

INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

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INTRODUCTION

There is a significant difference between short-term, emergency and humanitarian aid, and long-term recovery projects. While short-term support is best provided directly, spontaneously, and in a decentralised manner, long-term recovery requires planning, research, and management which could oversee the whole process. It also requires monitoring and adjusting strategies in the process, therefore is a slower process, focused on long-term impact. While in the case of Ukraine, short-term aid is currently in demand more, it is also necessary to begin planning for the country's recovery. While people in Ukraine are mostly preoccupied with day-to-day needs, human resources that can support planning from abroad can be a game-changer.

The overview of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) will focus mostly on development cooperation angle, as it is a part of a project of Lithuania's support for Ukraine. CSOs, their state of affairs in Lithuania and international practices that allow for high-impact programming will be presented in order to provide space to consider how Lithuanian so-called Third Sector can become stronger.

Why are strong NGOs important?

As the example of Ukraine shows, strong Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) are key in crisis situations, where the government is not able to cover the needs of their citizens. In addition, as the Council of Europe notes, "independent NGOs are a vital component of European society, guaranteeing freedom of expression and association, both of which are fundamental to democracy"¹. They can also provide services when governmental institutions lack resources and have political, bureaucratic, or other constraints.

Notably, United Nations have also acknowledged that Non-governmental, Civil Society, Non-profit organisations are "crucial for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals"².

Therefore, a strong NGO ecosystem is crucial to a strong democratic state. But firstly, let's see how Lithuania has been managing its CSOs and what obstacles they face.

1. NGOs across a research report Europe: To diagnose opportunities and needs. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from https://www.ngeurope.net/sites/default/files/output/files/i01_research_report_0.pdf

2. Same source

LITHUANIA

The current state of Lithuanian CSOs can be seen in the USAID Civil society index report, which has compiled relevant data for the year 2021. Even though the pandemic took a lot of attention, the situation of the Lithuanian Civil Society seems to have only changed minimally.

One of the criteria for CSO sector strength is the sustainability of its activities. In 2021, only service provision was recorded to have slight improvements due to the rising interest from municipalities to outsource services from CSOs. This also led to the broadening range of services that CSOs offer.

The government, specifically the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MoSSL) provided capacity-building support. It is noted that “CSOs primarily used these discretionary funds to further their technical base and to maintain staff.”³ However, capacity building is generally seen as a different activity from day-to-day operations, which will be reviewed in the next chapter. One of the capacity-building elements is the improvement of strategic vision, and as it was observed in the report, “few organizations display strategic visions”⁴. It is no surprise, that without a strategy, planning is difficult, thus “the programs of many regional CSOs still follow the availability of funding”⁵.

From the perspective of funding, issues stem from the public sector too. The institutional design of Lithuanian development cooperation can be seen in a report by Julius Zubė and Vygantė Mizgerytė ([here](#)). In addition to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Development Cooperation Department, which is responsible for shaping the development cooperation policy, the Central Project Management Agency which organises project calls and administers their implementation, and the Ministry of Finance that coordinates the development cooperation policy with international institutions, CSOs also get support for their projects in Lithuania and capacity building from the Ministry of Social Security and Labour (MoSSL).

As the Lithuanian „CSOs continue to rely heavily on government funding”⁶, reduced governmental support can become an issue.

„Annual funding for community CSOs has remained in the range of EUR 2 million since it was first introduced in 2014. However, its proportion of the overall national budget has fallen dramatically; appropriations for local communities initially constituted 0.3 percent of the budget but had declined to 0.13 percent by 2021.”⁷

Considering that CSOs are non-governmental organisations, they should not be fully relying on governmental funding. Having external, diversified funding sources also increases the independence of their decision-making processes.

2.-7. Lithuania 2020 human rights report - U.S. embassy in Lithuania. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://lt.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/184/LITHUANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

LITHUANIA

As the report on Lithuania developed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, and Center of Excellence on Democracy, Human Rights and Governance shows, the amount of funding that is received by Lithuanian CSOs from governing institutional bodies is significantly lower than the business support.

Government support for pandemic relief	EUR 2.6 million
Municipalities	EUR 35.5 million
MoSSL for CSO capacity building + CSO umbrella organisations	EUR 637,000 + EUR 790,000
Community CSOs	EUR 2 million
The MoSSL NGO Fund	EUR 1.268 million
ACF (Open Society Fund)	EUR 9.6 million
Business support	EUR 100 million ⁸

It is important to consider the increasing opportunities of Lithuanian CSOs to engage in improving the legislation. "In June 2020, the Seimas adopted amendments to the Law on Lobbying, according to which public interest organizations may register as "influencers of legislation."⁹ By registering as influencers, CSOs provide data on their advocacy interests and receive certain privileges, including the right to receive information on legislative developments on relevant topics and participate in meetings of legislators."¹⁰ Lithuanian CSOs are considered to be rather strong in their advocacy, especially those that offer their services to the government themselves.

Finally, lack of understanding and utilising international networks of CSOs is observed in Lithuania. There is an abundance of umbrella organisations that unify small Lithuanian NGOs, but strongest singular NGOs are mostly offices of international organisations in Lithuania rather than initiatives born locally.

8.-10. Lithuania 2020 human rights report - U.S. embassy in Lithuania. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://lt.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/184/LITHUANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

CONCEPTS

What is capacity building?

As mentioned before, a tendency of Lithuanian NGOs to stay small is observed, which means that they have a limited capacity to implement projects. That is extremely important in development cooperation projects, including post-war Ukraine, as they require larger-scale programs in order to have a sustainable impact. A definition of capacity building varies, however, it can be summed up in these four types:

"1. Organizational capacity is the ability of an NGO to mobilize its resources (human, financial, material) to maximize quality and timeliness of service delivery at the lowest possible cost;

2. Technical capacity involves developing state-of-the-art skills, improving knowledge and applying best practices;

3. Financial management capacity encompasses the extent to which the systems, procedures and internal controls within an organization offer confidence that funds are judiciously used and properly accounted for.

4. Context refers to the complex, dynamic, unpredictable, difficult-to-control, external forces in developing countries. These might include sociopolitical and economic instability, cultural and environmental variables and the climate for donor funding, among others."¹¹

For comparison, the capacity building indicators used by ACF (managed by the Lithuanian Open Society Fund) in Lithuania are "CSOs' financial resources, scope of organized campaigns, and licenses obtained."¹²

11. Measuring NGO capacity development through organizational assessments. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://www.ngoconnect.net/sites/default/files/resources/NGOTips%20-%20Measuring%20NGO%20Capacity%20Development%20via%20Organizational%20Assessment.pdf>

12. Lithuania 2020 human rights report - U.S. embassy in Lithuania. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://lt.usembassy.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/184/LITHUANIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

CONCEPTS

What is a project?

Most of Lithuanian CSOs are working on a project-based routine.

“A project is a systematic, goal-oriented, temporary and one-time activity undertaken to create a unique product or service. Projects differ from routine work, in the sense that they do not involve the implicit or explicit procedures that exist in the organization to regulate the day-to-day work. As such, they are a particularly useful way to introduce innovations, address new challenges or find solutions for problems for which the existing procedures do not accommodate. The goal of a project can be to increase knowledge (research projects), develop and pre-test interventions to address a particular problem (development projects), or disseminate and implement an existing intervention (implementation projects).”¹³

Considering this definition, it is worth exploring how organisations in other countries work. The following cases were chosen according to the most common areas that Lithuanian NGOs work with, which are:

- Education, mainly non-formal
- Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

These cases also include an element of innovation, in order to define what innovation is and how it can be introduced through project-based activities. Innovation can mean anything from a new methodology, new tool, source, or market, but it can also be defined by adaptation to a changed context. Using post-war Sri Lanka as an example, researchers have noticed that context of a country in conflict always requires innovation.¹⁴

13. Stephan Van den Broucke, Guy Dargent, Michel Pletschette, Development and assessment of criteria to select projects for funding in the EU health programme, *European Journal of Public Health*, Volume 22, Issue 4, August 2012, Pages 598–601, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/ckr066>

14. L. Charlés and G. Samarasinghe. 2015. *Psychosocial Innovation in Post-War Sri Lanka*. Taos Institute

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Education

Firstly, it is valuable to define Ukraine's condition of education in the pre-war period, leading to the currently worsened situation.

Digitisation of education¹⁵ is seen as a necessary qualitative change in the education process.

- Involvement of parents without burdening them through technology
- Adaptation of education to the changing conditions of future job markets
- Need for interdisciplinarity
- A teacher as a guide, not as an information provider
- "Gamification" of education
- Collaboration with private sector, technology providers and developers

"The set of legislative and regulatory documents in the field of digital technology has many uncertainties and contradictions, namely: - the multiplicity of regulatory norms and institutions, administrative and tax pressure on actors; - the ability of the State to effectively manage its responsibilities remains low."¹⁶ It is not likely that the situation has changed much from the legislative perspective, however, when drawing on bold project examples, it is possible to achieve these changes later.

UNICEF has developed an app for pre-schoolers in Ukraine that provides games and stories to develop relevant skills for children.

- Digital innovation: achieved by cooperation with private sector (tech company)
- Relevant in war-time conditions (available offline)
- Possible to upscale

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

Another extremely important topic that is common for post-war societies and in which Lithuanian CSOs have built expertise both locally and in Ukraine, is MHPSS. MHPSS needs as a part of public health is understood to belong to every person by international law¹⁷. Provision of such services is common in many post-war societies and a sufficient amount of know-how has been gathered.

15. Rossikhina, Galyna & Rossikhin, Vasyl & Kaganovska, Tetyana. (2019). Problems of education digitization in Ukraine. 10.2991/iscde-19.2019.144.

16. New UNICEF Games App Nurtures key skills for Ukrainian preschoolers. UNICEF. (n.d.). Retrieved January 5, 2023, from <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/press-releases/new-unicef-games-app-nurtures-key-skills-ukrainian-preschoolers>

17. Cryer, Friman, Robinson & Wilmhurst, 2007. An introduction to international criminal law and procedure. New York : Cambridge University Press.

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Main concerns in post-conflict societies for reconstruction and development tend to be weak institutional capacities, lack of human resources and management of the transition activities. Primary concern of the state is to provide security, infrastructure and justice¹⁸. Therefore, projects concerning education and healthcare might take secondary importance after food and energy, and in order to be covered might need support or even at times substitution from non-state actors.

However, some research proves the importance of psychosocial support: „failure to recognise and deal with mental suffering at both an individual and collective level has a detrimental effect on a society’s cohesion, economic productivity and stability“.¹⁹

Example: Case of Sri Lanka

MHPSS was provided through topical gatherings of communities, such as women that have lost their husbands. The importance of adjusting the procedures of psychosocial support to the local culture is emphasised. The NGO adjusted their model while counseling children, where instead of giving toys in the psychosocial support center they teach children to make toys themselves, as at home children do not own toys and need to learn how to find other tools to play. Final innovation is the use of community volunteers, or locals, who work for the NGO of psychosocial support by doing advocacy and outreach.²⁰

„In particular, it seemed that each country was (of course) implementing MHPSS in different ways. The differences often had to do with the nature of the conflict in the first place, and the relationship between state and civil society in the country.“²¹

Of course, it is necessary to understand the importance of relying on local expertise. “Rather than global experts with ready-made formulas for conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, it is local people with an understanding of workings of societies and cultures who can mediate situations, provide solutions and analyses, and bring their experience“.²²

18. World Bank and UNDP. 19-21 September, 2005. Workshop report „Rebuilding Post-Conflict Societies: Lessons from a Decade of Global Experience“. New York

19. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. 2018. „Guiding Framework for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) in Development Cooperation As exemplified in the context of the crises in Syria and Iraq“

20.-21. L. Charlés and G. Samarasinghe. 2015. Psychosocial Innovation in Post-War Sri Lanka. Taos Institute

22. Meyer, J. (2000). Qualitative research in health care: Using qualitative methods in health related action research. BMJ: British Medical Journal 320.7228: 178.

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In 160 reports from MHPSS in humanitarian settings, „the five most commonly reported activities were basic counselling for individuals (39%); facilitation of community support of vulnerable individuals (23%); provision of child-friendly spaces (21%); support of community-initiated social support (21%); and basic counselling for groups and families (20%)“²³. Furthermore, it is observed that most of the interventions are done by non-state actors, which may indicate that the state in humanitarian settings is more preoccupied with hard tools of recovery, such as rebuilding physical infrastructure and supporting crippling economy rather than the social one. This leaves a gap that tends to be filled by international and non-governmental organisations.

Existing Guidelines on providing MHPSS

International organisations, responsible for humanitarian support, recovery and development in post-conflict countries, have compiled a number of valuable insights from various interventions. The lessons learned and recommendations are publicly available on many topics, one of them being MHPSS. Creating projects and programmes can be planned by following these guidelines.

WHO (World Health Organisation) - a toolkit for assessing MHPSS needs and resources in humanitarian settings²⁴

IASC (The Inter-Agency Standing Committee of the United Nations) - guidelines of MHPSS support in emergency settings²⁵

European Commission - operationalizing psychosocial support (OPSIC) project, where comprehensive guidelines were created by 11 partners from 8 countries consortium, research supported by the European Commission under the Seventh Framework Programme for Security.²⁶

The guidelines show common trends in MHPSS provision. Some of those are:

- Informing the society and awareness raising
- Establishing safe physical spaces for providing MHPSS
- Intersectoral coordination approaches

It is possible to draw on such documents in creating development cooperation projects and avoiding overburdening the receiving population that has a lack of resources to carry out such programmes on their own. However, they also outline how and in which steps the local populations must be involved. Similar documents can also be found for projects in other topics.

23. Tol, W. A., Barbui, C., Galappatti, A., Silove, D., Betancourt, T. S., Souza, R., ... van Ommeren, M. (2011). Mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian settings: linking practice and research. *The Lancet*, 378(9802), 1581-1591. doi:10.1016/s0140-6736(11)61094-5

24. Assessing mental health and psychosocial needs and resources toolkit. (n.d.). Retrieved February 26, 2023, from https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/76796/9789241548533_eng.pdf

25. Guideline mental health and psychosocial support in emergency - IASC. (n.d.). Retrieved February 26, 2023, from <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-11/IASC%20Guidelines%20on%20Mental%20Health%20and%20Psychosocial%20Support%20in%20Emergency%20Settings%20%28English%29.pdf>

26. The Comprehensive Guideline On Mental Health And Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) In Disaster Settings. (n.d.). Retrieved February 26, 2023, from <https://www.uibk.ac.at/psychologie/fachbereiche/psychotraumatology/resources/opsic-mhpss-handbook-planning-tools-june-2016.pdf>

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Financing CSOs

“Even though many organisations depend on government grants or public funding to operate there are many entrepreneurial options for self-funding that are not dependent on the existence of funding programs and are valuable sources of income for NGOs, such as:

- Membership fees
- Providing services
- Selling products (merchandising for instance)
- Donations
- Sponsorships
- Crowdfunding
- Fundraising campaigns
- Exchange of goods and services”²⁷

„Share your work. Websites are a great way to showcase your NGOs work and projects. Even if you don't make regular posts on it, it is always a good way for potential partners, sponsors or members to learn more about your NGO and the work you do, but you should try to keep information current.“²⁸

NGO – private sector partnerships

Partnerships between NGOs and the private sector are often viewed sceptically, yet they have become desirable for the decision-makers in the public sector. It is important to consider the benefits and risks that such collaboration may bring in development cooperation projects.

„Positive aspects of partnership

- Private sector actors may provide critical amounts of financial support.
- Private sector actors may award grants or donations without criteria for use or other restrictions.
- Private sector interactions increase availability and access to various contacts, political influences and technical expertise.
- Private sector actors may develop internal and external organisations for education, awareness and advocacy.
- Private sector actors may initiate and develop policy-making opportunities for the NGO.“²⁹

27, 28. NGOs across a research report Europe: To diagnose opportunities and needs. (n.d.). Retrieved February 24, 2023, from https://www.ngeurope.net/sites/default/files/output/files/i01_research_report_0.pdf

29. NGOs and the private sector. Field Exchange 19, July 2003. p11. www.enonline.net/fex/19/ngos, accessed 2023-02-03

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Example: Action Against Hunger (Action Contre La Faim – ACF)

Founded in 1979, the organisation aimed to fight hunger, they started from working in in Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Somalia, and in ten years grew the funding in order to meet the needs in these and other countries, expanding the organisation itself.

In 1993, together with their scientist team, ACF developed “F100, the first-ever therapeutic formula to treat severely malnourished children”. Testing it in the field, they further developed the innovative product and supported the creation of international standard of treatment protocols.

The organisation managed to find a new way of approaching hunger by treating it not only in hospitals, but also in health centers and in communities, creating a model that is now used by more than 70 countries.³⁰

Key takeaways:

- Partnership with scientists, experts and researchers allows for innovative solutions
- Upscaling an NGO allows to reach more benefactors and offer more solutions
- Expanding an NGO increases its legitimacy and may lead even to governments employing solutions it offers

Partnership with businesses and academics can bring innovation to the project. However, it is important to consider the terms of the partnership. A diverse array of possible setups exists, which is worth exploring in order to find the best match for each particular NGO.

30. Key milestones. Action Against Hunger. (2022, October 23). Retrieved February 8, 2023, from <https://www.actionagainsthunger.org/global-impact/key-milestones/>

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Example: Repair Together

The organisation was founded after the full-scale invasion of Russia to Ukraine. Repair Together cleans up the environment in areas that have been destroyed by war and in some places also takes up rebuilding. It became popular through social media (claiming to have more than 150 publications in the media across the globe), as while cleaning up they also organise concerts and raves, where DJs and other performers accompany the process.³¹

- Together with 2500+ volunteers they have cleaned up 120+ houses in 11 villages and prepared them for reconstruction
- More than USD 200,000 raised and spent on reconstruction in 2022
- Reconstruction contracts worth more than a total of USD 600,000 signed in 2023 (as of February 8th)³²

Repair Together carried out business collaboration projects, worked with IT companies, funds, organised charity events. Considering all this was done in less than a year, the organisation represents creativity, inventiveness, and ability to mobilise and connect not only among Ukrainians themselves, but also to attract foreign funding and volunteers. Such civil society initiatives show that Ukraine has a capable society, however, it also requires foreign support.

Key takeaways:

- Unique idea attracted media attention, volunteers and funding;
- Business cooperation expanded the scope of the organisation;
- Both human resources and funding from abroad are necessary for the organisation in the present Ukraine's conditions
- Openness for expanding activities and involving new stakeholders is increasing the organisational capacity

31. Repair Together official website: <https://www.repair-together.com/>

32. Repair Together Instagram: <https://instagram.com/repair.together> (instagram stories February 8th, 2023)

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Example: People In Need

Founded in 1992, the organisation initially was delivering humanitarian aid to conflict zones. Next year, after becoming a part of a foundation, it raised 30 million Czech crowns for the biggest humanitarian operation in the post-soviet region, helping Bosnia and Herzegovina. This led to them becoming an official aid program partner of UNICEF in former Yugoslavia. They also supported Somalia and Mongolia with partners.

In 1994, PIN merged with Czech television and continued providing support. Establishment of a counseling centre in Kazakhstan was the first non-humanitarian program they carried out. From the following year, more such programs in other locations were implemented, including cultural events, construction of buildings, protests, support for political activists under repressive regimes and others, including continued humanitarian aid operations.

PIN became a non-profit organisation in 1999. It also obtained the status of an executive partner for WFP, UNHCR. They also carry out programs in Czech Republic, thus supporting own citizens when the government support is lacking and bringing their expertise home. In 2013, they provided support in Czech Republic after the 50th-year flood occurred through an aid and recovery program.

In Ukraine, PIN has provided help to around 600 000 people, as well as support the ones who have relocated to Czech Republic.³³

Key takeaways:

- Large-scale operations lead to partnerships and more expansion
- Partnerships provide more expertise and capacity, allow expanding the range of activities organisation does
- Being key partner for international organisations allows to build expertise, that can lead to emergency preparedness at home and bring the knowledge from development cooperation projects to the home country

33. People In Need official website: <https://www.peopleinneed.net/timeline-5391gp>

CONCLUSIONS

This overview is intended to provide guidance in building future projects for Ukraine's recovery and can be used by Lithuanian or other NGOs.

- Strong Civil Society Organisations (and NGOs) are the basis of any democratic society, they guarantee civil participation and security in times of crises. Therefore, they have to grow their experience and build their capacity.
- Lithuanian CSOs can utilise the potential support of business sector better, this way including an innovation element in their projects and programmes.
- Examples of strong organisations with academic, business, international cooperation show, that building capacity takes time, however, it is necessary and can bring great rewards in development cooperation, as well as in application of lessons learned back in the home country.



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