



EVALUATION OF EDF UKRAINE PROGRAMME

Phase 1 Evaluation Report

Abstract

Report of the external evaluation of the CBM-funded Ukraine programme managed by the European Disability Forum (EDF)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ONLY

Elaine Green & Gemma Cook

emgreenconsulting@gmail.com, gemmaconniecook@gmail.com

Contents

Executive Summary	4
Methodology	4
Key Findings	5
Recommendations to Strengthen Phase 2 & 3	6

Disability Language

This report is guided by the language of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability¹. We recognise that disability language differs according to context and culture, and that this can lead to sensitivities and difficulties at times. We also recognise that there is no absolute correct way but are clear that we consistently take an approach to language that is driven by inclusive values.

Consent and Anonymity

Prior to interview consent to include any information provided in a published report was secured from each interviewee. This report does not name anyone directly. For the purposes of contextualisation, comments tend to be attributed to the role and organisation of the commenting individual.

Authors and Acknowledgements

This report has been produced by Elaine Green and Gemma Cook. Elaine Green is an independent disability inclusion, global health and international development consultant with more than 20 years' experience of influencing policy at local, national, regional and international levels. Gemma Cook is a disability research doctoral scholar and consultant, with special interests in policy and understanding the meaning of human experience. She also has a background as a neurological physiotherapist specialising in disability. Sincere thanks go to the teams at the EDF Secretariat, especially Gordon Rattray and Mariya Yasenovska, and in Ukraine, including Larysa Bayda from the National Assembly for Persons with Disability Ukraine, and Darya Sydorenko from League of the Strong in Ukraine, for their support and contributions to this evaluation. Appreciation is also given to the translators who supported the in-country visit and without whom it would not have been possible to gather such detailed information.

¹ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-Persons-with-disabilities.html>

Acronyms

ADs	Assistive Devices
AOPD	Alliance of Organisations for Persons with Disabilities, Moldova
ASRM	Society for the Deaf, Moldova
CBM	Christian Blind Mission
CDPD	Centre for Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Moldova
CNDR	Romanian National Disability Council
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EDF	European Disability Forum
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
LDF	Lithuanian Disability Forum
LoS	League of the Strong, Ukraine
MEOSZ	National Federation of Organisations of People with a Physical Disability, Hungary
NAPD	National Assembly of Persons with Disabilities, Ukraine
NROZP	Slovak Disability Council
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPDs	Organisations of Persons with Disability
PFON	Polish Disability Forum
SUSTENTO	Latvian Umbrella Body for Disability Organisations
UHF	Ukraine Humanitarian Fund
UNCRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
UNDRR	UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNHCR	UN Refugee Agency
UNICEF	UN Children's Agency

Executive Summary

On 24th February 2022, Russia launched military action against Ukraine, with Russian forces crossing into the country from Belarus in the north, Russia in the east and Crimea in the south. In response to the launch of the military action by the Russian Federation, the European Disability Forum's partners in Ukraine, and neighbouring countries², identified the need for a rapid response to ensure the protection and respect of the rights of persons with disabilities. In April 2022, the European Disability Forum (EDF) received funding from CBM International for its first humanitarian action programme. This programme, running from April 2022 until July 2023 and titled "Ukraine Crisis: Organisations for Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) led disability inclusive response and recovery (phase 1)" aimed to ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs) were supported in the response and recovery efforts in Ukraine and seven neighbouring countries.

Two external consultants have been contracted to conduct an end-to-end external evaluation of the EDF 3-phased Ukraine programme to understand the impact of CBM International's funding. The overall aim is to critically analyse progress, and define lessons learned, as the programme progresses through phases.

Specific **objectives** of the evaluation are to:

- Identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.
- Generate programme evidence to enable programme managers and other relevant staff to make informed decisions regarding the programme's priorities and activities.
- Identify key lessons learned to enable EDF to provide the most effective possible response to similar situations in the future.

The evaluation will be conducted in three stages to cover the three different phases of the programme. This report covers phase one of the programme conducted between April 2022-July 2023. Subsequent evaluation reports will be produced for phase 2 (covering the period July 2023-March 2024) and phase 3 (covering the period from April-December 2024).

Methodology

The overall approach and methodology used for the evaluation comprises a mixed method approach capturing both quantitative and qualitative data that will be used to assess the progress of the Ukraine programme against expected deliverables, as well as assessing the impact of the programme and making

² Neighbouring countries include: Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Slovakia.

recommendations for adaptations/amendments to the programme where this is required.

Each of the three phases of the external evaluation will comprise desk-based reviews of programme documents, and key informant interviews (virtual and / or in-person). Programme documents will include country plans with deliverables and reports. Interviewees will include EDF staff, Ukraine programme partner organisations, service users and service user family members (i.e. programme beneficiaries), donor agencies, and external stakeholders.

This report concerns Phase 1, the methodology for which comprised: desk reviews of the programme proposal and monthly, six-monthly and annual review reports; an in-country visit to programme partners and project sites in Ukraine; and a series of virtual interviews with key internal and external stakeholders.

Key Findings

Phase 1 of the programme "*Ukraine Crisis: OPD led disability inclusive response and recovery*" set out to ensure that persons with disabilities and their representative organisations (OPDs) were not left behind in the response to, and recovery from, the Ukrainian war. It is clear that Phase 1 successfully met core objectives that included: providing direct support to persons with disabilities affected by the war; achieving significant advocacy outcomes both within Ukraine and at regional and EU levels; highlighting the impact of the war on persons with disabilities at international level; and strengthening the capacity of the disability movement in both Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

It is also clear, however, that this support needs to continue to ensure that persons with disabilities are not left behind as the war prolongs. This means a continued multi-pronged effort including responding to the needs of individual persons with disabilities, strengthening engagement with the wider humanitarian response (particularly in Ukraine), and building on efforts to demonstrate good practice in service delivery and the transition from residential institutions to community-based support (i.e. de-institutionalisation) and ultimately scale-up successful interventions.

For phase 2 and 3, it is recommended that EDF focus on supporting partner OPDs to: build effective relationships with key humanitarian actors and processes; increase financial sustainability of their own organisations and service delivery partners; and ensure OPDs put robust governance and safeguarding mechanisms in place. It is also recommended that EDF explores the roles the programme can play across: increasing the availability of accurate and reliable data on persons with disabilities; providing targeted support to individuals with complex and unique support requirements; supporting partners to identify appropriate opportunities for scaling up proven good practice; and in developing effective mechanisms to support mental health and wellbeing of staff and partners participating in the programme.

Key strengths of the programme that contributed to the significant service delivery, advocacy, and capacity building achievements can be broadly summarised as:

- The speed of funding, which was considered "*super important in the middle of the full-scale invasion*" (Strategy Development Manager, Lviv)
- The flexibility and diversity of the funding, which enabled partners to respond rapidly to the most pressing challenges in their local environment.
- The clear, simple, and effective programme management and decision-making processes associated with the programme.
- The operational support and guidance provided by EDF.
- Support provided by EDF to strengthen communication channels among OPD partners and with humanitarian actors.

Gaps and challenges identified at the end of the phase 1 evaluation included:

- A lack of accessible and accurate data on persons with disabilities.
- A lack of trained government staff and personnel to deliver quality services for persons with disabilities.
- A lack of accessible services and facilities, including access to and maintenance of assistive devices.
- Low awareness of disability rights and regressive attitudes towards persons with disabilities among Ukraine health professionals and decision-makers.
- Lack of attention given to support for accessing education and meaningful employment.
- Concerns regarding long-term financial sustainability of some partner OPDs and service providers.
- The need for support for the personal wellbeing and mental health of staff and partners implementing and/or supporting the implementation of the programme.

It is important to note here that many of the gaps and challenges listed above have already been identified by EDF as issues to address and some initiatives, such as the EMPOWER programme funded by CBM and the German government, are already beginning to overcome some of these gaps and challenges.

Recommendations to Strengthen Phase 2 & 3

The evaluation of Phase 1 has resulted in the following recommendations to strengthen Phase 2 and Phase 3:

Engagement with the humanitarian sector: an important priority is to continue to strengthen engagement with the humanitarian sector. To enable this, it is recommended that:

- EDF continue to support OPD partners in Ukraine (and other countries involved with the programme) to identify the most effective routes to engage with humanitarian coordination mechanisms. This could include

identifying and upskilling key staff members within the National Assembly for Persons with Disabilities (NAPD) and League of the Strong (LoS) to lead on engagement with the Ukraine humanitarian sector.

- Provide support to partners to access funding from the Ukrainian Humanitarian Fund (UHF). This could mean seconding an EDF staff member, or consultant, with humanitarian fundraising expertise to Ukraine, to support applications to the UHF.
- EDF and OPD partners in Ukraine, Hungary, Romania, and Lithuania continue their engagement with the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) and maximise the potential impact of the November 2024 EU Regional Forum on DRR, to ensure disability rights are mainstreamed into future DRR strategies, plans and responses.

Disability data: The evaluation team recognises the complex and challenging context of disability data collection in Ukraine and surrounding countries. However, it also recognises the importance of disability data collection to powerfully advocate for disability rights and to optimally respond to needs. It is therefore recommended that EDF and partner OPDs:

- Where possible, and without placing undue burden on OPD partners and service providers, aim to capture data that is disaggregated by disability type within EDF monitoring systems, to gain a better understanding of persons with disabilities at risk of being left behind.
- Work collaboratively to pool knowledge, skills, and understanding of available disability data collection tools, such as the Washington Group Questions, to optimise national disability data systems and mechanisms, taking into account the government measurements systems already in place.
- Work constructively together with other data collection initiatives to create a central disability database that responds as accurately as possible to the rapidly changing situation in Ukraine.

Financial Sustainability: Given the high levels of financial precarity among OPD partners, sub-grantees and service providers, it is recommended that EDF continue supporting programme partners to strengthen their fundraising capacity including through:

- Raising awareness and showcasing examples of good practice in service delivery and care that can be scaled up.
- Equipping OPD partners with skills in financial management and fundraising, through the continued provision of relevant training and support in these areas.
- Supporting partner OPDs to identify and access appropriate financial support.
- Understand the reasons why some OPDs have been unsuccessful in small grant applications, and explore whether this may mean unmet need.

Scalability and Sustainability: Recognising the examples of good practice developed and strengthened by the programme, it is recommended that during phase 2 and 3 of the programme:

- Good practice examples, including of the transition from residential institutions to community-based support (de-institutionalisation) and effective engagement of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action, are documented and shared in a timely and effective manner with influential policy and decision makers.
- EDF support OPD partners to identify the appropriate mechanisms through which to enable the scaling up of effective good practice demonstrated by the programme.