

VNG International / PAX project summary: Eastern Ukraine State Building and Accountability (EUSTAB)

The Ukrainian state and society have been greatly destabilised over the past 1.5 years, putting the human security of Ukrainian citizens at risk. Decentralization has the potential to become a valuable instrument out of the current crisis in Ukraine. As a response, VNG International, in close cooperation with PAX and local partner organisations, has designed a project to foster stability in Eastern Ukraine from the bottom up through legitimate and responsive governance and inclusive political and public participation processes at the local level.

The project interventions aim at providing a participatory, locally driven response to the reform efforts, focussing on the Eastern regions of Donetsk, Luhansk (government-controlled territory), Kharkov, Dnepropetrovsk and Zaporizhia. The proposed interventions in these areas are linked to the high influx of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who need basic services such as education, health care, housing, jobs. Subsequently, municipal structures in these regions face challenges in providing these services to IDPs, while at the same time, these groups of citizens are especially vulnerable and traumatised; the trust in the government is weak, and resources and services are scarce and poorly administered.

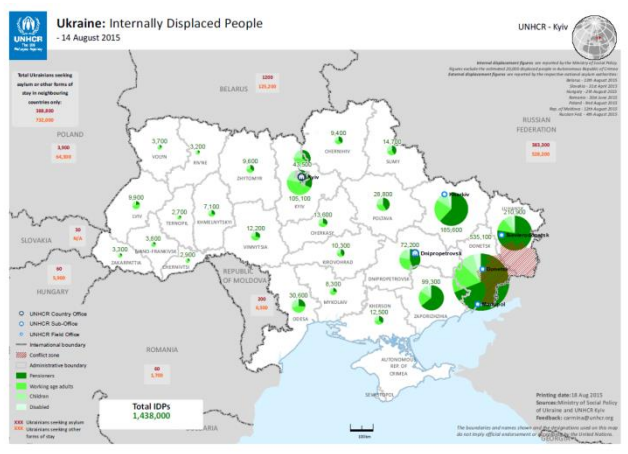


Figure: Internally Displaced People in Ukraine (August 2015)

At the core of the project stands the building of trust and a stable, predictable, law-based relationship among citizens and municipalities. To achieve this, the project works in 3-ways:

1. On the **demand-side**, the project provides inclusive processes for local civil society, including IDP groups, to elaborate realistic demands towards local government actors. In addition, citizens participation practices in local policy and project development will be developed.
2. On the **response side**, the project provides support to local authorities to formulate systematically accurate, accountable responses to demands put forward by (civil) society.
3. On a third level, crucial dissemination of the results of the project to other local governments within Ukraine will be done through the partners (local government associations).

Figure: Methodology



Capacity building activities are supported by **small scale locally driven initiatives** aimed at carrying out concrete municipal tasks in a transparent and accountable way. Municipalities will draft their own plans and organise an inclusive process, thereby involving local stakeholders, aiming at locally driven initiatives to improve equal access to basic services, restore trust in local authorities, and to contribute to social cohesion among different ideological groups. These are elements of peace building processes. The development of the local pilot projects allows the involved parties to go through all the different phases of the project, using inclusive processes and meeting demands from citizens.

We consider this project to bring together the three most crucial aspects for change:

1. an active and involved population
2. an active and effective civil society
3. a responsive, transparent and accountable local government

In order to create trust, change has to be supported at these three levels. This is especially the case in conflict contexts. Decentralization that encourages locally driven initiatives will be critical in finding inclusive and non-violent solutions to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. It is the participative nature of these processes that is crucial for its success. Through accountable processes, change is supported at these three levels.

Figure: Aspects for change



The project will be implemented by VNG International, in close collaboration with PAX and local partner organisations (local CSOs and government associations).

The project with a budget of € 672.358 is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and will run from January 2016 till December 2017.