

THE IMPACT OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS ON THE RESILIENCE POTENTIAL OF TERRITORIAL COMMUNITIES IN UKRAINE

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Abstract. *The relevance of studying non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Ukraine is determined by their significance in enhancing the resilience potential of local communities within limited timeframes and constrained resource availability. The purpose of the article is to reveal the impact of NGOs as an effective tool for improving the adaptive capacities and self-organization abilities of community groups on the resilience potential of territorial communities, mitigating destructive consequences, and accelerating their recovery during and after the Russian-Ukrainian war.*

With the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict into a full-scale war in 2022, significant shifts have been observed in the prosocial behavior of citizens and the social structure of Ukrainian civil society. These shifts are characterized by increased cohesion and consolidation among the population, driven by the transformation of individual perspectives and institutional adaptation in high-risk conditions, as well as a revitalization of cooperation among civil institutions.

The study of the impact of NGOs on the resilience potential of territorial communities was conducted using the systemic approach method, techniques of abstraction and generalization, functional and comparative analysis, statistical methods and data analysis, as well as the graphical method. Correlation-regression analysis was also applied: indicators that determine the resilience potential of the country's local communities were selected based on the criteria of significance and the presence of a cause-and-effect relationship, including local budget revenues per capita, household monetary incomes, and the number of informally employed individuals as an indicator of the shadow economy. The results of the correlation-regression analysis confirmed the existence of a positive dependence between the amount of local budget revenues per capita and the number of public and charitable organizations. This finding allows for the assertion that local budget revenues increase as the number of organizations grows, due to the heightened public activity of residents, increased social responsibility of businesses, reduced corruption, and decreased mistrust among community members. It was substantiated that a low level of civic engagement, formed based on closed networks and information communications, exacerbates material gap, status differentiation, and income inequality in the community.

In the conditions of war, residents' affiliation with formal and informal communication channels of public organizations increases citizens' employment opportunities. As the number of NGOs in a territorial community increases, the communication network and trust among residents become more developed, and socially responsible behavior among the population rises. It enhances the probability of official employment for the unemployed, as confirmed by the results of the correlation-regression analysis between the number of informally employed individuals and the number of public and charitable organizations.

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Keywords: *non-governmental organizations, public and charitable organizations, territorial community, resilience.*

JEL: L31, D73, O18, O19

1. Introduction. Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, most of the territorial communities of Ukraine are in the zone of high financial, security, environmental, and social risks. In response, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been actively working to minimize human, environmental, and economic losses. With their flexible organizational structures and proximity to potential service recipients, NGOs are characterized by higher efficiency and effectiveness in their activities at the local level and their ability to enhance the resilience potential of local communities within limited timeframes and constrained resource provision. This underscores the relevance of studying NGOs as an effective tool for the recovery of territorial communities during wartime and in the post-war period.

The increased influence of the civil sector encourages local authorities to recognize the agency of NGOs and involve them in the process of community recovery. Establishing cooperation between local authorities and NGOs, and delegating certain social tasks to them, allows for a more rational use of the community's limited resources under the extreme conditions of war and contributes to enhancing the community's resilience potential. While in European Union countries NGOs are integrated into public life and receive financial support from both national and local governments, the involvement of NGOs in Ukrainian territorial communities in cooperation with local authorities is minimal. It has decreased even further under wartime conditions – the proportion of NGOs receiving funding from state or local budgets has been reduced by nearly threefold.

Ukraine is in the zone of influence of various international public associations, including the Red Cross, UNICEF, Right to Protection, Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, Greenpeace, and others. Notably, the international environmental organization Greenpeace actively defends Ukraine's interests by blocking oil and gas tankers in various countries to reduce the financial potential of the Russian army and exerting pressure on companies and governments whose actions at the Kakhovka Hydroelectric Power Plant, Zaporizhzhia and Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plants threaten environmental security. The NGO "Right to Protection" actively provides legal assistance to internally displaced persons, identifies violations of their rights, and helps restore pension payments. Conversely, the active use of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate by Russian agents has a destructive impact on the resilience of territorial communities and poses a threat to Ukraine's national security.

Domestic and foreign scientists have repeatedly emphasized the issue of ensuring the resilient recovery of territorial communities in war conditions and the potential of public organizations as an effective tool for increasing the adaptive capacity of the public community. The problem of resilience in Ukraine is studied thoroughly by specialists from the Institute for Demography and Life Quality Problems of the NAS of Ukraine: E. Libanova (Portnikov, 2024), T. Zaiats (Zaiats et al., 2019), V. Zvonar (Zaiats et al., 2019; Zvonar, Dyakonenko, and Kotenko, 2023), S. Aksyonova and P. Shevchuk (Aksyonova & Shevchuk, 2024), H. Kraievska (Kraievska, 2020), as part of research into institutional mechanisms for balancing social responsibility, public activity in territorial communities in the conditions of military operations, self-organization and responsibility in

community development, population resilience during COVID-19, and social capital as a means of ensuring resilience in Ukrainian society (Dyakonenko, 2023). T. Birkland and M. Warnement investigated the problem of resilience potential in the conditions of disasters in non-democratic countries. In particular, on the example of Nicaragua, they analyzed the decrease in the resilience of the reconstruction of a settlement after an earthquake caused by government corruption (Birkland, & Warnement, 2014). The influence of international non-governmental organizations on the development of declining countries was studied by Y. Bradshaw and M. J. Schafer. In their opinion, international NGOs have a productive effect on the development of such countries, in particular on housing construction, the sphere of health care, the sanitary and epidemic situation, and act as a significant source of financial resources (Bradshaw, and Schafer, 2000). While acknowledging the contributions of scientists, there is a notable lack of research on the potential of public organizations in the resilient recovery of Ukraine’s territorial communities during and after the war.

The purpose of the article is to reveal the influence of public organizations, as an effective tool for increasing the adaptive capacity and self-organization of the public community, on the resilient potential of territorial communities, mitigating the destructive consequences and speeding up their recovery in the war and post-war periods of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The study was conducted using general scientific methods: the systemic approach, techniques of abstraction and generalization, functional and comparative analysis – to substantiate the main functions of NGOs in ensuring the resilience of territorial communities; statistical methods and data analysis – to assess the impact of NGOs on the resilience-based recovery of territorial communities during wartime and the post-war period; and the graphical method – to visualize the obtained results. Correlation-regression analysis was used to examine the impact of NGOs on the resilience of territorial communities. Specifically, indicators were selected and tested for multicollinearity, paired correlation relationships were evaluated, linear regression analysis was conducted, and dependency equations were constructed. Based on significance and cause-and-effect criteria, three indicators were selected that directly impact the resilience potential of the country’s territorial communities: local budget revenues per capita, household incomes, and the number of informally employed individuals as a shadow economy indicator.

2. Basic content. The resilience potential of NGOs is the aggregate of available resources, capabilities, and means that these voluntary associations of territorial community residents can mobilize to meet their interests and public demands for recovery and adaptation in the face of external threats and internal challenges during wartime and the post-war periods. The resilience potential of NGOs is determined by the size of the organization and its social capital, the scale of its activities and sphere of influence, the efficiency of resource utilization, and the ability to realize its inherent potential. With the escalation of the Russian-Ukrainian war into a full-scale one, significant shifts have been observed in the prosocial behavior of citizens and the social structure of Ukraine’s civil society, characterized by increased cohesion and consolidation among the population. This is driven by the transformation of individual perspectives, institutional adaptation under high-risk conditions, the revitalization of cooperation among civil institutions, and the heightened activity of charitable and volunteer organizations.

The effectiveness of cooperation depends on the motivation of the participants in this process, the solidarity of government representatives’ views in the community, and publicity is the key to effective

decision-making. The community sector’s influence on the processes of local budget funds allocation in order to strengthen social ties and increase the social capital of territorial communities is undeniable (Sova, 2023). Currently, the public sector of Ukraine is developing in the context of modern global trends with target orientations for the social integration of all subjects of local development and a harmonious combination of private and public interests. The social integration of efforts by various actors into a cohesive whole is a global trend in civil sector development, alongside the relative autonomy, openness, and mobility of institutions. Achieving integration goals relies on shifting values, developing new institutional forms, and transforming informal civil groups into structures aligned with public demands.

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, NGOs have shown increased integration into the social space of the country’s territorial communities and have intensified volunteer activities. This has enabled them to compensate for the unpreparedness of state structures to conduct military operations on the country’s territory by providing assistance to the Armed Forces of Ukraine, evacuating populations from areas under constant shelling, patrolling territories, delivering humanitarian aid to those in need, rebuilding destroyed housing for free, and more. There was a significant surge in civic activity in the communities of the Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, and Odesa regions, which rank among the leaders in civic engagement. In contrast, in the frontline territorial communities of the Kherson, Donetsk, Chernihiv, Sumy, and Mykolaiv regions, the civic movement was minimal following the onset of the full-scale invasion. There was a decline in the number of official NGOs, with the creation of new ones primarily occurring in regional centers, focusing mainly on supporting the military and war victims.

From 2013 to 2023, the civil sector experienced significant growth in the charity index (by 2,6 times) and in the level of donations (by 8,8 times) (Figure 1). As a result, in the 2023 World Giving Ranking, Ukraine rose to 2nd place from 102nd (in 2013), effectively becoming the only European country in the top-10, surpassing the Baltic states (Estonia – 49th place, Lithuania – 83rd, Latvia – 90th), Georgia (104th), Moldova (101st), and Poland (142nd place).

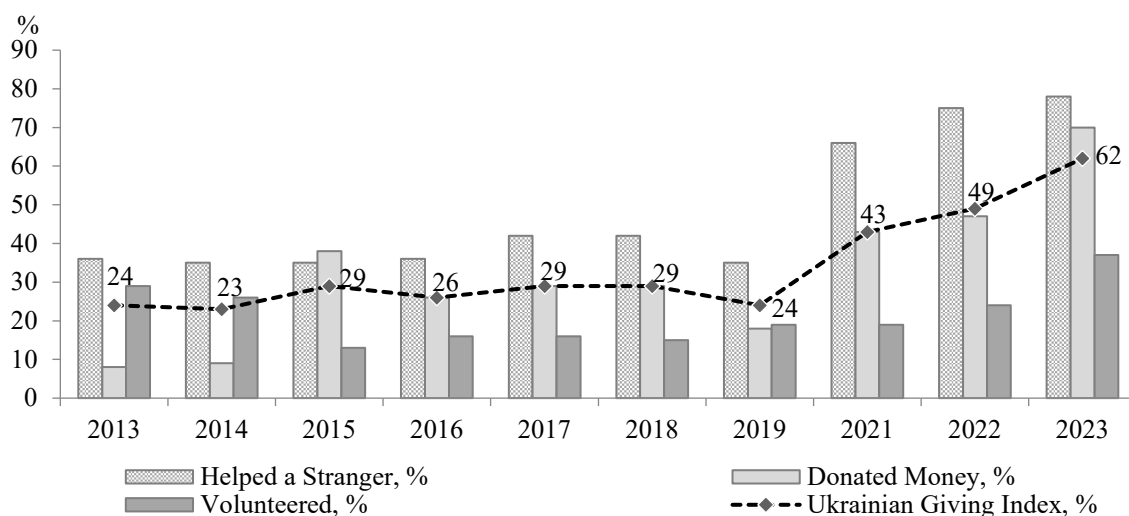


Figure 1. Ukrainian Giving Index, 2013-2023, %

Source: built by the authors on the bases of (Charities Aid Foundation, 2024)

From the first months of the full-scale invasion, NGOs have performed a wide range of socially significant functions (Figure 2), actively responding to threats and public demands.

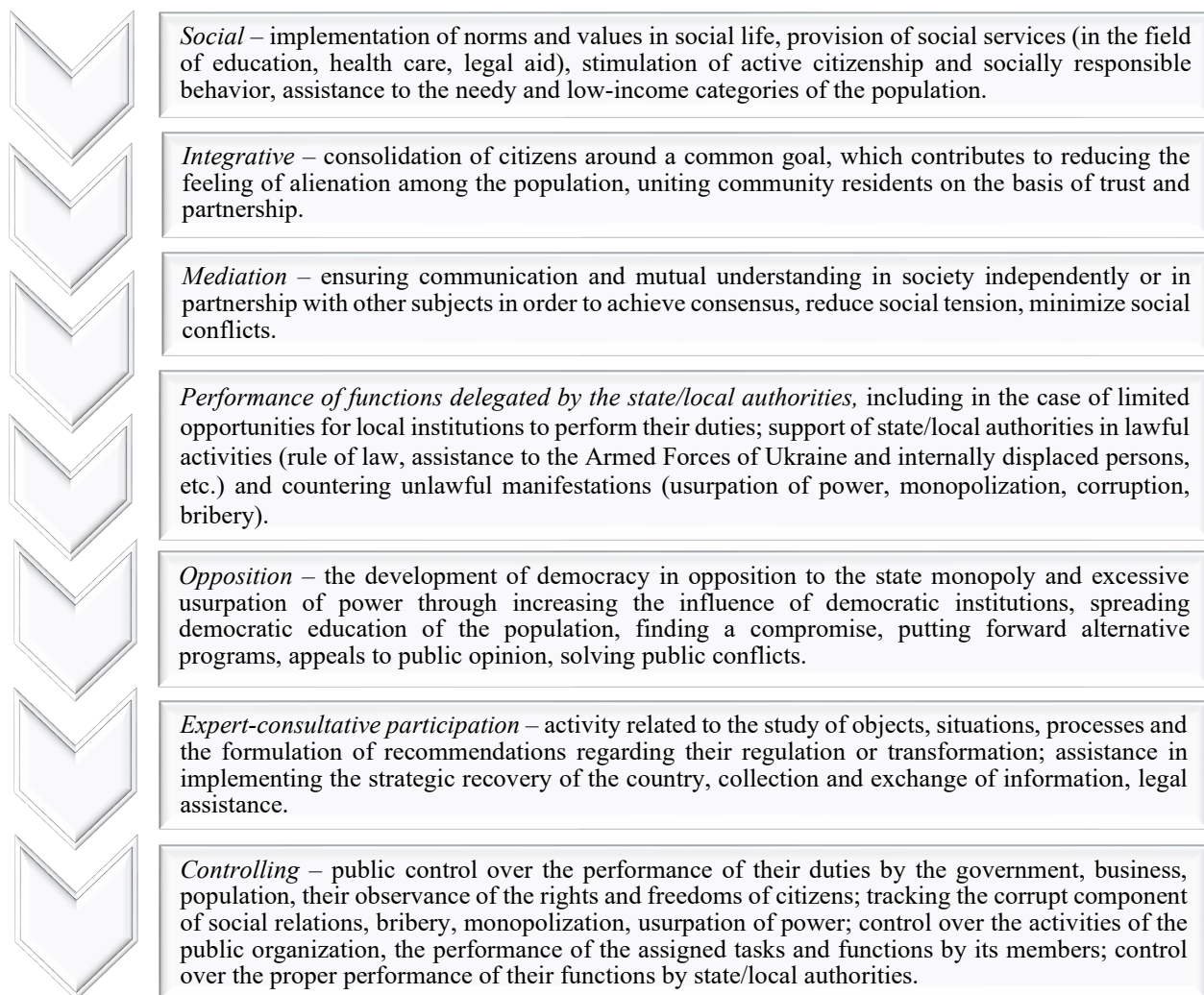


Figure 2. The main functions of NGOs in ensuring the resilience of territorial communities

Source: compiled by the authors

The social function of NGOs, particularly in providing social services to the population (such as education, healthcare, and legal assistance), is crucial for the resilience of territorial communities (Zaiats, et al., 2024). This includes the involvement of financial resources from international donors, which has reduced the financial burden on the state/local budget and created the opportunity to allocate the saved resources to other urgent needs, including defense and military-strategic purposes. Thanks to their flexible organizational structure and proximity to potential recipients of administrative and social services, public organizations are able to effectively organize their delivery. For example, in developing countries, NGOs are a significant source of financial resources, ensuring the inflow of several million dollars to improve the living conditions of impoverished populations (construction of housing and healthcare facilities, improvement of sanitary and epidemiological conditions, implementation of programs for children, etc.) (Bradshaw, and Schafer, 2000).

The NGOs’ active work and the delegation of administrative and social tasks by government bodies to these associations will contribute to the efficient use of budgetary resources and their growth due to the attraction of financial resources from international donors, the development of entrepreneurial

activity and residents’ education, the enhancement of the community’s social capital, etc. In particular, the results of the correlation-regression analysis confirm the existence of a positive relationship between the average local budget revenue per capita and the number of public and charitable organizations in the community (Figure 3). Accordingly, we can assert that an increase in the number of NGOs will contribute to the rise in per capita local budget revenues as a result of heightened civic engagement, increased social responsibility of businesses, reduced corruption, and greater trust among residents.

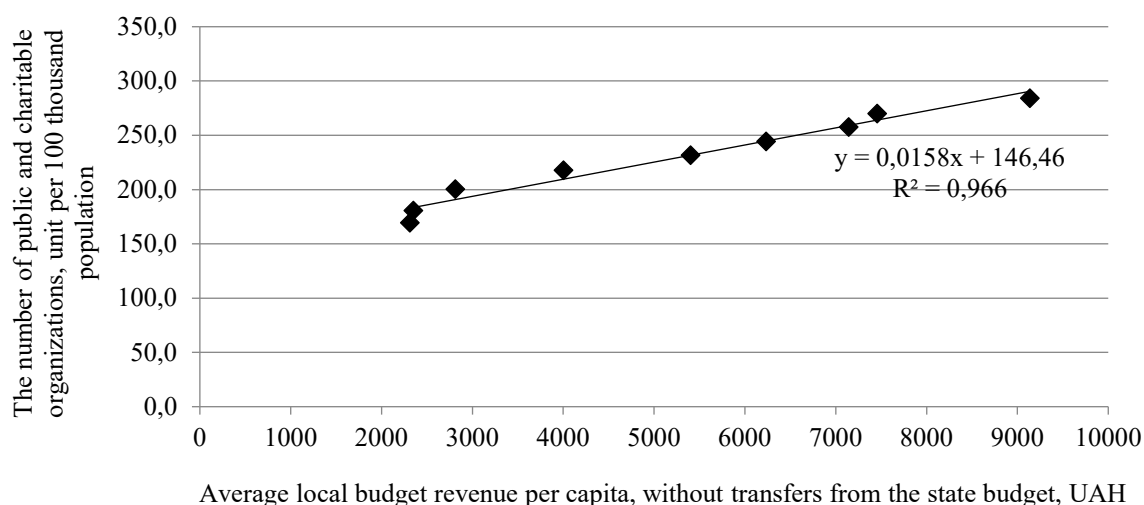


Figure 3. Dependence of local budget revenues on the number of public and charitable organizations

Source: built by the authors on the bases of (Ministry of Finance of Ukraine [MFU], 2022; MFU, 2019; State Statistics Service of Ukraine [SSSU], 2024)

Conversely, a low level of civic engagement, which is shaped by closed networks and information communications, exacerbates material disparities, status differentiation, and income inequality within the community. On the other hand, increasing public activity creates favorable conditions for the growth of income among interacting entities, diversifies the sources of their income, and enhances existing assets, including by mitigating the risks of resource loss through formal and informal connections. This is supported by the results of the correlation-regression analysis of the relationship between household monetary incomes and the number of NGOs and charitable organizations in the community (Figure 4).

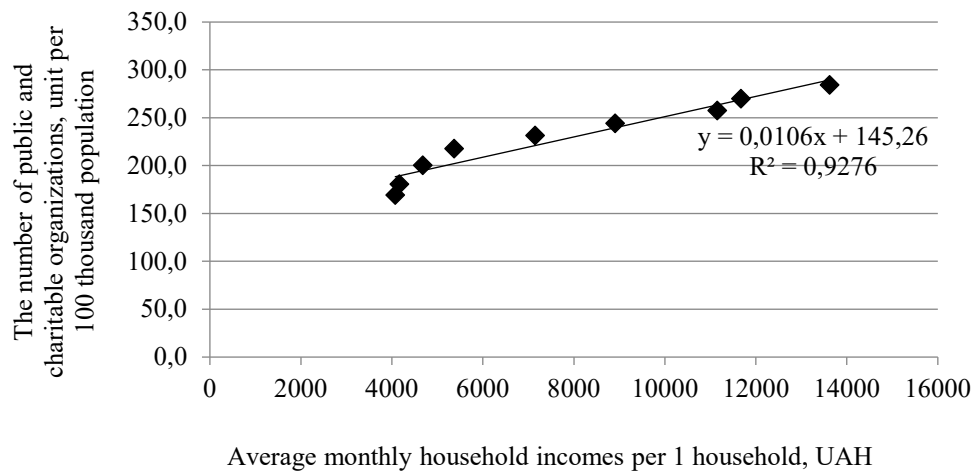


Figure 4. Dependence of households’ monetary income on the number of public and charitable organizations

Source: built by the authors on the bases of [SSSU, 2024]

One of the primary reasons for the shortfall in financial revenues to the local budget is the presence of a shadow economy and informally employed population. In wartime conditions, residents’ affiliation with formal and informal communication channels NGOs enhances their opportunities for official employment. Undoubtedly, the greater the number of NGOs in a territorial community, the more developed the communication network and trust among residents, leading to an increase in socially responsible behavior and raising the likelihood of officially employing unemployed individuals. This is confirmed by the results of the correlation-regression analysis of the relationship between the number of informally employed individuals and the number of NGOs and charitable organizations in the community (Figure 5). Conversely, excessive closeness of the community network, limited contacts, biased attitudes towards residents, and restricted access to information negatively affect the efficiency of the labor market.

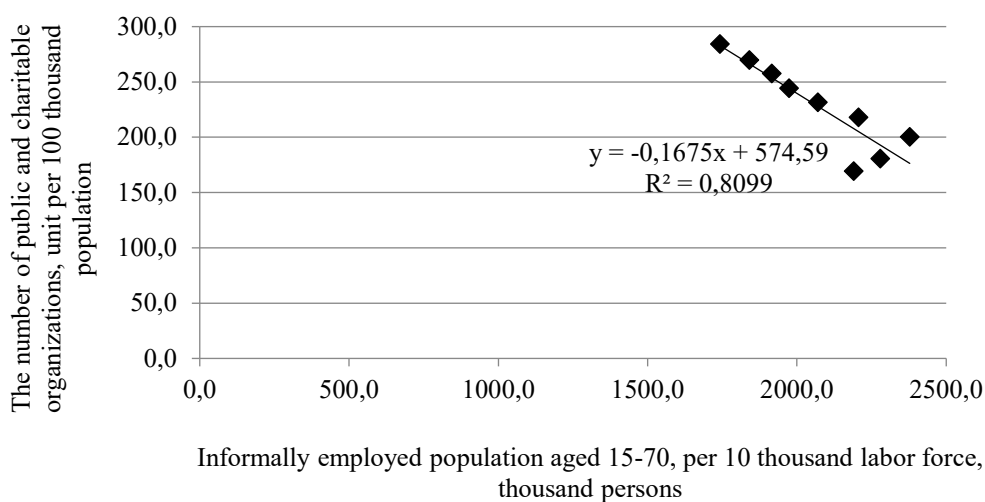


Figure 5. Dependence of informally employed population on the number of public and charitable organizations

Source: built by the authors on the bases of [SSSU, 2024]

The social function of NGOs in the post-war period may come under the pressure of reconciliation policies between nations. Given the hostile attitudes between Ukrainians and Russians, rooted in endured suffering and pervasive Russian propaganda, the reconciliation process will be prolonged and painful for both nations and will require the use of various tools. For example, a German NGO focused on issues of understanding and reconciliation between the German people and former concentration camp prisoners and victims of repression in Eastern Europe employed instruments such as providing financial assistance, offering medical treatment to survivors, and collecting testimonies and memories from eyewitnesses.

The integrative function of public organizations is aimed at consolidating residents around a common goal, stimulating civic engagement, and promoting socially responsible behavior. To ensure the resilience of territorial communities, it is crucial that the cooperation between NGOs and other stakeholders is built on the principles of dialogue and the pursuit of new opportunities for interaction based on subsidiarity, safety, social efficiency, and responsibility (awareness of the social consequences of their activities). Currently, the activity of Ukrainian NGOs in establishing communication with authorities and business structures remains low, which is due both to the challenges of adapting to wartime conditions (only 50,4 % of NGOs were able to fully or significantly adapt to working under war conditions; only 57,6 % of organizations were able to secure funding after the full-scale invasion) and to the low level of civic culture in society.

In ensuring the resilience of territorial communities, the intermediary and expert-consultative function of NGOs plays a crucial role, as it allows for the consideration of the expectations and attitudes of various population groups in specific management decisions, strategic documents, and successful social projects. During wartime, its significance increases in the context of preparing the population for potential disasters and preventing and mitigating possible negative consequences. The Ukrainian NGO «*Euromaidan-Warszawa*» (based in Warsaw), aimed at unblocking border checkpoints on the Polish-Ukrainian border, organized several forums with the participation of Polish officials. As a result, a proposal was made to Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk to include border crossings on the Polish-Ukrainian border in the list of critical infrastructure objects, and the need for a systematic approach to solving this issue was substantiated, as other professionals, incited by Russian propaganda, might follow Polish farmers in blocking the border (Bodnaruk, 2024). Such mediation and expert-consultative participation of public organizations, often based on informal relationships, helps accelerate the process of restoring relations to pre-crisis levels, preventing or reducing the scale of damage and losses.

The ability of a territorial community to recover largely depends on the controlling and opposition functions of NGOs, which involve monitoring the observance of citizens' rights and freedoms, tracking the corruption component in public relations, and preventing the usurpation of power. The recovery of a territorial community can be significantly complicated by a high level of corruption in the country, as vividly demonstrated by the recovery experience of the city of Managua after the earthquake, where resilience was undermined by the corruption of the Nicaraguan government (Birkland, & Warnement, 2014).

The resilience of a community in combating corruption and power usurpation is determined by the resources and persistence of NGOs, which find it challenging to operate at the national level and even more so at the local level. In Ukraine, there are several NGOs actively fighting corruption, among

which the most effective are: the human rights organization "Human Rights" (counteracting corrupt schemes, assessing corruption risks in public procurement), the Anti-Corruption Action Center (fighting corruption during state procurements, lobbying anti-corruption legislation, and establishing anti-corruption bodies like NABU and SAPO), and Transparency International Ukraine (anti-corruption research, including the Corruption Perceptions Index).

In the near future, the influence of NGOs on the potential for enhancing the resilience of Ukraine's territorial communities will continue to grow, driven by the institutionalization of their activities and the qualitative renewal of their methods of interaction with partners. Leading positions will be held by charitable and volunteer organizations, which will not only increase in number but also expand the range of tools at their disposal. The most effective tools for NGOs in ensuring the resilience of territorial communities will include active measures (promoting citizen mobility, shaping public opinion, public oversight) and segment-specific tools (targeting particular population categories, infrastructure objects, territories, etc.) with fixed effects (providing legal assistance to internally displaced persons, restoring destroyed housing and healthcare facilities, improving living conditions to prevent epidemics, ensuring the operation of humanitarian centers, and collecting necessary information). Among the priority areas of activity for newly established and pre-invasion public and charitable organizations planning to participate in the country's post-war reconstruction, infrastructure rebuilding (80,0 % of organizations) and the provision of humanitarian aid (87,7 %) will be key (The Ukrainian Center for Independent Political Research, 2023).

Implementing contemporary global trends in the development of the public sector within territorial communities, in the context of building a resilient economy in Ukraine during wartime and post-war periods, will require:

- adaptation of domestic legislation to European standards regarding NGOs and their cooperation with local authorities such as European Fundamental Principles on the Status of Non-Governmental Organizations, Recommendation № CM/Rec(2007)14, and the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950). This will necessitate the regulation of a three-tier territorial status for public organizations in Ukraine (international, nationwide, local) to align with the two-tier system in the EU (international, national status);
- implementation of Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine № 976 dated 05.11.2008 "Procedure for facilitating the conduct of public expert examination of executive authorities' performance", which provides for the involvement of public control as a tool for establishing and maintaining close communication and control over the activities of executive authorities and ensuring their transparency functioning, including for the purpose of preventing the unauthorized use of charitable aid by the authorities in the war and post-war periods of territorial community recovery;
- enhancing current anti-corruption legislation to strengthen public anti-corruption oversight; legislating increased legal protection for whistleblowers; ensuring legal frameworks for interaction between public anti-corruption organizations and citizens; implementing public monitoring of compliance with normative legal acts in the field of corruption prevention and counteraction;
- development of sector-specific and thematic legislative acts for the functioning of NGOs to ensure more competent regulation;

- legislative restriction or termination of the activities of Ukrainian public organizations that are used by foreign agents and pose a threat to national security, or that engage in active resistance with manifestations of national intolerance and xenophobia towards the Ukrainian population;
- development of effective cooperation programs between NGOs and local authorities based on a comprehensive assessment of the community’s resilience, which will promote the active involvement of public organizations in joint projects aimed at addressing community issues;
- optimization of financial support for the activities of public organizations by supporting their institutional development, reforming the taxation system, exemption from taxation of charitable assistance for treatment, prosthetics, social support for children, etc.;
- active support for public organizations from local entrepreneurs, donors, and benefactors to restore community infrastructure and reduce the financial burden on the local budget;
- establishing close cooperation between local and international public organizations, which will facilitate a better understanding by international donors of local needs when providing humanitarian aid;
- increasing the awareness of local public organizations regarding collaboration with international organizations and reducing the language barrier;
- involving the public sector in the processes of transforming the value-based orientations of residents in a territorial community, and reassessing values that have developed over decades and hinder the formation of civil society.

3. Conclusions. Non-governmental organizations are one of the most effective forms of resident participation in the local governance. NGOs serve as a powerful tool for the resilient development of territorial communities by enhancing the adaptive capacities and self-organization abilities of the community, mitigating destructive consequences, and accelerating recovery after shocks. With greater efficiency and effectiveness in their activities at the local level compared to the national level, NGOs are capable of strengthening the adaptive and transformational potential of territorial communities within limited timeframes and resource constraints, as well as in the face of the inflexibility and hyper-coherence of local authorities.

The resilience potential of NGOs in Ukraine’s territorial communities is defined as the aggregate of available resources, capabilities, and means that can be utilized for recovery and adaptation in the face of external threats and internal challenges during the wartime and post-war periods. Currently, Ukrainian NGOs are characterized by limited financial capital and a shortage of human and material resources, which have undergone significant transformations and reductions due to the war. The number of organizations, particularly charitable and volunteer groups, tended to increase at the onset of the full-scale war, but subsequently, the dynamics of civic activity have shown a decline. This downturn is due to the difficulties of adapting to work under high-risk conditions, a decrease in donations resulting from declining trust in these structures, and the overall drop in living standards. In frontline areas, there has been a shutdown or freezing of projects, a reduction in the number of official NGOs, and the creation of new ones has occurred mainly in regional centers, focusing primarily on assisting the military and war victims. Military actions have forced many NGOs to relocate to safer regions, leading to a drop in revenue and operational difficulties due to the lack of office space and equipment.

The main functions of public organizations in ensuring the resilience of territorial communities include social, integrative, mediation, expert-consultative, and controlling. Correlation-regression analysis has confirmed the significance of public and charitable organizations for local budget revenues, resident income, and informal employment indicators. It has been established that an increase in the number of NGOs will contribute to higher local budget revenues per capita, driven by civic engagement, business social responsibility, reduced corruption, and increased trust. It has been substantiated that the growing number of NGOs and their activities create preconditions for increasing the income of interacting entities, diversifying their sources of income, and reducing the risks of losing existing assets and resources, as evidenced by the results of the correlation-regression analysis of the relationship between household monetary income and the number of public/charitable organizations in the community.

Using correlation-regression analysis, a negative relationship between the number of public/charitable organizations and the informally employed population was also established. It is argued that as the number of public organizations increases, the communication network and trust among residents develop, socially responsible behavior among the population grows, thereby increasing the likelihood of official employment for the unemployed. Conversely, excessive closure of the public network and restrictions on contacts and access to information negatively affect the efficiency of the labor market.

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