



CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

OVERVIEW

Ukraine is home to robust civil society and independent media sectors that actively engage with policymakers and state institutions, provide citizens with information about pressing political and social issues, and empower society to advance reform and solve community problems. The country also has a growing culture of volunteerism, demonstrating the commitment of Ukraine’s citizens to improving conditions in their communities and in the country at large. This work is critical as Ukrainian society resists Russia’s aggression and strives to strengthen its political and rule of law institutions and advance its Euro-Atlantic integration. Civil society organizations (CSOs) advocate for the needs and interests of Ukrainians and empower citizens to become more civically active, while independent media is a critical source of information and a counterweight to pervasive disinformation that aims to undermine public confidence in democratic processes. These sectors have become even more important in the face of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. CSOs are providing critical support to people affected by the war, while independent media outlets are ensuring that Ukrainians and the outside world have accurate information about Russia’s invasion.

Despite notable progress, civil society and media organizations often lack the financial sustainability, influence, and training to effectively function at the national and local levels. Due to undeveloped domestic funding sources, these sectors are still largely dependent on international funding. Greater domestic funding would strengthen local ownership and increase public confidence in Ukraine’s civil society and independent media sectors. This is exacerbated by Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which has increased the need for community-level action while eroding the domestic resource base. To address these challenges, USAID funds activities to promote financial independence, increase organizational capacity and effectiveness, and further empower civil society and independent media to contribute to Ukraine’s independent, democratic, and European future.

OBJECTIVES

- Foster a strong civil society sector in Ukraine that holds elected officials and state institutions accountable, promotes reforms, and empowers citizens, especially young people, to contribute to positive change.
- Help Ukraine’s independent media sector become more financially sustainable and better equipped to inform the public about key issues, including countering pervasive and malicious disinformation.

OUR ACTIVITIES

MEDIA

USAID's Media Program strengthens the independent media sector's ability to promote civic engagement and democratic processes by expanding citizens' access to fact-based information about key social and political issues. Notably, USAID assistance strengthens the public service broadcaster, promotes accountability in the media sector, and helps media outlets create high-quality, fact-based content that educates audiences and contributes to public debate on critical issues. USAID also supports efforts to increase media literacy, including by making it part of the national school curriculum at all levels. This activity largely focuses on eastern and southern Ukraine, which are particularly vulnerable to Kremlin disinformation narratives. This activity has supported Ukraine's journalists to report from the frontlines of Russia's war against Ukraine. Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion, the activity has provided more than 200 journalists with protective gear such as flak jackets and helmets as well as training on how to report from a conflict environment. During the war, USAID has also provided financing, cybersecurity support, and technical assistance to 66 local media outlets in southern and eastern Ukraine. The assistance includes helping media outlets promote their reporting via Telegram, a key channel for reaching people during the war.

TRANSFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS

Russia's war against Ukraine includes a disinformation campaign aimed at undermining Ukraine's national unity and commitment to its democratic future. USAID's Transformation Communications Activity counters Kremlin disinformation narratives through collaboration among government, commercial media, the creative sector, and civil society. The activity helps these Ukrainian actors create and disseminate high-quality, fact-based content targeted to the audiences most vulnerable to disinformation. By addressing social issues and countering disinformation through positive narratives, this activity aims to shift the national conversation away from division and toward optimism about Ukraine's democratic development and civic equality.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

USAID supports Ukraine to build a stronger, more people-centered democracy by empowering CSOs and citizens to engage in democratic processes and advocate for policy reforms. USAID's Enhance Non-Governmental Actors and Grassroots Engagement activity promotes greater civic participation by enhancing civic education, supporting civic initiatives, and building the organizational capacity of CSOs. These efforts advance Ukraine's democratic development and cultivate grassroots approaches to addressing development challenges.

CSO INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

USAID's Ukraine Civil Society Sectoral Support Activity strengthens the self-reliance of the civil society sector. Under the activity, USAID builds the organizational capacity of CSOs and activists (including by helping them continue to operate amid Russia's invasion), supports civil society to advocate for Ukrainian interests abroad, strengthens the legal enabling environment for civil society, and promotes research and learning in the sector. Specific actions to build organizational capacity focus on institutional governance, financial management, strategic and contingency planning, fundraising, and resilience. USAID also promotes advocacy campaigns and legislative initiatives to strengthen civil society. Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the activity has provided rapid response grants to nine CSOs and established three regional platforms that allow CSOs to work together to support the Ukrainian people during the war. It has also helped nearly 100 CSOs strengthen their cybersecurity and shift their activities toward meeting the needs of internally displaced persons.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

Ukraine's young people have actively supported their communities and wider society amid Russia's full-scale invasion. Youth engagement also forms an important base for Ukraine to build upon following the war. USAID's Ukraine National Identity Through Youth (UNITY) activity empowers youth and cultivates a sense of ownership in Ukraine's independent, democratic, and European future. The activity mobilizes youth leaders to further strengthen a values-based Ukrainian identity grounded in pluralism, equality, and civic engagement. Ukraine's youth, who are generally more in favor of reform and Euro-Atlantic integration than are members of older generations, can play a critical role in cementing a values-based concept of Ukrainian citizenship. Through the activity, USAID empowers Ukraine's youth to take on greater roles participating in civic and democratic processes, promoting European values among their peers and in their communities, and contributing to Ukraine's efforts to address social challenges while pursuing further democratic development.