 and June 2017. The graphic below illustrates the impact and achievements of UCBI activities.
HISTORY OF THE TASK ORDER OBLIGATIONS

- Final obligation: $22,207,229
- Final ceiling: $27,810,930
- Contract number: AID-OAA-I-14-00006
- Task order number: AID-OAA-TO-14-00015
- Mission: Office of Transition Initiatives
- Number of modifications: Six
- Final period of performance: July 7, 2014 - July 6, 2017

SECTION 1. ASSISTING INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND ATO VETERANS

UCBI addressed the crisis of internally displaced persons in Ukraine by implementing nationwide activities focused on establishing a more consistent and unified approach to provision of services for internally displaced persons. UCBI aimed to promote social inclusion of vulnerable groups in conflict-affected communities, reduce tensions and frustrations around limited resources, and promote unity and productive engagement between citizens in divided communities.
FREE PEOPLE HOUSE OPENING. Free People House, a hub for service providers focused on assisting internally displaced persons, opened with UCBI support as a national coordination and information sharing center in Kyiv in 2015. This unique collaboration brought together key NGOs from across Ukraine. The establishment of Free People House combined the collective efforts of four NGOs to establish a one-stop-shop in Kyiv for service providers assisting internally displaced persons, thus enabling them to deliver services more effectively. During the grant implementation period, approximately 10,000 internally displaced persons received assistance from the hub, including humanitarian assistance, housing support, legal services, job search support, psychological services and cultural, educational, and social support aimed at assisting vulnerable groups to better integrate into their new communities. Through employment consultations, more than 100 internally displaced persons became employed during the grant implementation period. Additionally, UCBI supported a series of exchange visits between NGOs from different regions of Ukraine to help strengthen networks of service providers and improve their assistance to internally displaced persons by sharing best practices. Many of the NGOs that took part in the exchange visits established new partnerships and launched joint activities and initiatives. The hub also became a platform for internally displaced persons to work on developing their own businesses. With mini-grants provided through UCBI, many participants in the business development program launched their own businesses, while others learned useful tips and received professional mentoring in business development.

PROVIDING LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND CRITICAL INFORMATION FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND ATO VETERANS. Access to free legal aid has represented a major problem for displaced persons and demobilized soldiers in Ukraine. With UCBI support, an organization focused on providing legal assistance to vulnerable populations collaborated with local lawyers to launch the Online Legal Aid Center, a resource available to the public. The center used phone or internet connections to offer clients remote consultations and provided educational events on a variety of legal issues for vulnerable citizens. The high demand for legal services from vulnerable populations demonstrated the need for the Online Legal Aid Center. Lawyers working with the Center regularly received requests from internally displaced persons and ATO veterans. Their questions focused on receiving internally displaced person status, registering for state benefits, receiving pensions and other social benefits, and applying for plots of land. The center’s media manager noted that those seeking assistance could reach center lawyers easily through Skype, Viber, social networks, and
a hotline for questions on a variety of topics. The center strived to make sure that people affected by the armed conflict in Donbas received high quality legal advice. Internally displaced persons and ATO veterans across Ukraine gained access to one trusted point of contact for quality, free-of-charge legal assistance.

**EXPANDING JOB SEARCH, EMPLOYMENT, AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION FOR INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND ATO VETERANS.**

Internally displaced persons have faced serious challenges in finding employment in Ukraine. In 2015, an NGO approached UCBI with a request for support to the NGO’s work enhancing the competitiveness of internally displaced persons and ATO veterans in the job market in targeted regions. UCBI supported the NGO in programming focused on assisting vulnerable populations to develop job-related skills, implementing two large educational programs from 2015 to 2016. This initiative resulted in more than 2,000 internally displaced persons and ATO veterans receiving career consultations, more than 1,800 participating in 170 training courses and learning programs, and 200 individuals finding jobs. This activity also established a business incubator that helped beneficiaries create their own projects. Incubator participants received consultations and mentoring to assist them in implementing their ideas. Some participants established their own businesses and by 2017 had begun providing employment for other internally displaced persons and community members. The business incubator helped reduce unemployment and lack of economic opportunity, and the frustration they cause, among groups affected by the conflict in Donbas.

**PROVIDING CRITICAL SERVICES AND INFORMATION TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN KHARKIV AND DNIPRO.** In 2015, nearly 95,000 persons registered as internally displaced in Kharkiv; this influx of people into the city’s fragile socio-economic and political environment placed a strain on local resources and threatened equilibrium. Lack of information increased internally displaced persons’ fears about reception in their host communities, resulting in tensions between internally displaced persons, government officials, and local citizens. With UCBI grant support, a volunteer organization provided an array of critical services to internally displaced persons to help them adapt and integrate into Kharkiv after relocating from eastern Ukraine.

The organization collected information from local government, civil society, and volunteer groups about services available to internally displaced persons and distributed more than 40,000 brochures with information on aid and critical services. The grantee also worked with local psychologists to produce a pamphlet listing signs of psychological trauma and providing contact information for local support centers. Further, the organization developed an online platform to enable it to disseminate critical information regarding services for internally displaced persons and important policy issues them more quickly. In total, the grantee served 16,731 internally displaced persons over the life of the activity. It also produced various articles and videos published on its informational platform to help inform internally displaced persons of the
services and training offered. Through this platform, internally displaced persons learned about job opportunities and opportunities to obtain assistance or support from other entities. In addition, the platform provided information on how to become a volunteer and assist the internally displaced person community. This activity garnered significant attention on social media, with content posted or reposted more than 8,000 times. UCBI contributed to this effort by providing the organization with furniture, equipment, and printing to help it expand the reach of its assistance. In April 2016, the organization received recognition for its work in Kharkiv, with the head of the organization receiving the Refugees International Richard Holbrooke Award. As a result of UCBI’s initial funding and capacity building support, the grantee increased its financial and administrative capacity to manage grants from international donors.

In the city of Dnipro, UCBI helped an NGO with its mission to assist newly arrived internally displaced persons by furnishing and upgrading the electrical capacity of a center for such persons. UCBI also supported an initiative run by the NGO to reach target communities with high numbers of internally displaced persons in the Dnipro oblast by monitoring conditions and assessing needs. In addition to this initiative to help mitigate tensions in communities hosting displaced persons, UCBI supported another local NGO to facilitate dialogue between community stakeholders, engaging more than 275 displaced persons, representatives from host communities, and local government entities in Dnipro oblast.

PROMOTING SOCIAL ADAPTATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE CAREERS FOR ATO VETERANS. Ukrainians, and in particular Ukrainian men, have traditionally been reluctant to seek mental health or psychological support, due to a fear of stigmatization and widely held social norms that equate mental health care with weakness. This trend of resistance toward psychological support has resulted in dangerously high numbers of demobilized soldiers without access to treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) attributed to military service in a conflict environment. In response to this, a Ukrainian civil society organization developed a project to counter the stigma surrounding psychological support. The organization discovered that lack of information on mental health resources represented one of the most pressing challenges. UCBI partnered with the organization to assist in the creation of a unified resource database for mental health services.

The group analyzed and collected extensive data on psycho-social support services and created a user-friendly web portal that provides information on legal, psychological, medical, and social assistance for ATO veterans throughout Ukraine. The web portal was launched along with social media messaging and outdoor billboard campaigns across six of the largest cities in Ukraine. National TV channels and radio stations offered their support for the initiative as well. Since its launch, the platform added more than 550 verified organizations and initiatives from 135 locations around the country, making it the only online database for social aid to demobilized soldiers in Ukraine. Acknowledging the online database as a trusted source of information, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine issued an order requiring its local military commissariats to register with the web portal. One former soldier admitted, “I, as well as all the rest, was sure I could cope without a psychologist. Now I realize it’s time to ask for help.” The new database provided this individual and many others like him with access to information to get needed support.
UCBI supported a follow-on activity with the grantee in 2016-2017 to promote access for ATO veterans to government employment opportunities, enabling them to participate in economic life. The grantee developed two skills-training courses for 78 ATO veterans in Kyiv and Kramatorsk. By 2017, seven graduates became employed in public service institutions and three others entered into trial periods of employment. The grantee recorded the course and began preparing for its release on an online education platform in September 2017. This initiative received media attention and the president’s office expressed interest.

ESTABLISHING AN INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS RELIEF AND RESETTLEMENT CENTER IN KYIV CITY. In 2014, UCBI supported a joint effort between civil society and local government to provide accommodations and deliver social, psychological, and other services to displaced families in a low-income suburb of Kyiv. UCBI furnished and equipped twelve bedrooms, two offices, two kitchens, and a recreation room. UCBI also supported outreach efforts for an internally displaced persons center in the Kyiv suburb of Troyeschyna, a district in which many people sought affordable housing. The center opened on June 22, 2015 to serve internally displaced families. By expanding accommodations and services for internally displaced persons in Kyiv, UCBI helped local government and civil society mitigate social tensions and other destabilizing effects of the internally displaced persons crisis in Ukraine’s capital city, which hosts the second largest number of IDPs outside of the Donbas.

SECTION 2. WORKING IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

During project implementation, Ukraine faced a dearth of independent media content and conflict-affected communities lacked access to media. With both sides of the conflict involved in propaganda and counter-propaganda initiatives, those affected by the conflict did not enjoy access to all the information they needed to make informed decisions about their and their families’ futures. UCBI placed emphasis on supporting and promoting more independent media content, developing stronger networks of professional journalists reporting on the conflict, and investing in innovative techniques to disseminate reliable content via web-based media platforms and locally driven print media.

In recent years, residents of the Donbas region and internally displaced persons had increasingly come to rely on social media and other informal media sources for access to critical information. Although misinformation and propaganda had in some cases spread through these informal networks, exacerbating tensions, social media became the go-to outlet for thousands of conflict-affected residents. As part of a broader effort to improve access to information on issues related to the conflict, UCBI provided technical support and IT equipment to independent media outlets to help them produce media content highlighting key social and political issues in liberated territories in eastern Ukraine and conflict-affected communities.
MEDIA CONSUMPTION SURVEY. UCBI focused on tracking media consumption in southeastern Ukraine throughout implementation. In the fall of 2015, UCBI commissioned the first of its media consumption surveys in eight regions of Ukraine, including non-government controlled areas, to better understand the dynamics of the local media markets and to understand the political leanings of various segments of the media-consuming populations in areas UCBI worked in. This first survey targeted Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Luhansk, and Odesa. Survey results helped inform the direction of UCBI and were well received by Ukrainian and international audiences. One of UCBI's partners posted the survey results on its website and the results received more than 8,000 downloads in the past year. The results helped several USAID/OTI partners rethink their strategies for reaching target audiences and also helped inform donor support for media activities in eastern Ukraine. A follow-on survey expanded territorial coverage to two additional oblasts — Kherson and Mykolaiv — after results of the Social Cohesion and Reconciliation (SCORE) Index showed political trends influenced by media coverage in the regions.

Under this activity, UCBI partners mapped local media ownership at the regional level to better understand how it may influence content in the region. Additionally, UCBI supported a series of outreach initiatives, including roundtables in each of the regions surveyed, the dissemination of infographics on some of the more salient findings, and policy briefings for key interlocutors in the government to help inform future policy decisions related to media. This activity aimed to provide a window into the media habits of citizens in southeastern Ukraine to better understand how they received information and what information they believed was lacking.

DONBAS MEDIA FORUM. UCBI helped establish and organize the first Donbas Media Forum in 2015 and supported the event a second time in 2016. By 2017, the event had begun to bring together journalists and media professionals annually from Donetsk and Luhansk to network and discuss challenges and opportunities to provide information to Ukrainians in government controlled and liberated areas of Donbas. Opening the first forum, former United States Ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt noted, “The world should know the truth about what is happening - the persecution and torture of residents. I call on journalists to continue to cover the situation.” The forum allowed for an interactive and constructive dialogue between participants and a discussion on the internationally-recognized Principles of Journalism and Code of Ethics. The forum served an informational purpose and it helped institutionalize and strengthen the capacity of a UCBI partner to hold the third forum at the end of June 2017.
INDEPENDENT JOURNALIST INITIATIVE. In 2015, UCBI supported an initiative to help university students get involved in journalism and to express their perspectives on issues relevant to youth and civic activism in Kharkiv. This pioneering initiative supported student reporting and helped reduce manipulation of information in one of the largest student towns in Ukraine. UCBI helped deliver training sessions and mentorship programs to a group of 17 university students, which included internally displaced persons. In addition to receiving instruction in journalism, students also attended training with sociologists, linguists, and lawyers who provided them with training in their specific areas of expertise. With IT and media equipment provided by UCBI, the student group launched a new student newspaper published online. The student group noted that it aimed to provide an objective and independent perspective on familiar events and topics.

INTERNEWS MONITORING. From July to October 2015, Internews Ukraine conducted monitoring of media products created and disseminated by UCBI. This monitoring assessed the content produced with UCBI support and analyzed whether it corresponded to internationally recognized journalistic standards, in addition to looking at the content’s reach and reception. Internews analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of each outlet and developed recommendations for improvements. The study found that UCBI grantees adhered to journalistic principles and presented fair and unbiased coverage. The Internews assessment helped UCBI make decisions about follow-on activities and better design media-related initiatives.

SECTION 3. DEVELOPING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND A MODERN INCLUSIVE UKRAINIAN IDENTITY

Lack of internal mobility, poor support for youth, limited citizen engagement, a weak national identity, and persistent propaganda and misinformation have represented key drivers of frustration and division that have plagued Ukraine in recent years. These factors have also contributed to the overall lack of unity and common vision among Ukrainians about the country’s path to a modern and prosperous society. Furthermore, a weak connection to a modern Ukrainian identity had made communities in Donbas vulnerable to exploitation and externally driven separatism. Long standing political tensions, external propaganda, and a historical dependence on the state have made many residents in eastern Ukraine skeptical of Ukraine's transition and a modern Ukrainian identity.
SUPPORTING CIVIC YOUTH AND CREATIVE PLATFORMS IN EASTERN UKRAINE. For years, smaller cities in eastern Ukraine did not represent a political or social priority at the national level. As a result, residents of these communities had often felt isolated and ignored by the Ukrainian government. Lack of engagement between government and citizens in these communities resulted in poor development of local governance and social infrastructure, “brain-drain,” and a general decline in social inclusion, citizen engagement, and networking. To address this issue, UCBI supported “creative space” initiatives and youth platforms in Slovyansk, Severodonetsk, Kramatorsk, Pokrovsk, Novohrodivka, Mariupol and Bakhmut with the aim of increasing citizen and youth engagement through community development, urban activism training, community development projects, and cultural events to promote positive change in these small cities. The hubs and creative initiatives began serving as resource centers for activists and youth through the organization of training, workshops, and community development initiatives. UCBI-supported youth platforms provided young people with an opportunity to engage in a positive, non-political, and organized structure, laying the groundwork for future civic engagement based on the development of a modern, inclusive Ukrainian identity. Youth platforms in eastern Ukraine made significant steps toward becoming sustainable and independent organizations through their experience managing UCBI grant awards. Activities put on by these organizations helped with community development and involved local businesses in programming. The youth platforms in eastern Ukraine caught the attention of other cities, which began promoting Slovyansk and Kramatorsk as safe tourist destinations with an active cultural life.

DEVELOPING COMMUNITY COHESION AND RESILIENCE IN DONBAS. During UCBI’s implementation, communities across Donbas remained vulnerable to externally driven manipulation through the proliferation of misinformation. The discord sown by this misinformation, in turn, stymied community cohesion and hindered citizens from assuming an active and constructive role in the formation of a new modern national identity. Propaganda and a historical dependence on the state created skepticism in eastern Ukraine about Ukraine’s transition and reluctance among residents to embrace a modern national identity.

UCBI responded to this by supporting an experienced NGO to promote unity and productive engagement in vulnerable cities. With UCBI support, the NGO developed a proven approach to community activism and the promotion of greater citizen participation at the local level with the aim of addressing disunity in eastern Ukrainian communities. UCBI support enabled the organization to mobilize more than 600 volunteers from Ukraine, Russia, Poland, the United States, Hungary, and Lithuania to work on an initiative called Building Ukraine Together (BUR). Initiative volunteers organized summer service camps for youth in eastern, central, and southern Ukraine. Over the course of the initiative, participants renovated 38 houses and...
apartments for disadvantaged families affected by the conflict; developed the design for the Children’s Library in Svatove; revitalized parks in Severodonetsk, Pavlohrad, and Melitopol; and restored four community spaces and youth centers in Enerhodar, Mariupol, Chervonohrad, and Smila in the Cherkasy oblast. Additionally, the NGO promoted more than 24 community graffiti events with local artists and completed murals in all of the cities referenced above. Lastly, the initiative produced 12 videos to promote social activism and the grantee established a School of Responsible Citizenship entitled BUR.LAB. To ensure sustainable outcomes and motivate summer camp participants to partake in further community building, the organization established 12 teams of local volunteers in target communities. The teams dedicated themselves to implementing activities to help bring about social change and improve educational projects in their hometowns — with the ultimate goal of transforming and modernizing Ukraine. The NGO supervised the BUR.LAB teams and mentored them in the process of implementing their local initiatives. This cooperation and support led to community transformation, cultural and educational development, promotion of transparency, activist network development, and increased volunteerism and citizen participation in community governance.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS DURING SUMMER VACATIONS. The summers of 2015, 2016, and 2017 provided a unique opportunity to promote social inclusion for conflict-affected populations. During the reporting period, UCBI supported local summer camps, cultural programs, and inclusive celebrations reaching more than 50,000 beneficiaries. UCBI and its local partners held eight summer camps in 2015, with more than 1,300 participants coming from Kharkiv, Dnipro, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Participants, both long-time residents and newly displaced Ukrainians, engaged in cultural and arts activities and conflict-mitigation and confidence-building seminars to build relationships and equip children with tools to integrate into their new communities when the school year started.

The Azov coastal town of Prymorsk held one such camp, drawing 300 children from Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, and Donetsk to spend a week with peers near the sea. Participants included members of host communities as well as those recently displaced by the conflict. The camp included typical summer camp activities, such as dance, art, sports, and music, in addition, the organizers provided opportunities for children to begin recovering from the traumas they sustained 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 integrating the two communities. One of the participants who had relocated from Donetsk to Zaporizhzhia as an internally displaced person noted that she doubted her ability to work with children in the camp at first because of the intense environment. But, she said that as time went on, she built relationships with the volunteers and campers, which helped break down any negative preconceived notions she had about her new community. Through her participation, she noted that she built many new relationships and she became an active volunteer with
ongoing local programs to provide educational and cultural opportunities for displaced children. Many other parents involved with the camp followed her example, and this helped build a strong local volunteer base of both local and displaced parents. The volunteers began to meet regularly in Zaporizhzhia to plan activities for their children.

PROMOTING INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION THROUGH READING FESTIVALS IN ZAPORIZHZHIA. Beginning in early 2015, UCBI worked to mitigate social and economic tensions in Zaporizhzhia oblast. The project supported a three-day festival entitled, Book Toloka. UCBI partnered with a local organization for this event, which engaged 6,800 visitors (1,800 more than expected). Book fair participants included 59 publishing houses and 100 writers and artists. A total of 200 volunteers from all over Ukraine assisted the grantee with the festival. Visitor demand demonstrated that the goals of the event, to promote greater unity and cohesion, resonated with the local population. Subsequently, UCBI supported the second annual follow-on event in October 2016, which aimed to unite the Zaporizhzhia community around a modern Ukrainian culture by creating a platform for dialogue between opinion leaders, artists, publishers, interpreters, local citizens, IDPs, and ATO veterans. The second festival, the Zaporizhzhia Book Toloka, reached its goal of generating greater interest in Ukrainian literature and culture. A total of 150 writers and 20 publishing houses participated in the event, gathering about 9,700 attendees, including 1,935 children, 4,207 women, and 400 internally displaced persons. The festival created a huge social platform that united round tables, lectures, and discussions on topics, such as overcoming traumatic consequences of war, human rights, controversial aspects of Ukrainian history, and accessibility for people with special needs. This event contributed to community cohesion and created an opportunity for reflection. These events marked significant cultural milestones for Zaporizhzhia, and the organizers planned to continue them as an annual tradition. UCBI has also expanded the concept to other regions, such as Kramtorsk and Mariupol.

BRINGING NEW VISION TO PUBLIC SPACES IN SLOVYANSK AND BEYOND. Although Slovyansk, the former seat of power for the occupying separatists, largely recovered from the physical scars of war, during UCBI implementation, the community was still reconnecting with its Ukrainian identity. In addition, public spaces remained neglected. For example, the main city park remained dilapidated and local officials and residents identified restoration of this public space as a top priority. UCBI responded to this community priority as one of the few donors actively helping to improve public spaces in Slovyansk. In February 2016, UCBI began work with local stakeholders to develop a renewed vision for the city park through an inclusive, community driven, decision-making process.

With UCBI support, professional designers and community development experts from a Kyiv-based NGO crafted a new vision for Slovyansk’s central park. In collaboration with the local
community, the park was re-designed and re-branded using the park’s pre-Soviet name, Shovkovychnyi (Mulberry). The image of the park changed and it became a central platform for community events, uniting activists and engaging citizens. UCBI also helped formalize a newly created group called “Friends of the Park.” Members joined to play an active role in maintaining the revitalized park. The work of a landscape architect and graphic designer resulted in renovations and installation of equipment and, as of 2017, the park had been hosting public events regularly. During the summer of 2016, 11 events, including concerts, lectures, workshops, open air film screenings, children’s games, and photo exhibitions took place in the park. Citizens and local authorities appreciated the newly developed concept for the park. In July 2016, the Slovyansk City Council allocated nearly $112,360 for the park, making it one of the most important milestones in Shovkovychnyi’s development. UCBI’s partner received numerous requests from neighboring cities to assist them in revitalizing their public spaces. As a follow on to this activity, UCBI replicated this approach to community-driven improvements of public spaces in other cities in the northern Donetsk and Luhansk regions, establishing similar Friends of the Park groups and rebranding and reimagining public spaces.

**FACILITATING CULTURAL PERFORMANCE RALLIES IN EASTERN UKRAINE.** According to UCBI’s SCORE Index, eastern Ukraine recorded the largest number of people looking for a new direction and identity for the country. This interest in a new identity created an opportunity for UCBI to promote and implement media, music, art, literature, and popular culture programming in the region. These activities inspired local communities to play a more active role in their city’s cultural life and helped foster a Ukrainian civil identity based on social engagement and responsible citizenship. One of UCBI’s grantees contributed significantly to this movement during project implementation. The grantee held a series of summer festivals aimed at helping communities in Donbas shape a modern and inclusive Ukrainian culture. The organization employed a unique approach, using public events to engage local communities in the development of these programs, and empowering them to play an active and productive role in their communities, promoting the values of social responsibility, creativity, and a can-do spirit. In 2015, with UCBI support, the organization hosted festivals in 18 towns of Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, and Kharkiv oblasts. In 2016, more than 500 volunteers helped to hold festivals in 11 Donbas cities, attracting more than 80,000 participants. This engagement resulted in capacity building of partners in eastern Ukraine and connected them to civic national movements promoting modern Ukrainian culture and civic identity.

**SECTION 4. SUPPORTING GOVERNMENT REFORMS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL -**

UCBI activities under this objective supported members of local government who demonstrate reform and encourage civic engagement in local governance, transparency, and the implementation of national reforms. The slow pace of reform eroded many Ukrainians’ faith in the promise of the Maidan Revolution and their hopes for Ukraine to head in a new direction. According to a comprehensive survey completed by the International Republican Institute in
late January 2016, the vast majority of Ukrainians saw the country as moving in the wrong direction. They expressed frustration over the lack of demonstrative reform. Ukrainians in all parts of the country expressed a desire to see an end to the culture of corrupt officials pilfering public resources with impunity and undermining efficient, European-style services. UCBI quickly demonstrated a new relationship between the state and citizens. At the local level and in many communities, local officials proved willing partners in efforts to improve transparency, invite citizen involvement in decision-making, and improve service delivery. In cases where outdated ways of doing business still dominated local government, UCBI supported citizen efforts to advocate for reform and included citizens in decision-making through activities like roundtable discussions, training sessions, and informational campaigns.

ADVANCING ACCESS TO TRANSPARENT AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT SERVICES AT THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND THE MINISTRY OF TEMPORARILY OCCUPIED TERRITORIES AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS. The government of Ukraine created the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories and Internally Displaced Persons in April of 2016 to better coordinate assistance to citizens and to serve those adversely affected by the armed conflict in Donbas. The ministry did not receive sufficient resources from the state budget for its new staff of 114 employees and asked the United States government for assistance. UCBI provided the ministry with critical IT equipment, software, and furniture so it could establish itself and begin fulfilling its mandates.

UCBI helped the government of Ukraine to demonstrate its commitment to reform by improving the efficiency and transparency of key citizen services. In cooperation with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, UCBI supported the national government’s efforts to demonstrate such reforms by piloting service improvements in four of the busiest driver’s license and vehicle registration service centers in Kyiv. The centers were equipped with up-to-date IT equipment that allowed for improved quality of services and reduced the amount of time customers spend in the centers to obtain a requested service. A decrease in the number of complaints and an increase in the number of suggestions and recommendations in the request books reflected an improvement in the center’s image and a positive customer perception regarding improved services. The center’s staff also reported positive changes in customers’ attitude to their work.

MAKING LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPENDING MORE TRANSPARENT. UCBI helped civil society and local governments in eastern Ukraine demonstrate a commitment to reform and transparency by making an innovative online government e-procurement system, ProZorro, a reality. In collaboration with a Dnipro-based NGO, UCBI trained more than 1,000 government employees and local leaders on how to use the system; conducted public awareness campaigns about the system; and monitored the use of ProZorro in Dnipro. By 2017, Dnipro had evolved as a leader in the use of ProZorro. Nearly all government procurements in the region were conducted with ProZorro and reports suggested the city saved as much as $2.6 million in 2016 alone. UCBI leveraged this success in Dnipro, expanding the approach to other regions of eastern Ukraine, including Donetsk and Luhansk. UCBI’s ProZorro partner worked with pro-reform city council members and activists in cities like Slovyansk, Severodonetsk, and Mariupol to monitor and ensure its fair use. In Slovyansk, for example, when members of the city council attempted to block the full implementation of ProZorro, UCBI worked with pro-reform council members and activists to hold an information campaign that dispelled any
misconceptions about the system and argued for its implementation. In these Donbas communities, the implementation of ProZorro marked an important opportunity for reform-minded members of local government to make good on campaign promises and build the expectation for openness and accountability among their constituents. In 2017, ProZorro stood out as one of the most visible reforms in the country and its implementation served as a primary indicator of local authorities’ commitment to reversing corrupt practices.

HELPING TO ESTABLISH ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES CENTERS (ASC) IN EASTERN AND SOUTHERN UKRAINE. ASCs are physical access points for a range of government services for citizens and businesses across Ukraine. Services offered at ASCs include passport services and business and land registration. In the past, many of these services required long waits or the payment of bribes. ASCs were established by law in 2012, but for years made little progress to define standards, formalize operating procedures, and perhaps most importantly, clarify funding for ASCs. ASCs suffered from inconsistent implementation and very low customer satisfaction. This led to local initiatives to create model ASCs that focus on customer service and rapid response times by increasing salaries of ASC employees and optimizing business processes. This model captured the imaginations of local governments looking to model reform, transparency, and improved service delivery. UCBI supported the establishment of a new ASC in Mariupol by providing IT equipment, queuing system equipment, and by providing software for automation data processing, furniture and its delivery and installation, branding and promotional materials, and staff training.

The towns of Starobilsk, Rubizhne, and Lysychansk advanced to the forefront of innovation, becoming among the first district-level ASCs in the Luhansk region to adopt the electronic queue system, with the support of UCBI. These UCBI activities enabled local administrations to deliver services to residents more quickly and efficiently. Historically, ASCs had a reputation for long lines and had served as a symbol of inefficient, bureaucratic government reminiscent of Soviet times. The electronic queue systems and technical equipment provided by UCBI brought tangible changes in the way people interact with their ASCs and improved people’s outlook on the future of their local governments. As a result, UCBI helped support local government to be more inclusive in decision-making, more transparent, and more effective in its service delivery.

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY OF DNIPRO AND SLOVYANSK CITY COUNCILS. Through in-kind support, UCBI assisted progressive members of the Dnipro city council to modernize the legislative process by live streaming public meetings to increase citizen participation and transparency and to reduce corrupt practices. This activity enabled the city council to live stream the work of deputies in plenary sessions online, including meetings of working group commissions often known for holding meetings opaquely. All video was broadcast live, recorded, and made available to citizens in a searchable archive. Traditionally, the majority of decisions, including those allocating public resources, were reached in closed-door sessions, although this practice is contrary to Ukrainian law. Once installed, the electronic video system allowed local activists and journalists to observe discussion in real time and report on them. This UCBI-led initiative helped to reduce the incidences and perceptions of corrupt practices, reduced the incidence of clear conflicts of interest in the allocation of public funds, and enabled communities to observe and participate in critical government debates. The public can now track decisions, understand public expenditures, and see how deputies
ultimately vote. Through this activity, local government began making meaningful reform at the local level.

Almost three years after liberation from separatist control, Slovyansk city in northern Donetsk oblast remained divided and residents lacked trust in local authorities. Through a limited scope in-kind grant, UCBI introduced and installed an electronic vote tracking system in the Slovyansk city council to better manage the results of city council deliberations. UCBI also provided additional software that allowed the system to be adapted for other events outside of city council sessions. The system’s easy interface allowed open access to voting results which made the decision-making process in the city easier and more transparent.

**IMPROVING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS IN KHARKIV.** The ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine placed a significant strain on Kharkiv State Emergency Service resources, leaving the department with limited ability to respond to threats facing the local population. In 2014 and 2015, after separatist attacks targeted the Kharkiv State Emergency Service, the public’s fear of terrorism and emergencies related to armed conflict had increased. At the same time, critical emergency equipment resources, such as self-contained breathing apparatuses, were unavailable. UCBI sought to address this issue by providing technical and material assistance through a two-pronged approach that consisted of support to outreach activities and procurement of safety equipment. Assistance aimed to improve the capacity of the Kharkiv State Emergency Service staff to effectively react to threats and to perform their duties with vital life-saving equipment. Assistance also sought to increase public confidence in local government response capacities. In 2015, according to the State Emergency Service, more than 7,000 firefighting incidents occurred in Kharkiv oblast. The equipment procured with UCBI support benefited both firefighters and victims. UCBI also used strategic communications experts to provide public outreach training for State Emergency Service employees. This activity improved local government’s ability to respond to crisis situations and increased the confidence of Kharkiv residents in the ability of local emergency services to keep them safe during potential terrorist attacks.

**IMPROVING CITIZEN SERVICES IN SLOVYANSK.** After the liberation of Slovyansk in late summer of 2015, a wave of internally displaced persons from non-government controlled areas arrived in the city. The Department for Social Protection of Slovyansk City Administration lacked capacity and sufficient resources to effectively respond to requests for assistance from internally displaced persons. UCBI worked with the Department for Social Protection to increase the department’s capacity to deliver services, collect data, and conduct outreach and communications activities, and helped prepare it 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 department employees serving internally displaced persons and vulnerable community members. At the request of the city mayor, UCBI supported the department to
establish, manage, and equip a one-stop-window within the main city administration building where internally displaced and vulnerable people could receive assistance from six representatives from several key departments (e.g., pension, migration, social services) in one space. These initiatives enhanced customer experience with the Department for Social Protection and helped promote inclusive civic participation and constructive engagement between government and citizens in divided communities.

**PROGRAM EVALUATION**

Throughout implementation, UCBI placed a strong emphasis on monitoring, evaluation, and learning at the activity and program levels.

Annual strategic review sessions helped the team identify potential geographic locations and adjust program priorities to the most critical national and regional needs. UCBI held M&E meetings monthly, giving the program team the opportunity to conduct a deep dive on grantees and their activities and incorporate lessons learned into the program cycle.

In 2015, UCBI employed field program assistants who bolstered activity level monitoring, and the project engaged research firm GFK as a third-party monitor and data collector to ensure incorporation of accurate and timely information in activity development. This design provided an additional level of flexibility for UCBI, allowing it to release discrete sub task orders as needs arose and to carry out rolling M&E at the activity and program levels in the form of in-depth interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

Additionally, UCBI commissioned a number of stand-alone, third party studies to help gauge the effectiveness of its programming and further refine its objectives. These included monitoring of media products produced by UCBI grantees. For example, in 2015, UCBI conducted independent monitoring of three UCBI media outlet grantees. This monitoring assessed the content produced and whether it corresponded to internationally-recognized journalistic standards and analyzed the product’s reach and reception. The study found that UCBI’s grantees acted overall in a fair and unbiased manner, adhering to journalistic principles, and had garnered sizable audiences.

After UCBI’s initial media monitoring activities helped the project better understand the media environment and build key relationships, it commissioned a media consumption survey to obtain quantitative and qualitative research on the local media situation and media perceptions in Kharkiv, Odesa, Zaporizhzhia, Dnipro, and government-controlled areas of Luhansk and Donetsk. The results of this study helped determine future media activities and framed the media component under the project’s follow-on, UCBI II.

UCBI also implemented a localized version of the SCORE Index, an international tool to identify the root causes of social tensions used in contexts such as, Bosnia, Cyprus, and Nepal. A team of consultants visited Kyiv to work with a local research firm, and together they conducted nation-wide field surveys in every region of Ukraine. The SCORE Index offered a representative survey of Ukrainians in every oblast, with questions covering topics such as, inter-group relations, the direction of the country, and Ukrainian identity. The survey revealed that while Ukrainians showed similarities in many respects, significant political differences
existed with the potential to stand in the way of a cohesive vision for the future. Surprisingly, results revealed that the eastern oblasts of Ukraine supported a European future more than they had in the past and that they expressed views that were more pluralistic and open to compromise than western oblasts. The findings indicated that UCBI programming may have had a positive effect on dialogue and shifting opinions in the East, an effect which could be exported to other regions of the country. The SCORE results were finalized and helped to set a baseline and assumptions for future UCBI activities around national identity and reform. UCBI further incorporated SCORE findings into its project-level theory of change and strategy.

CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNED, AND BEST PRACTICES

UCBI embraced a culture of continual learning and incorporated lessons learned into its programming and management practices throughout implementation. The project benefited from frequent project performance management reviews that allowed the senior management team and leadership from all four corners to take a critical look at UCBI’s successes and challenges. The section below discusses significant challenges UCBI faced as well as the project’s lessons learned and best practices:

GRANTEE CAPACITY. At the start of UCBI, Chemonics envisioned that most project grantees would have the capacity to manage more advanced grant mechanisms, such as reimbursable and fixed amount awards, because of the long-standing presence of international donor programming in Ukraine. However, UCBI quickly realized that the majority of the project’s target beneficiaries were nascent organizations that had recently formed in the wake of the conflict in eastern Ukraine and were new to donor-funded programming. UCBI partners thus required significantly more capacity building and support than originally envisioned. The project dedicated significant time to ensuring UCBI grantees were set up for success and that they were not placed in a position where they were unable to manage an award. To ensure proper spending of project resources, UCBI provided grantees with equipment and technical resources in-kind, purchasing items on behalf of the grantee and then deeding them over. This greatly reduced grantee exposure to risk and allowed grantees to familiarize themselves with donor-funded programming requirements. At the same time, this capacity building support required for significant amounts of time from UCBI staff and resulted in a heavy load of administrative tasks that were difficult for the project’s staffing structure to absorb. Realizing this issue, UCBI put forth a modified staffing structure for the UCBI follow-on project, including additional administrative staff to adequately handle the workload associated with in-kind programming. Additionally, Chemonics conducted an assessment on what processes needed to be simplified to allow more grantees to be eligible for fixed amount awards. Fixed amount awards can provide grantees with more autonomy in their programming and UCBI staff with more bandwidth to focus on activity development and oversight, rather than procurement. Lastly, in Year 2 and 3, UCBI began setting up partnerships between experienced organizations and newer groups to help facilitate collaboration between organizations doing similar work and to encourage groups to share lessons learned and build each other’s capacity. This has resulted in more organizations in eastern Ukraine with the capacity to implement programming through donor funding.

GEOGRAPHIC SPREAD AND TRAVEL. Ukraine is a large country and poor infrastructure in many parts of eastern Ukraine have traditionally made domestic travel time consuming and
sometimes dangerous. UCBI originally focused geographically in Zaporizhia, Dnipropetrovsk, Mariupol, and Kharkiv, in addition to national-level programming out of the Kyiv office. The geographic spread of the project resulted in limited UCBI staff travel to these areas and dependence on field program assistants in these cities for program monitoring and activity identification. A program management review conducted in March 2015 identified a need for more staff travel to eastern Ukraine, especially by members of the senior management team. Increased travel to activity sites and the Kharkiv-based office greatly improved project communication and activity development. Additionally, when the project’s geographic focus shifted, UCBI opened a small office in Mariupol and moved the Kharkiv office to Kramatorsk to be closer to new priority areas in Luhansk and Donetsk. The UCBI follow-on also benefited from this lesson learned with the number of program staff located in the project office in Kramatorsk increased.

**ACTIVITY CLOSEOUT.** On fast-paced programs such as UCBI, activity generation and implementation often receive priority over closeout tasks. However, delayed closeouts can tie up transition activities pool funds that need to be de-obligated, prevent the project from fully benefitting from activity-level learning, and result in an administrative backlog. Timely closeout of UCBI activities represented a challenge for the project throughout implementation and an area for follow-on work to prioritize. UCBI completed extremely detailed final evaluation reports. From this experience, the project learned that the development of concise, action-oriented reports focused on lessons learned and opportunities for improvement could help streamline closeout. Additionally, during closeout, the project management unit and the field team developed an effective means of sharing accurate and timely financial information that captured all activity payments. UCBI’s experience suggested that sharing this tool on a monthly basis would ensure reflection of all activity payments in a database.

**ONE-TEAM APPROACH.** UCBI benefited from an extremely collaborative and transparent one-team approach, both in Ukraine and in Washington, D.C. Strong inter-team relationships allowed the project to pivot quickly when programming priorities shifted. UCBI experience suggested that follow-on work should continue this collaborative approach.

**WEB-BASED DATABASE.** The web-based database served as a critical tool that helped all UCBI staff stay up-to-date on programming. Although UCBI updated the database regularly with activity notes and detailed implementation information, the project found opportunities existed to improve database usage in the UCBI follow-on. For instance, UCBI found that the field office team regularly uploading activity information, such as grant agreements, modifications, and deliverables so that both the field and headquarters could access information would assist implementation. UCBI experience suggested that continuation of these improved operating procedures would help follow-on projects stay up-to-date with emerging program needs and clearly communicate with stakeholders both in Ukraine and Washington, D.C.
THE FUTURE OF UCBI

UCBI II, the UCBI follow-on project, launched in April 2017. UCBI II is designed to serve as a two-year quick response mechanism to continue programming that assists vulnerable, conflict-affected Ukrainian communities. UCBI II aims to assist these groups to more actively participate in, benefit from, and advocate for Ukraine’s transition to a prosperous and democratic state. UCBI II’s three program objectives are:

- To expand a constituency for reform and Ukrainian identity based on tolerance and democratic values
- To increase citizen confidence and engagement in the reform process at the local level
- To decrease vulnerability to external manipulation and information

UCBI II objectives may shift over the life of the project to account for changes in the political environment. Project activities will focus on promoting arts and culture, reclaiming public spaces, supporting an entrepreneurial mindset among youth, promoting volunteerism, installing public art and beautifying cities, increasing transparency of government spending, empowering civil society watchdog organizations, and modernizing service delivery. To advance project objectives, UCBI II intends to issue in-kind grants and to provide short-term technical assistance and direct distribution of goods and services. The in-country management team will draw on lessons learned under UCBI to inform implementation.

Building on the foundation established in Ukraine from 2014 to 2017 by UCBI, UCBI II will continue support to vulnerable, conflict-affected Ukrainian communities and advance Ukraine’s transition to a prosperous and democratic state.