

DONBAS

transformation

challenges

MONITORING

FOLLOW-UP REPORT

ENHANCING CIVIL SOCIETY'S IMPACT IN DONBAS

on the results of the strategic seminar

"Involving Civil Society in the Conflict Resolution Process in Donbas"

in Warsaw on 26-28 June 2017

conflict

Russia

experience

IDP

civil

SOLIDARITY

perspective

mediation

resource peace Minsk discourse

ADVOCACY connection justice

peacebuilding

UKRAINE

human rights media CIVIL

SOCIETY recommendations



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List of Acronyms

ATO - Anti-Terrorism Operation Zone

CSOs - Civil society organisations

CSP - Civic Solidarity Platform

“DPR”/“LPR” – “Donetsk People’s Republic” and
“Luhansk People’s Republic”

DRA - Deutsch-Russischer Austausch e.V. (German-
Russian Exchange)

ECHR - European Court of Human Rights

ICC - International Criminal Court

IDP - Internally displaced persons

MFA - Ministry of Foreign Affairs

MinTOT - Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories
and Internally Displaced Persons

NGO - Non-governmental organisation

ODIHR - OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and
Human Rights

OSCE - Organisation for Security and Co-operation in
Europe

PCU - Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine

RF - Russian Federation

SMM- Special Monitoring Mission of OSCE in Ukraine

UN - United Nations

UT – Uncontrolled territories - Temporarily occupied
and uncontrolled territories of the Donetskaia and
Luhanskaia Oblasts

WILPF - Women’s International League for Peace and
Freedom

Executive summary

In the fourth year of the violent conflict in East Ukraine, this report refers to the work of civil society actors, as one of the driving forces for social change. This report also takes stock of the question of how civil society can enhance its impact on the process of conflict resolution in Donbas.

The recommendations, presented in this report, were pronounced by civil society actors from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries at a strategic retreat in Warsaw (26-28 June 2017), which was co-organised by the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) and the DRA (German-Russian Exchange), in co-operation with ODIHR and the support of the French and German governments.

The strategic retreat in Warsaw was important because it addressed two overlapping challenges which are integral to the civic engagement in Donbas - the tense relationship between Russian and Ukrainian civil society communities, and the interrelation between the approaches of human rights advocacy and peacebuilding. To respond these challenges can help enhance the impact of civil society in the process of conflict resolution.

The following findings are the summation of discussions in 9 thematic working groups and in plenum:

First, since the Maidan events and the beginning of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, a vibrant civil society has flourished and civic engagement in and around the Donbas region has become more dynamic. NGOs are active in various fields: besides humanitarian aid, they provide documentation of war crimes, support IDPs, give legal assistance to victims of war, and engage in human rights advocacy, including the protection of women's rights and the rights of minorities. Additionally, they carry out projects on environmental, informational, educational, health and youth issues, etc..

Often, civil society activists work in a volatile security environment. Their contribution is crucial as it aids in improved living conditions on the ground and focuses on the needs of the most vulnerable. Some civil society activists are involved in conflict resolution, reconciliation and dialogue. They are keen to improve and enhance the lines of communication with NGOs from the Russian Federation in order to help defuse tensions.

Second, there is a significant sectoral fragmentation among the CSOs working in different fields on Donbas issues. In response to identified needs in the society, many NGOs work autonomously and rely only on their own resources, contacts and knowledge. Furthermore, there is an incomplete understanding of what other CSOs do. This is exemplified by the strong emphasis that human rights

activists place upon reestablishing international norms as a critical pathway for enhancing justice and peace in the Donbas region. Given the state of knowledge about the nature of violent social conflicts, from the peacebuilder's perspective, emphasis on the legal system is unlikely to help resolve the conflict and establish a stable environment of peace in the region. There is little confidence within the NGO-landscape because there is a misperception and lack of familiarity with their methods and approaches. Also a rather rudimentary collaboration with state structures obstructs synergies despite the tremendous efforts of civil society actors. This is a significant problem within an already large range of challenges that resulted from this violent conflict.

Third, there is a deep divide between the Ukrainian and Russian civil societies. Growing mistrust is based on partly differing views on the causes of the conflict, as well as the possibilities for its resolution. Additionally, the experiences with cooperation are missing. Because there is a lack of understanding of the background, context and possibilities of both the Ukrainian and Russian civil societies the potential for joint action seems unlikely. There are only a few projects where representatives from both countries actually work together.

The participants in Warsaw were aware of listed problems and were interested to find allies to launch joint international/interdisciplinary projects, in order to overcome existing tensions.

The findings allow to make two conclusions:

1. To strengthen the impact of CSOs in the process of conflict resolution in Donbas will require more strategic cooperation. Still a punctual collaboration seems to be a more plausible alternative comparing to a stronger unification of resources.
2. Because many of the constraints that prevent the CSOs from better using synergies to overcome the multifaceted consequences of the violence are recurrent and internal to the current political culture, both of Ukrainian and Russian societies; and because they inhibit the restoration of a rule of law and democratic peace in Donbas, it is necessary that the international community increases its support of joint activities (especially of CSO-representatives from Ukraine and Russia) as well as proceeds with technical and methodological support and a transfer of best practices.

The report materials suggest following general recommendations to CSOs (1) and to the international community (2):

1. How can civil society enhance its impact in Donbas?

- #1: Unite the efforts and resources wherever possible and plausible. Conduct joint meetings with Russian and Ukrainian participants in various formats in order to overcome barriers and bring people together.
- #2: Discuss whether and how you can jointly address the challenges. Define the priorities, directions and methods of work. Develop a mechanism for strategic influence on the conflict process. Search for allies and expertise in the civic sector of various countries, in scientific and other communities.
- #3: Restore and improve communications between people from across the demarcation line: Include small towns/settlements near the demarcation line in civil projects in order to encourage civil activity in this territory. Promote art projects in the grey zone and invite participants from the uncontrolled territories to join. Work with children and young adults. Support activists living in the uncontrolled territories. Motivate IDPs towards civic engagement.
- #4: Perform an independent qualitative analysis of the conflict, its actors and interest groups, as well as of the process of the Minsk agreements. Monitor the developments, establish (cross-sectoral and cross-national) discussions on the Minsk process and create a neutral description of it in order to inform the broader public and oppose propaganda in different countries.
- #5: Organise joint monitoring visits and engage local activists from the conflict zone to perform monitoring in the uncontrolled territories. Conduct a monitoring of Ukrainian legislation guided by the question: "How do resolutions adopted by the government of Ukraine impact the conflict zone?"
- #6: Establish systematic communication with official institutions engaged in decision making on Donbas issues, as well as stable cooperation with SMM to facilitate the information exchange and support of civil society activists doing field work in the conflict zone.
- #7: Initiate public discourse on the possibilities of peaceful conflict transformation in different countries. Use conflict-free language and non-manipulative means of communication. Develop a common lexicon for communicating "difficult" concepts (create a "dictionary" of peace).
- #8: Fight any political manipulation of the conflict issues and resist the attempts of instrumentalisation by political forces. Fight propaganda. Engage emigrants from

Ukraine and Russia living abroad to monitor the media coverage on processes in the conflict region in different countries. Establish communication channels to European (international) journalists. Disseminate an adequate information about the developments in and around the Donbas.

#9: Bring civil society expertise in political negotiations and advocacy work, improve qualifications and expand knowledge.

2. How can the international community support the CSOs working on Donbas issues?

- #1: Promote confidence building measures and collaboration between international institutions and CSOs from different countries.
- #2: Facilitate knowledge exchange and dialogue projects that bring together CSO-activists from different professional backgrounds (i.e. peacebuilding and human rights). Support Ukrainian NGOs in their search for Russian partners capable of actively engaging in joint civil projects.
- #3: Support a development of joint (cross-sectoral and cross-national) analyses and public positions, coordinate provision of joint recommendations on the national level in order to effectively influence the official positions of different states involved in the peace negotiations.
- #4: Encourage and support joint advocacy campaigns carried out simultaneously in different countries in order to raise public awareness about the Donbas issues. Disseminate information on how social activists may work with international programmes.
- #5: Provide reliable information for a broad public in different countries via international networks of different professional groups. Strengthen the support of international organisations and communities to increase social pressure on conflicting states.
- #6: Develop and conduct regular trainings designed to advance a culture of dialogue for various target groups. Organise (joint) trainings of Russian and Ukrainian monitors in order to document the processes on both sides of the demarcation line. Support trainings of bloggers and journalists in order to conduct joint and long-term coverage of the conflict in Donbas, as well as trainings for Russian attorneys in order to improve effectiveness in bringing criminals to justice.

#7: Lobby the mechanisms of admittance so that journalists and monitors may work in the non-controlled territories on an international level.

#8: Support educational trips of CS-activists from Ukraine and Russia to other countries to collect information on different aspects of the post-conflict phase (e.g. development of legislation related to the status of victims and reparations, re-conciliation processes, etc.).

Ukrainian civil society requires the support of the international community and their colleagues from the Russian Federation, first and foremost, to raise awareness and change public opinion about the conflict in Donbas as well as to document violations or crimes connected with the military conflict on the Russian side, in particular on the territories not under the control of the Ukrainian

government. International organisations and international community may not impose their vision or way of coordinating activities on Ukrainian civil society, but in possessing powerful financial and institutional resources, they may initiate these activities, provide expertise and practical support, integrate the Ukrainian CSOs as equal members in the European community. As the experience of the initiation of the European civil society platform CivilMPlus shows, regular communication between different civic actors working on the Donbas issues is based on reciprocal confidence. The facilitation of confidence building can help to do a strategic planning of joint activities, and thus strengthen a cooperation and enhance the impact of civil society in the process of conflict resolution and restoring Donbas as a peaceful region of Europe.

Introduction

On 26 - 28 June 2017 a strategic seminar on the role of civil society in the conflict resolution process in the Donbas took place in Warsaw. The seminar was organised jointly by the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) and Deutsch-Russischer Austausch (DRA e.V.) in collaboration with the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and with the support of the French and German governments. Seminar participants included about 40 civil society activists from Ukraine, Russia, Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, France and other European countries, as well as official OSCE representatives (SMM, PCU, ODIHR) and representatives of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of France and Germany.

The seminar aimed at:

1. Summarise three years of efforts involving different types of activities focused on the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine;
2. Provide information on various civic engagement activities in the conflict region;
3. Discuss specific problems in various aspects of the conflict in the Donbas (working in topic groups);
4. Establish contacts and promote trust among actors working in different areas with a focus on the Donbas conflict, both inside civil society and between the civil sector and official institutions (OSCE and others);
5. Identify priorities and methods for peaceful transformation of the conflict in the Donbas;
6. Discuss possibilities for establishing professional (international and interdisciplinary) collaboration and developing a common civil society strategy incorporating the experiences of activists from different focus areas (human rights, peacebuilding, humanitarian work, etc.).

This report outlines the seminar's primary results in several parts:

1. A short description of participants' views on problems related to selected aspects of the conflict (based on discussions in working groups during the seminar);
2. Recommendations developed by participants for civil society and official institutions sorted by topic and discussed in the working groups. Recommendations for the international community are presented separately;
3. Analysis of issues arising out of the interaction of human rights advocacy and peacebuilding;
4. Bank of ideas proposed by civil society representatives based on their participation in the seminar.

The seminar findings support a development of a common strategy aimed at enhancing the civil society's impact in the process of conflict resolution in Donbas.

1 Short Description of Participant Views on Problems Related to Selected Aspects of the Conflict

Work Group #1:

Interactions between Peacebuilding and Human Rights Advocacy

Group members discussed and compared the concepts of peacebuilding and human rights advocacy and identified problems in both areas of activity in the context of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, as also proposed possible solutions for resolving the existing tensions between these two different areas.

Group members defined the main goal of a peacebuilder as helping people regardless of their ethnic, religious or other identity. To achieve this goal, a peacebuilder must possess the following skills: realistically evaluate his/her image as a peacebuilder in the eyes of others; predict how the conflict will develop and adapt accordingly; analyse every layer of the conflicting parties' identities.

In turn, the goal of a human rights advocate is to monitor compliance with international law and take a critical stance toward de facto and de jure authorities' compliance with human rights legislation (separation of politics from human rights).

During the discussions, the group identified the following contradictions between the two approaches: 1) The legitimisation of de facto authorities in the event of any interaction therewith; 2) Accepting the need for elements of controlled violence within the bounds of the law and observance of human rights; 3) The use of pseudo-human rights advocacy and pseudo-peacebuilding by conflicting parties for purposes of propaganda or gaining a military advantage; 4) Claims to absolutism: human rights must be observed without exception or half-measures; 5) Absence of neutral assessment of decisions made by conflicting state parties through the prism of human rights and sustainable peacebuilding; 6) Human rights activists refusing to account for the level of transformation resulting from people's involvement in the conflict.

Work Group #2:

Working and Documenting in the Controlled and Uncontrolled Territories

Only Ukrainian human rights activists participated in the work of the group. The participants noted that the presence of Russian human rights advocates and OSCE representatives could have improved chances of the brain storming for solutions to problems pertaining to

documenting human rights violations in the controlled and uncontrolled territories of the Donbas.

During the discussions, the working group identified the following difficulties in the documentation process: a lack of documenters in the uncontrolled territories; a lack of access to certain areas and zones; a lack of international monitoring by representatives of various countries. In particular, not enough documenters from Russia or Belarus are prepared to travel to the uncontrolled territories of the Donbas.

The group also noted difficulties in analysing and processing information associated with the setup of a single database. Difficulties in cooperation exist between the owners of the various human rights violation databases, and there are no established rules for using information gathered in different databases.

Working group members emphasised the need for advocacy activities due to information about human rights violations and crimes against humanity in the conflict zone not easily reaching the general public, especially in Russia and the European countries.

According to the group members, victims of the conflict do not receive sufficient legal support - criminal investigations take a long time if undertaken at all. This situation is due to a lack of legal counsel capable of preparing lawsuits to be filed with the national (Ukrainian) courts and the ECHR.

Work Group #3:

Expectations and Experience of Collaboration between CSOs and Official Bodies/Political Institutions

The group discussed expectations and experiences of civil society collaborating with official governmental and political institutions. The participants noted difficulties interacting with authorities in Ukraine and Russia.

Group members identified inconsistent and poorly thought-out legislative processes as one of the main institutional problems of the central government of Ukraine. Not all necessary laws are being adopted, and some of the laws that have been adopted introduce contradictions into legislation or violate human rights. Civil organisations actively participate in developing and modifying legislation; however, it is a challenging

process that requires extensive support from international organisations and public support to defend the need for a bill or draft regulation.

The group also discussed a lack of funding for, and control over, law enforcement.

Ukraine has created the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories (MinTOT) and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP); however, the Ministry of Social Policy still holds most of the authority. The ministries are underfunded by the government and cannot carry out routine duties. The situation is complicated by a lack of staff and representation of other ministries in the Donbas.

Group members also noted that decisions made at the central level are not implemented locally. Further, the activities of a number of Ukrainian governmental institutions, including local authorities, are characterized by populism, paternalism and corruption. Effective cooperation between civil society and official governmental structures in Ukraine is impeded by the local power of oligarchs as well as the government's cooperation with bogus civil society organisations. After accepting humanitarian aid, local authorities do not always transfer it to the end recipients.

Among problems in the relationship between the government and civil society in Russia, the working group noted the inability of civil society to directly influence the state power, as well as the active collaboration of Russian law enforcement authorities with the authorities of the so-called "DPR"/"LPR".

Work Group #4: Monitoring of the International Negotiations in Minsk

The working group discussed the levels of influence in the process of the Minsk negotiations and possible formats for participating in meetings. The group identified five formats: 1) The Normandy Format, used by the ministries of foreign affairs of the participating countries – who so far failed to develop a "road map", announced in Fall 2016; 2) Trilateral Contact Group – Ukraine, Russia and OSCE – which has four subgroups and holds two meetings a month. The Trilateral contact group has developed many documents and solutions that, although in use, are not considered an official "road map"; 3) A joint centre for monitoring and coordination of issues associated with the cease-fire and stabilisation of demarcation line. This centre does not possess strict rules but is expected to handle any decisions affecting the peacebuilding process, as well as routine, daily issues such as water supplies. 4) OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM); 5) The Minsk Platform, an

informal parliamentary group in the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada, includes representatives of different political parties in the Ukrainian Parliament.

Working group members believe that responsibility for the tension in societies associated with the Minsk Agreements rests with politicians who signed them. The lack of a clear strategy for executing the agreements has given some parts of the societies an impression that they are being deceived. Meanwhile, information is constantly being manipulated: each side in the public space interprets events in its own favour. As election seasons are about to begin both in Ukraine and Russia, it is quite likely that the Minsk Agreements will be misused for populist statements.

According to group members, the Ukrainian political community is characterised by a weak willingness to compromise. Many politicians use the Minsk negotiations to build their own political image, and the debates do not lead to joint proposals. A possible participation of representatives from uncontrolled territories proves problematic: their safety and the sincerity of their position are in question.

The low intensity of socio-political discourse about opportunities and paths toward conflict resolution was also noted as a negative factor affecting the process.

The civil society in Russia is unable to successfully influence the authorities, particularly, when it comes to implementing agreements. However, to the opinion of the working group, launching a public discourse in the lead of elections might be a suitable point of time, both in Ukraine and in Russia.

Work Group #5: Human Rights Situation in Eastern Ukraine: Challenges and Possibilities for Monitoring

During the discussion in the working group, a few key issues were raised: Do NGOs specialise in certain types of crimes? Is there any coordination of NGO efforts focusing on different topics inside the human rights spectrum? What are the priorities of monitoring organisations in selecting topics for investigation?

To the opinion of the group members, uncertainty over future developments in the region and difficulties with legislation are main issues associated with monitoring work: the uncontrolled territories are governed by the modified former Criminal Code of the USSR, the Ukrainian territory is governed by Ukrainian legislation, while in the conflict zone, peacetime legislation fails to address the

range of issues caused by hostilities. Another important problem is that Ukrainian monitors cannot work in the uncontrolled territories.

According to working group members, human trafficking and hate crimes are not recognised as separate categories by monitoring organisations and are not a priority for most of them. One further important issue is the lack of transparency in monitoring processes and a poorly established redirection system: Facts are recorded but often not investigated, which worsens victims' psychological condition and leads to feelings of disaffection. It is not clear what should be done with found facts that fall into a category which the recording NGO does not specialise in.

The working group members also noted that communication between civil society actors often takes place using private channels and is not systematic. The cluster system for information exchange proves ineffective because NGOs do not have sufficient time or funding to support the full-scale operation thereof. The participants also mentioned the issue of the lack of trust between NGOs.

In addition, some problems associated with monitoring activities are caused by the attitudes of the populace that cares more about humanitarian aid than observing and restoring human rights.

Work Group #6: Civil Society's Role in Opposing Propaganda

Discussion participants called the lack of access to authentic information from the so-called "DPR" and "LPR", as well as populism surrounding the issue of the Donbas, and the unwillingness of the media to broadcast information about life on the occupied territories, as a few of the main problems. The need to inform general public about processes going on in the Donbas is obvious.

A powerful propaganda tool operated by Russia inside and outside the country's borders, is another key problem. Ukraine's refusal to use the Russian language to express Ukraine's official position also negatively impacts information distribution to the broad public. In addition, discussion participants noted the presence of "mirror propaganda".

According to working group members, disproportionate measures are taken against the media in Ukraine: in particular, there is a lack of clear criteria for identifying calls for separation, war and rebellions. The same statements may be interpreted differently depending on their source. For instance, citizens who support the secession

of the Donbas from Ukraine and joining Russia are called separatists, while radical statements that support the separation of the Donbas from Ukraine or building a wall around the conflict zone do not fall within this definition.

Some participants also feel that it is unacceptable to publish the names of journalists working in the occupied territories (on websites like Mirotvorets, in magazines, etc.). This threatens the safety of journalists working in Donetsk and Luhansk, discredits them in the eyes of the Ukrainian public and robs them of their motivation to continue working in the uncontrolled territories.

Work Group #7: Cooperation between Civil Society and OSCE Institutions

Working group members, including representatives of ODIHR, SMM and PCU, discussed problems faced by OSCE representatives and agents of civil society working on the conflict in the Donbas.

One of the consequences of the military conflict in the Donbas is the growing fragmentation of society; the level of misunderstanding and rejection of interests and problems of other population groups, e.g. internally displaced persons (IDP), has greatly increased.

The OSCE SMM representative emphasised that SMM's terms of operation in Ukraine include cooperation with Ukrainian civil society. At the moment, there are 10 focus groups comprised of Ukrainian NGOs participating in regular consultations with SMM representatives, and other NGOs can deliver their questions and requests through these teams. The mission's priority reports are published in three languages. OSCE (SMM, PCU) official representatives expressed their willingness to communicate and distribute information.

The job of the Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine (PCU) includes project-oriented work and project support, but does not involve enforcement of project implementation. In particular, the National Dialogue project is aimed at developing a culture of democratic dialogue inside Ukrainian society, as well as establishing a dialogue between civil society and the authorities in Ukraine.

Based on the experience of group members from civil society, cooperation with the OSCE only occurs in isolated instances and on an ad-hoc basis, while continuous contact with OSCE representatives in key positions would be conducive to building long-term, mutually beneficial relations. In addition, it was noted that communication between the OSCE and civil society representatives tends to be unidirectional. The OSCE provides no feedback on

information it receives from civil society representatives or the population; this type of communication undermines incentives to share information.

Inside Ukraine, the OSCE cooperates exclusively with Ukrainian organisations. At the same time, cooperation with the civil societies of other countries that focus on Ukraine could expand the spectrum of opportunities for conflict resolution in the Donbas.

Work Group #8: Gender Aspects of the Peacebuilding Process

The following two questions were posed by the group to consider as special aspects of the problem: 1) How does the conflict affect men and women? 2) How can women be included into the peacebuilding process?

While working towards answering these questions, peacekeepers encounter the following problems: 1) the existence of gender stereotypes; 2) poor understanding of the problem in Ukrainian society; 3) low-level knowledge of gender discourse and gender issues common in the Western democracies.

However, working group members noted existing examples of peacebuilding activities that account for gender issues, including: mediator training courses (the Women of Don Association, the Odessa Mediation Group, OWEN); the introduction of the National Program for Gender Issues in Ukraine entitled "Women. Peace. Safety" (2016); attention to the rights of IDP, with consideration of the gender aspect; projects aimed at preventing human trafficking; Roma women's rights protection; reports on gender violence in Eastern Ukraine (e.g. "Unspoken Pain" from the East Ukrainian Centre for Gender Initiatives); report "Invisible Battalion" on women's participation in military activities in the ATO Zone by the Ukrainian Women's Fund; publication of gender-focused monitoring reports by SMM in Ukraine, as well as UN activities targeting women (e.g. WILPF).

Work Group #9: Compensations for Victims of the Conflict

A society experiencing military conflict is usually characterised by fragmentation and radical opinions and is an easy target for political manipulation. The issue of military conflict victim status has great potential for creating tensions, especially in connection with the approaching electoral campaign in Ukraine. The questions then become: Who should be assigned victim status? On what basis? How to define the conflict zone? What benefits

should this status bring? How will compensations be funded – from the budget of Ukraine or reparations paid by the aggressor state - Russia?

As main problems, the discussion participants identified a lack of a comprehensive approach to the topic of combining the knowledge and experience of different Ukrainian actors with expertise from other conflict regions, as well as the absence of resources to fund compensation to conflict victims in Ukraine.

Work Group #10: Establishing Contacts with Residents of the Uncontrolled Territories (UT)

During the discussions, working group members identified a number of obstacles regarding communication with residents in the uncontrolled territories. The overall situation over the past few years has promoted deepening mistrust and animosity among the populations on different sides of the demarcation line. Frayed economic ties and transportation links as well as a complicated procedure for crossing the demarcation line stand in the way of establishing a dialogue with the population in the UT and have effectively cut them off from Ukraine.

The information space of the UT is controlled by Russia; there is a total lack of broadcasts from Ukrainian media, particularly television. In addition, information policy, both in Russia and Ukraine, is characterised by propaganda and use of stigmatising language (labels like "terrorist", "nationalist", etc.). This convinces residents of the UT that they are unwelcome in their own country, Ukraine.

Working group members discussed ways to improve/ establish contact with residents of the uncontrolled territories, particularly through the operations of medical organisations that keep in contact with medical organisations in the UT; through half-legal children's camps organised or directly funded by Russian activists and through the Red Cross (this organisation has a special mandate to work on the UT, but agents of civil society have difficulty establishing cooperation therewith).

2 Recommendations of Civil Society

2.1 Recommendations by Working Group Topics

Recommendations of civil society are sorted by working group topic. Recommendations from different working groups referring to work on UT are presented separately:¹

- 1) Interactions between Peacebuilding and Human Rights Advocacy
- 2) Working and Documenting in the Controlled and Uncontrolled Territories
- 3) Expectations and Experience from the Cooperation of CSOs with Official Governmental/Political Institutions
- 4) Monitoring International Negotiations in Minsk
- 5) The Human Rights Situation in East Ukraine: Challenges and Possibilities for Monitoring
- 6) Civil Society's Role in Opposing Propaganda
- 7) Cooperation Between Civil Society and OSCE Institutions (SMM, PCU, ODIHR)
- 8) Gender Aspects of the Peacebuilding Process
- 9) Compensations for Victims of the Conflict
- 10) Establishing Contacts with Residents of the Uncontrolled Territories

1) Interactions between Peacebuilding and Human Rights Advocacy

1. A comprehensive and thorough analysis of the Donbas conflict which identifies the actors of the conflict and their interests is required (analysis/expert analysis)

2. An expert panel must be established to evaluate legislative initiatives from all sides of the conflict through the prism of their impact on human rights and peacebuilding in the UT (analysis/expert analysis)

3. Regular meetings of all sides of the Donbas conflict for multilateral dialogue at various levels (cooperation/communication)

4. Creating a system for cooperation between human rights activists and peacebuilders for quick consultations

and developing a common stance (cooperation/communication)

5. A common position on the concept of legitimization of de facto authorities must be developed (what this is and what it is not, which communication therewith is acceptable/unacceptable). The communication of common position to the government and society is important (advocacy)

6. Proactive promotion of ideas aimed at building a sustainable peace, including drafting bills and future advocacy thereof (advocacy)

7. When working on projects, it is important to use well thought-out wording, terms and definitions. Depending on the target audience, it may be necessary to "translate" certain concepts into the "language" of the target audience (discourse/information distribution)

8. Evaluating events as part of the Minsk process, both from the point of view of human rights and peacebuilding (discourse/information distribution)

9. Holding discussions and trainings for human rights activists and peacebuilders on the following topics (education/training/certification):

- Non-violent communication;
- Peacebuilding and conflict resolution techniques;
- Communication sensitive to the different identities of the conflict's participants and fostering new values;
- Methods for post-conflict reconciliation between conflicting parties and the NGOs that work with them, based on experiences of other countries;
- Methods for fighting propaganda for different target groups.

10. Discussion of the principles of transitional justice in Ukraine, developing recommendations and participating in ongoing projects (education/training/certification)

11. Creation of a methodology for conflict scenario management using cases in the Donbas and successful practices developed during other conflicts as an example (education/training/certification)

¹ In the parenthesis after each recommendation, there is a note as to the focus area: analysis/expert analysis, strategy, cooperation, monitoring and documentation, advocacy, discourse/communication/information distribution, education/training/certification, database, uncontrolled territories.

2) Working and Documenting in the Controlled and Uncontrolled Territories

1. Develop mechanisms for information exchange with UN and OSCE missions (cooperation/communication)
2. Involve Russian organisations, including the Soldiers' Mothers' Committee, in monitoring burial sites (photographing tomb stones: date of death + full name) of Russian soldiers participating in the Donbas conflict in order to determine how many are participating and to use this data in reports (cooperation/communication)
3. Based on previous experience, ad hoc project cooperation between NGOs appears to be a more acceptable option compared to combining resources by designating one organisation as the "keeper" of all intermediary results (cooperation/communication)
4. Joint preparation and presentation of reports by representatives of countries on different sides of the conflict (cooperation/communication)
5. Involving law firms and law students in the preparation of lawsuits to be filed with national courts, including the aid from lawyers with experience submitting suits to the ECHR; involving law firms in overseeing strategic cases both in national and international courts (cooperation/communication)
6. Work with Interpol to bring war criminals to justice (cooperation/communication)
7. Create groups of documenters on UT (monitoring and documentation)
8. Organise simultaneous advocacy activities in different countries (advocacy)
9. Promote "big fish" case investigations, because they attract more public interest and thus create precedent, helping the investigation of smaller cases (advocacy)
10. Monitor different countries' media coverage and treatment of the situation and events in the conflict region. This will help gather information on what populations in different countries know (and think) about the military conflict in the Donbas. Knowledge of what different countries focus on as part of their informational policies and proposed interpretations of specific events and parallel situations will help show what areas need work on refuting false information. Gather information about unmentioned facts, comparing different interpretations the same facts, developing anti-propaganda campaigns and understanding reasons that prompt different population groups to act a certain way (or make it

possible to manipulate the actions and thoughts of different population groups). Restore a complete picture of events in the Donbas (taking into account different, possibly contradictory, but not mutually-exclusive points of view), potentially through independent journalism projects, exchange of information with the embassies of different countries in Ukraine, and international advocacy (discourse/information distribution)

11. Find alternative ways to present studies to different target groups, e.g. by creating contextual ads to attract the attention of different countries' internet users to problems related to the conflict in the Donbas (discourse/information distribution)
12. Organise methodological trainings of remote monitoring (open source) for documenters (education/training/certification)
13. Building a network of documenters from Russia and Belarus (database)
14. Demand an increase in resources at the International Criminal Court, thus boosting the ability of the ICC to review materials associated with the conflict in the Donbas and speed up the procedure for preparing the materials and filing them with the court (strategy)
15. Create a database for reports (database)
16. Create a database of cooperation, providing information on organisations, their focus of work and interest in participation in activities with a certain focus (database)
17. Through communication with the representatives of the Tripartite Contact Group in Minsk, gain access to crime monitoring on UT (UT)

3) Expectations and Experience of the Cooperation between CSOs and Official Bodies/Political Institutions

1. Raise local issues at national and international levels (strategy)
2. Establish personal contact with parliament members who want and will promote draft legislation (strategy)
3. Establish and maintain contact with decision making institutions that directly (strategy)
4. Take into account electoral cycles when doing strategic planning of activities (strategy)

5. Develop a safe mechanism for dialogue (strategy)
6. Cooperate with more experienced organisations (cooperation/communication)
7. Monitor the social processes in different countries (monitoring)
8. Secure the support of international community to increase pressure on authorities (e.g. in order to have them pass or consider a bill or regulation draft and control the implementation) (advocacy)
9. Journalists presence at governmental meetings is important (discourse/information distribution)
10. Work on changing public discourse and public opinion (specifically regarding the function of the state and citizens in a democratic society) (discourse/information distribution)

4) Monitoring of the International Negotiations in Minsk

1. Analyse (calculate) risks and threats (e.g. formal and informal demands from Russia) (analysis/expert analysis)
2. Offer Ukrainian stakeholders and implementers a set of steps to effectively implement each item of the Minsk Agreements and monitor the implementation thereof (analysis/expert analysis)
3. Establish priorities for and a sequence of required actions (strategy)
4. Involve Russian CSOs in organising discussions on the conflict in the Donbas: motivate colleagues from Russia, even under the current Russian political regime, to conduct discussions on the issues connected to the conflict in the Donbas in their country and thus change the public opinion (cooperation/communication)
5. Make coordinated lobbying efforts at the national level in different countries promoting recommendations, interpretations, etc. (advocacy)
6. Influence official policy by developing certain analytical products and voicing public opinions during international negotiations (in the context of Minsk negotiations, there are two subgroups, each with its own representatives and focus; they can be approached, and many Ukrainian NGOs already approach them) (advocacy)
7. Approve language for communication and find a zero-manipulation method of distributing information

(discourse/information distribution)

8. Prepare quality products (regulation proposals, analyses of stances held by all sides of the conflict, comprehensive monitoring of the media space, including Russian and Ukrainian media and media of the so-called "LPR" and "DPR", in the context of the Minsk Agreements, etc.) and open them for public discussion (discourse/information distribution)

5) The Human Rights Situation in East Ukraine: Challenges and Possibilities for Monitoring

1. Develop and employ a comprehensive approach for coordinating the efforts of different organisations (start with databases: who does what?). Common goals must be identified and articulated to achieve this (strategy)
2. Find a way to monitor hate crimes in the context of a military conflict (strategy)
3. Create groups of documenters on the UT (monitoring and documentation)
4. Train monitoring organisations to recognise different categories of violations and crime. In particular, a special training course is required to document human trafficking and hate crimes (training/education/certification)
5. Implement projects aimed at developing an understanding of human rights and the importance thereof among the population, explaining the function of documenters, as well as publishing of successful cases - this will help motivate people to cooperate and build trust in monitoring efforts (training/education/certification)

6) Civil Society's Role in Opposing Propaganda

1. Study and analyse experiences of fighting propaganda in countries that have encountered violent conflicts (analysis/expert analysis)
2. Ensure true independence and de-politicisation of regulatory institutions (analysis/expert analysis)
3. Analyse fake information (analysis/expert analysis)
4. Strengthen horizontal connections with Russian journalists in order to work on joint information projects and fight propaganda (cooperation/communication)
5. Connect with the Ukrainians who live in Europe to

establish communication with European (international) journalists and report real, authentic information through expats (discourse/information distribution)

6. Attempt to increase the number of permanent correspondents reporting on Ukraine abroad by expanding the number of journalists on staff (discourse/information distribution)

7. Cooperate with international journalists and human rights activists and achieve more global distribution of authentic information (discourse/information distribution)

8. A media literacy course for Ukrainian journalists (training/education/certification)

9. Develop a mechanism for helping journalists access the UT and continue to lobby for this mechanism at the international level in order to have it accepted by all sides of the conflict (UT)

10. Have more contact with people who cross the demarcation line, internally displaced people (IDP), because they are primary sources of information and a vital link between the separated territories) (UT)

7) Cooperation between Civil Society and OSCE Institutions (SMM, PCU, ODIHR)

1. Verifying information (e.g. data on the dead and injured during the conflict) (analysis/expert analysis)

2. Combine OSCE and civil society resources to ensure quick and reliable communication (e.g. to simplify the procedure for crossing the demarcation line for monitoring organisations, verifying the latest data, explaining the mandate of OSCE's SMM, assisting with advocating for certain issues) (cooperation/communication)

3. Following the example of cooperation with the UN, ensure cooperation with OSCE institutions in order to verify information from non-public documenters on the UT (cooperation/communication)

4. Ensure cooperation with civil societies of other countries on the subject of the conflict in the Donbas, especially by encouraging joint activities between Ukrainian and Russian civil society actors (cooperation/communication)

8) Gender Aspects of the Peacebuilding Process

1. Reports on the situation in the conflict zone must take gender issues into account (analysis/expert analysis)

2. Collect expert knowledge on post-conflict experience/trauma (analysis/expert analysis)

3. Involve women in peacebuilding activities, political life and work in NGOs (strategy)

4. Involve men in projects/activities associated with gender issues (strategy)

5. Develop a strategic concept for gender projects for the post-conflict phase (strategy)

6. For the SMM of OSCE: Promote cooperation on gender issues with civil society and civil society networks (cooperation/communication)

7. Connect CSOs focusing on gender issues with the peacebuilding initiatives in Ukraine (cooperation/communication)

8. Provide reports on gender violence provoked by the conflict (monitoring and documentation)

9. Promote trainings on gender issues for increasing the capabilities of local NGOs (training/education/certification)

9) Compensation for Victims of the Conflict

1. Conduct joint studies using the resources of several NGOs (particularly those located in different countries) and present the results of these studies to the global community (analysis/expert analysis)

2. Gather experiences from other post-conflict societies: how did other countries solve legislative problems? (analysis/expert analysis)

3. Create more opportunities for lawyers to provide legal representation in different courts on different types of cases (in the court of arbitration for organisations, in the International Criminal Court and the European Court of Human Rights for individuals) (strategy)

4. Develop a mechanism for awarding compensation and determine population groups that fall under (different) categories of conflict victims (strategy)

5. Generate lists of people who suffered harm as a result of the conflict and create a registry of conflict victims (monitoring and documenting)

6. Advocacy activities promoting a draft bill on victims of the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine (advocacy)

10) Establishing Contact with Residents of Uncontrolled Territories

1. Take steps to promote the preservation, restoration and expansion of connections between people throughout the conflict zone, which would help counteract propaganda in the media (strategy)

2. Support projects aimed at rebuilding destroyed infrastructure (strategy)

3. Establish personal contacts with individual activists on the UT (for instance, those involved in humanitarian work) (strategy)

4. Establish and maintain contacts on different sides of the demarcation line, taking advantage of people's mobility (people travel to and from the uncontrolled territories and can deliver good news, humanitarian aid and a positive attitude to all people on the other side, regardless of where they live (strategy),

In particular:

- Provide access to Ukrainian television for residents of the uncontrolled territories;
- Simplify the procedure for issuing passports and crossing the demarcation line;
- Help families from both sides reunite;
- Hold joint events for children from the controlled and uncontrolled territories;
- Make it possible to involve residents of the UT in the work of Ukrainian institutions.

5. Establish personal contacts with individual activists on the UT (for instance, those involved in humanitarian work) that can become a connection to certain organisations (UT)

2.2 Recommendations for International Community

Cooperation with Official Institutions from the Global Community

Quick and reliable communication must be established between OSCE and CSOs working in the conflict region: develop collaboration mechanisms in order to build a trust-based partnership. Possible goals of cooperation: verifying relevant information; verifying information from private documenters on the uncontrolled territories (UT); exchanging and completing data received from different sources on different sides of the conflict; explaining the mandate of OSCE's SMM and awareness-building in the population; creation of the opportunity for a simplified demarcation line crossing for civil society monitors; assisting in advocating certain subjects.

Strengthen cooperation with European NGOs in other countries focusing on the conflict in the Donbas, especially by encouraging joint activities between Ukrainian and Russian civil society actors. This may be easier to do by enlisting the cooperation of active Russian citizens living abroad than Russian citizens living in Russia.

Through funding of projects by Western donors, strengthen cooperation between NGOs focusing on gender issues and peacebuilding activities working in the conflict region.

Request an increase in funding for the International Criminal Court (ICC) in order to expand its ability to examine materials connected with the conflict in the Donbas (e.g. to speed up submission and preparation of materials to the court).

Work with Interpol to bring perpetrators of war crimes to justice.

Cooperation with Civil Society in Western Europe: advocacy, public discourse, dissemination of information

By developing (joint) analytical products and public positions, affect official governmental policies in various countries participating in international negotiations (in the Minsk format there are subgroups and each has its own representatives and focuses on different issues. State actors may make contact with representatives of their own countries, as is done by many Ukrainian non-governmental organisations).

Facilitate the organisation and simultaneous performance of advocacy campaigns and activities in various countries.

Coordinate lobbying efforts at the national level in various countries for joint recommendations regarding civil society.

Provide more support to international organisations and the general public to increase pressure on the states, involved in the conflict (e.g. to achieve the adoption or evaluation of legislative measures or regulations and monitor the implementation of resolutions).

Provide the broad public in various countries with trustworthy information by cooperating with international journalists and human rights activists.

Develop a method by which journalists may gain access to UT and lobby for this mechanism to be accepted at an international level by all parties to the conflict in the future.

Monitor different countries' media coverage and treatment of the situation and events in the conflict region.

Work with immigrant Ukrainians living in Europe to establish communication with European (international) journalists.

3 Analysis of Issues arising out of the Interaction between Human Rights Advocacy and Peacebuilding

Ukrainian and Russian civil societies do not have a clear understanding of how to work (jointly) on resolving the conflict in the Donbas. The conflict is relatively new and many civil society activists never imagined having to work on resolving a conflict, while being at the same time a party to that conflict. At the event, the need for continued and detailed evaluation of problems arising from the interaction of peacebuilding and human rights advocacy has been proved in its entirety.

There were few Russian participants at the meeting. Also, there were no representatives from the uncontrolled territories. As a result, it is likely that the discussion was insufficiently wide in scope and that not every position was forwarded. Moreover, without a critical analysis, the results obtained during the process of the discussions could be a product of groupthink and therefore may not be adequately relevant. This problem is further complicated by the fact that there were few experts on peacebuilding and conflict transformation at the meeting.

Nevertheless, seminar participants indicated the need to extensively evaluate peacebuilding issues. This was reflected in the discussion of the working group "Interactions between peacebuilding and human rights advocacy" formed at the beginning of the seminar and continuing its work during the whole second day of the seminar (which had not been originally planned). The number of participants in this topic group continued to grow until the very end of the group's work.

The primary subject of discussion in the group was to evaluate differences of goals and values of the human rights advocacy and peacebuilding, and estimate their coincidence in general and in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Group recommendations (see Recommendations), and a peacebuilder's operational area cartography (see Fig. 1), are important materials for planning subsequent measures to develop an agenda in the context of the armed conflict in the Donbas, as well as for creating an intelligent method for fostering dialogue and trust between the Ukrainian and Russian sides and all other stakeholders in the conflict.

One of the fundamental reasons for the antagonism between human rights advocacy and peacebuilding elucidated during the group's work had to do not just with professional approaches but also with philosophical and world-view considerations. Human rights advocacy focuses on the existence of a generally-recognised system of law and human rights while protagonists of large-scale violent conflict are not committed to observing generally-recognised systems of law. In simple terms, protagonists to a conflict act in accordance with the logic of Realpolitik,

while human rights advocates, observing a framework of legality, presume that legal systems should and are capable of responding to any violations of law. Peacebuilders are required to work in situations where universal concepts of legality are no longer functioning. In this situation, human rights activists continue to appeal to generally-recognised international systems of laws. And this is what they should be doing. However, this approach in the context of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation towards Ukraine is incapable of effectively bringing the conflict to a more or less just conclusion. This creates the need to use also other methods of work, which peacebuilders in fact are actively pursuing.

This problem has the following consequences:

- failing to understand each other's "language": terminology used by peacebuilders may be perceived hostilely by human rights advocates and may also seem to them to be "in violation" of generally-recognised legal concepts;
- human rights activists misunderstanding of the effectiveness of peacebuilding;
- "accusations" from human rights advocates that peacebuilders indulge protagonists to a conflict;
- "accusations" from peacebuilders that human rights advocates are using resources ineffectively and/or are antagonizing the conflict instead of facilitating its resolution;
- "dissipating strategies": when each professional group insists on the correctness of its approach;
- misunderstandings of the essence and philosophy of law, especially of the interaction between domestic and international law, both by many peacebuilders and human rights activists, and on the whole by societies caught up in the conflict. This pertains especially to understanding the limits of international law and its foundations. International law is perceived as resembling "internal" law, and/or is negated for

“not working” (as “internal” law), or, conversely, it is appealed to in situations when it is in essence impotent. As a result, international law is used as a system of rhetorical appeals that distracts from the needs of the conflict or even becomes an argument for one or another side to aggravate a conflict.

- sides to the conflict “tugging” on one or another professional group to “take their side” depending on their perspective. As a result, the basis for professional activity is eroded.

A rough example of the latter is perhaps the most dangerous development possible: From the point of view of Ukrainian sovereignty, everyone in violation of this abstraction is a criminal and can be prosecuted at the national and/or international level. Thus, engaging in contact with suspects to such crimes without the express intent to bring them to justice, from the point of view of many rights advocates, is impossible. This, however, means civil society is not able to operate though the conflict’s dividing lines in the Donbas, because this work will require some form of contact with separatist leadership. At the same time, this observation may be interpreted by a non-reflective human rights advocate as an attempt by any means to “legitimise” the separatists, i.e. working in favour of the “other side”.

This example also shows another difference between the human rights advocate and the peacebuilder, namely that: peacebuilding does not have entrenched modes of operation, protocols, or some similar legal system that strictly dictates how to act and when. Those among the “peacebuilders” who would suggest clear action plans are

violating one of the primary principles of peacebuilding: Each situation requires its own thorough analysis in order to choose the right course of action. Flexibility and comprehensive reflection are perhaps primary principles of peacebuilding.

Issues related to the interaction of human rights advocates and peacebuilders are not specific to the conflict in the Donbas, they exist also on a global scale: Often development organisations and international structures do not possess the knowledge of how to go about transforming a conflict and thus do not include this necessity into their programmes, even if they are operating in conflict regions. The need to plan, taking into account the dynamics of a conflict, and to offer conflict transformation skills to the staff of such structures has long been highlighted by peacebuilding experts, but is insufficiently incorporated into their practice.

Many working group members at the seminar, especially from the Donbas region, understood the concept of peacebuilding well and were ready to work with the “other side”, however difficult that may be. The group discovered important issues on which human rights advocates and peacebuilders disagree but also those areas of overlap where representatives of various spheres of civil activity might work together.

It was unfortunately impossible to make public to other participants any conclusions from the group’s work in the concluding plenary session of the seminar. The scope and depth of the issues required significantly more time for reflection of progress, disclosing various aspects and adequate presentation of conclusions.

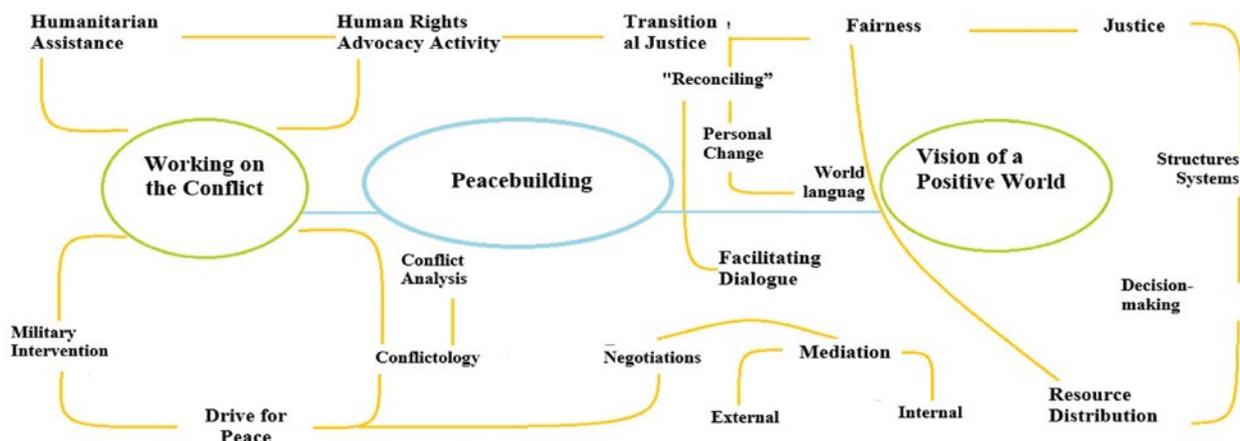


Figure #1: Peacebuilding Focus Areas

The primary conclusion reached: such meetings for providing a forum for discussion of the relationship of peacebuilding and human rights advocacy between civil activists should be prepared systematically, conducted regularly and work permanently with regular groups of participants. One of the first recommendations the group made was to conduct trainings for human rights advocates on peacebuilding and conflict transformation.

Even those human rights advocates sceptical of peacebuilding at the end of the meeting made explicit the need for continuing dialogue on the relationship between peacebuilding and human rights advocacy and indicated they would work to accomplish this. Knowledge of techniques and skills developed for peacebuilding may help human rights advocacy work more successfully and thoughtfully in conflict situations. Moreover, often experienced human rights advocates “unintentionally” act in concert with the principles of peacebuilding; however, not possessing the required qualifications in this professional sphere, they may not recognize it.

Working to strengthen the impact of civil society on the conflict resolution process in the Donbas highlights the importance of dialogue between human rights advocates and peacebuilders, as well as the importance of the Warsaw meeting, which allowed some problems related to the interaction of the two principally different approaches to be explicitly formulated. The meeting was important because, in addition to the things discussed above, it prompted articulation and discussion of issues in the interaction of human rights advocates and peacebuilders in the context of hybrid war.

The overlap of two vector-incongruent dynamics: creating dialogue and trust between Russian and Ukrainian nationals, on the one hand, and between human rights advocates and peacebuilders on the other, was the significant methodological achievement of the Warsaw meeting.

4 Bank of Ideas

When finalising the results of their discussions, the participants specified a few ideas noted in the working groups and expressed individual interest to include the following in their work:

1. Develop a mechanism to enhance a strategic influence of civil society in the process of conflict resolution (with the leadership of experienced organisations). Search for allies and expertise to help with developing a civil society strategy among CSOs in various countries, in the scientific and other communities;
2. Perform qualitative analysis of the conflict by modelling peacebuilding scenarios and then strategies permitting participation of civil society in peacebuilding processes;
3. Search for Russian partners capable of actively engaging in civil projects;
4. Perform a targeted search for financing for joint projects and synchronised activities and campaigns in various countries;
5. Disseminate information on how social activists may work with international organisation programmes;
6. Organise educational trips to other countries with experience with conflicts to collect information on the development of legislation related to the status of victims and reparations;
7. Conduct monitoring of Ukrainian legislation in terms of the question: "How do resolutions adopted by the government of Ukraine impact the conflict zone?";
8. Include small towns/settlements near the demarcation line in projects to encourage civil society activities in this territory;
9. Organize get-together initiatives for children from Ukraine (including „LPR“/“DPR“) and Russia; reconstructing the centre for child creativity in the settlement Zolote, involvement of children from the "grey zone" and the uncontrolled territories in art-projects;
10. Support activists living in the UT (in particular, philanthropist Yakov Ragalin from Donetsk);
11. Organise joint monitoring visits and engaging local activists from the conflict region to perform monitoring in the UT;
12. Establish stable cooperation with SMM (feedback, information exchange, support for field work in the conflict region);
13. Establish cooperation with Interpol in terms of political prosecutions for criminals in the conflict in the Donbas;
14. Conduct Russian and Ukrainian meetings in various formats in order to overcome barriers and bring people from the Russian Federation and Ukraine together;
15. Organise training for Russian civil activists in order to involve them in monitoring the processes in Rostov Oblast;
16. Joint training of Russian and Ukrainian bloggers and journalists in order to conduct common and long-term coverage of the conflict in the Donbas;
17. Conduct training for Russian attorneys in order to improve effectiveness with bringing criminals to justice;
18. Develop and conduct regular training designed to develop a culture of dialogue for various target groups;
19. Create a neutral description of the process for the Minsk Agreements in order to inform the wider public and oppose propaganda ("Minsk in Plain Language");
20. Develop a common lexicon for communicating "difficult" concepts (create a "dictionary" of peace).

Final Conclusions

Ukrainian civil society's potential has significantly increased after Maidan and the beginning of the military conflict. Ukrainian NGOs can do a great deal to eliminate the systemic factors leading to the conflict within Ukraine by themselves: by influencing public discourse and using public pressure to prevent manipulation of the conflict in the Donbas by Ukrainian authorities, documenting violations and crimes on territories under the control of the Ukrainian government, monitoring the activities of the authorities on national and local levels, making recommendations for legislation, strategically planning long-term projects of cooperation with colleagues from various spheres of civil activity, disseminating objective information on the conflict and the consequences thereof, raising civil awareness in Ukrainian society and conducting projects designed to activate the democratic political culture.

Can civil society provide alternative solutions to political negotiations in order to resolve the conflict? Likely not. But CSOs can organise the discussion process, for the simple reason that besides common conclusions it is necessary to look for precise answers to the question: "What do we do about this situation?"

Civil discourse about problems and ways to resolve the conflict should occur in suitable environments using deliberate (non-belligerent) language, and, whenever possible, include various tools and products that CSOs can make available.

At the same time, the ability for civil activism to engage in activities in the Russian Federation has decreased at present. Ukrainian civil society actors believe Russian society will develop in its own time. How to strengthen the peacebuilding movement in the Russian Federation? To do this, we need to find communication channels and create contents to inform Russian society, in particular, about the goings-on in Ukraine and about the consequences of Russian aggression in the conflict region of the Donbas. A number of Russian experts are working on the international level, and so it is especially important to provide European support to develop civil structures, both in Ukraine and in Russia.

Ukrainian civil society requires the support of the international community and their colleagues from the Russian Federation, first and foremost, to change public opinion in both countries about the conflict in the Donbas, to document the activities of Russian authorities and violations or crimes connected with the military conflict, in particular on the territories not under the control of the Ukrainian government.

International (intergovernmental) organisations may not impose their vision or way of coordinating activities on Ukrainian civil society, but in possessing powerful financial and institutional resources, they may initiate these activities, provide expertise and practical support. Strategic planning and regular communication between all forces working on the Donbas issues can facilitate the required level of confidence in order to effectively coordinate the efforts of all protagonists in this process, and thus enhance the impact of civil society in the process of conflict resolution in East Ukraine and restoring the Donbas as a peaceful region of Europe.

Deutsch-Russischer Austausch e.V. (DRA)

is a non-profit, non-governmental organization based in Berlin, working since 1992 with the aim of promoting democratic developments in Russia and other East European countries through cooperation with Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian and other European NGOs, with independent mass media and in cross-sectoral cooperation. The DRA offers youth and other exchange programs in the field of political education, democracy and active citizenship and works to establish links with Western partners. Moreover, the DRA acts as an agency for volunteers between Eastern and Western Europe.

Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP)

is a coalition of civic organizations and groups from the countries of the OSCE region, as well as international NGOs, interested in joint action to defend human rights in the region. They are also prepared to create common positions on key issues and provide each other with mutual support and assistance in case of need.

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

is one of the world's principal regional human rights bodies. It promotes democratic elections, respect for human rights, tolerance and non-discrimination, and the rule of law. The Office works closely with the OSCE's other institutions and field operations, as well as a large number of partners among governments, international organizations and civil society.

ENHANCING CIVIL SOCIETY'S IMPACT IN DONBAS

In the fourth year of the violent conflict in East Ukraine, this report refers to the work of civil society actors, as one of the driving forces for social change, and takes stock of the question of how civil society can enhance its impact on the process of conflict resolution in Donbas.

The recommendations, presented in this report, were pronounced by civil society actors from Ukraine, Russia and other European countries at a strategic retreat in Warsaw (26–28 June 2017), which was co-organised by the Civic Solidarity Platform (CSP) and the DRA (German–Russian Exchange), in co-operation with ODIHR and the support of the French and German governments.

The report highlights two overlapping challenges which are integral to the civic engagement in Donbas – the tense relationship between Ukrainian and Russian civil society communities, and the interrelation between the approaches of human rights advocacy and peacebuilding. The presented findings contribute to the work on a joint NGO-strategy and support the need of more cooperation among the civil society actors in Europe.