Evaluation summary
Psychosocial seeds for peace: Trauma rehabilitation and civic activism, Ukraine – Internal Evaluation
March 2018

Evaluation theme
Conflict Sensitive Development & Humanitarian Programming

Summary
This is a summary of an internal final evaluation which assesses our work to strengthen mental health and psychosocial recovery efforts and encourage civic activism in Ukraine.

Introduction
This summary outlines the internal final evaluation of the Psychosocial seeds for peace project in Ukraine. It aimed to strengthen mental health and psychosocial recovery efforts and encourage civic activism through local peacebuilding projects and conflict analysis training and advocacy. The project ran from October 2015 to April 2017 and the evaluation was published in March 2018.

Over 16,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and vulnerable individuals received targeted psychological help based on their needs and a small peacebuilding community emerged because of the intervention. The project received positive feedback from the trauma centres, however the project did not make the impact on national level policy that was expected.

Background to the project
At the time of project design, violent conflict in eastern Ukraine between Ukrainian government forces and separatist fighters was ongoing despite a peace deal, and there were few prospects for a stable resolution. The project aimed to complement humanitarian relief efforts and help to support local populations respond to the consequences of war. Much of this effort fell on local civil society and community-based organisations, particularly helping victims of war trauma (primarily IDPs and ex-combatants). Psychosocial services provided were ad hoc and of varying quality and in need of professional standards and procedures. Volunteers were heavily relied upon and, while being highly motivated, they were inexperienced in civic activism and lacked conflict-sensitivity and general organisational skills.

Through three work packages the project aimed to: a) strengthen mental health and psychosocial recovery efforts in Ukraine through three model psychosocial centres in
Kyiv, Lviv, and Dnipro, and mobile centres operating in six locations along the line of confrontation, offering services to IDPs, ex-combatants and other vulnerable groups; (b) allow volunteers and civic activists from across Ukraine to see their role within the conflict system and to become active agents for social change through capacity building and training on conflict analysis and seed grants to pilot peacebuilding projects at the local level; (c) strengthen conflict analysis through research and policy roundtables.

Two “overall objectives” were put forward:

- The reintegration and recovery and prevention of marginalisation of groups affected by the conflict (IDPs, ex-military-personnel, bereaved families or those whose relatives are missing).
- The establishment of the basic building blocks for rebuilding social cohesion as a strategy towards longer term peacebuilding.

As were two “specific objectives”:

- To strengthen mental health and psychosocial recovery efforts at both national and community levels.
- To develop locally owned peacebuilding strategies both within communities directly affected by conflict and at the expert, national level.

**Methodology**

The evaluation analyses qualitative and quantitative data against the established indicators using data collected throughout the project with a focus on effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project. The evaluator had access the project documents (the original proposal, logical framework, monitoring data, reports and research outputs) and visited targeted locations and project stakeholders and beneficiaries in Kyiv, Dnipro, Mariupol and Berdyansk in December 2017, as well as the project co-applicant in Tbilisi (in October 2017).

**Summary of findings**

- The model and mobile psychosocial centres have strengthened mental health and psychosocial recovery efforts at the local level and have improved their knowledge in delivering multidisciplinary psychosocial services to different groups. The centres report a reduction in trauma and PTSD among their clients but change stories have not been sufficiently documented.
- Across all model and mobile centres, over 16,000 IDPs and members of other vulnerable communities received targeted psychological help based on their needs. Over 24,000 people were indirect beneficiaries of psychosocial service delivery.
- The Ministry of Health stresses the importance of the research conducted under work package A, which hints at recognition of the report as an evidence base for policy development. However, action is not visible. At the community level, local government have shown interest in supporting the model centres in Lviv and Dnipro;
however, at the central level stakeholders cite minimal buy-in from decision makers in Kyiv (both local administration and national government).

- Alert has managed to establish a small community of peacebuilders in Ukraine through training and the grants mechanism. Most participants of Alert’s training are active in their communities and confident enough to design new projects or follow-on projects.

- The consortium stressed that gender dynamics had been integrated into the training and support provided across the three work packages; however, this was not reflected in any monitoring and project reporting. Therefore, it is difficult to argue that gender was mainstreamed into project activities and gender sensitivity was sufficiently considered across all activities. None of the partners from this project refute the value and importance of gender as a cross-cutting issue; however, it seems that there is a lack of understanding how gender can be mainstreamed into project activities (and monitoring) in practice.

Lessons

- While delivering these services, the mobile centres would share information to make their delivery effective. Sharing was less pronounced between the model centres, who pursued different aspects of psychosocial support. Both mobile and model centres did interact with government actors that provide services to victims of trauma, but there is little evidence of collaboration between state and non-state actors.

- Consortium relations were strained by changes in management and there are multiple lessons here for Alert, from staff inductions and training, to partnership management. Alert’s capacity was pushed by implementing such a large, short-term project in a country it had never operated in before. Nevertheless, the project yielded positive results in two of the three work packages in a relatively short timeframe, which is a considerable achievement.

Recommendations

- Given that Alert were implementing a new project in a new country, far more emphasis should have been placed on monitoring, evaluation and learning. This must be reflected in the way the projects are staffed, roles and responsibilities, level of support and oversight from London, and the use of M&E frameworks.

- Gender mainstreaming and sensitivity must be included at the project design to ensure that a clear methodology relevant to the project can be elaborated, understood by the implementing staff, and followed.

- When planning future advocacy efforts, there must be a clear advocacy strategy outlined in project design, revisited in inception with stakeholders, and reviewed frequently during implementation. Advocacy is multi-faceted; therefore, the means for advocacy should be diversified away from the traditional approach of research reports. It must consider policy analysis and relationship building with policy makers and social influencers. An inclusive, participatory and, formative advocacy strategy is crucial from design to completion.
• In future, the planning required in opening a new office must be realistic of the time, attention, and investment required from London. This may involve bringing staff to Alert HQ in London or flying out London-based staff to the country in question. New staff in Alert country offices require in-depth, in-person induction to ensure that they are fully aware of Alert’s experience and approaches to peacebuilding, and how they apply to the context in question.

• Alert should consider its role and added value in partnerships on issue areas where we have limited expertise (such as psychosocial services). On the one hand, working with specialist organisations to provide contextually relevant services can help us to achieve greater impact. On the other, it can be difficult to ‘manage’ partners in such situations and they may hold ‘creative control’, even as a co-applicant. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but clarity on partner management structures, roles and the added value of each party should be clear from the outset.