



Ukraine: Rebuilding Social Connections

Building Ukraine Together -
volunteer and a community
programs in Crisis

Since 2014, Russia's invasion has displaced millions and fractured communities. Building Ukraine Together (BUR) created volunteer and a community programs where displaced people reconnect, learn, and find support - transforming crisis into opportunity for social resilience.

The Challenge

The war created massive educational and socialization gaps. Millions lost access to schools, community centers, and social networks. Many evacuated to unfamiliar cities, isolated from support systems. Depression, anxiety, and trauma became widespread. Traditional institutions couldn't reach everyone needing help, especially in newly formed displaced communities.



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Volunteer and a community programs

BUR created "Volunteer and a community programs" - is mobility-based volunteering, where youth travel, collaborate with local communities, and contribute to rebuilding war-affected areas. This fosters skills development, trust, social cohesion, and personal growth. Programs evolve based on what people want and need. BUR applies a "small responsibilities" strategy, allowing participants to gradually take on more roles and leadership. This both empowers youth and strengthens the organization's sustainability.

What Makes It Work

By training camp leaders, BUR has significantly expanded its impact, increasing the number of participants and communities involved. Many alumni continue volunteering or pursue careers in related fields. The holistic approach tackles interconnected challenges - social isolation, loss of purpose, educational gaps, economic uncertainty. Participants aren't passive aid recipients but active contributors who lead activities and shape their community. This restores dignity, control, and purpose.

Results and Impact

BUR has significantly increased its reach, engaging over 10 000 young people involved through its volunteer leadership model. The program strengthens youth networks, builds leadership skills, and encourages long-term civic engagement, with many participants continuing as organizers or launching their own initiatives. It also equips youth with resilience, adaptability, and teamwork skills, supporting social cohesion and contributing to the development of civil society in wartime Ukraine.

Key Lesson

In protracted crises, addressing social and psychological needs is as critical as meeting material needs. In the context of war, such a network of active young people plays a key role in strengthening civil society and advancing non-formal education. Investing in local volunteers and flexible programming creates resilient support systems that adapt to changing circumstances.