BACKGROUND

An armed conflict has affected millions of lives in eastern Ukraine since 2014. There are 3.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, among them 500,000 children. Furthermore, there are over 1.5 million registered Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), including over 220,000 children. Children are particularly vulnerable in such a situation, with their families exposed to significant hardship often related to multiple displacements and the depletion of coping mechanisms.

This case study will look specifically at the challenge of achieving social inclusion in the context of internal displacement of children and their families due to conflict. Anecdotal evidence shared from UNICEF-supported community centres and psychosocial outreach programmes shows that children and families are affected by the conflict, and IDPs in particular often suffer from intolerance and prejudiced attitudes among the host communities. These are manifested in interactions in places like schools and health facilities, for example. In fact, a UNICEF-supported survey on bullying among children has identified that IDP children are more likely to be bullied in schools, and that they are shyer and less communicative than their peers.
Looking at existing data and analysis to uncover contributing factors to these negative attitudes, it is interesting to note that there is not just low interaction with IDPs among host communities but also extremely low media coverage of IDPs and the humanitarian support provided to conflict-affected populations when compared to all conflict-related media reports. The rate was found to be somewhere from 1 to 4 per cent of all media reporting. Some earlier opinion polls stated that 60 per cent of Ukrainian citizens felt prejudice against IDPs when in fact only 30 per cent had experienced personal contact with IDPs.2

To respond to this need for improved social inclusion of families affected by the conflict, UNICEF Ukraine developed a Communication for Development (C4D) strategy aimed at addressing inclusion from various angles. A national behaviour change programme that ran from 2016 to 2017 used a combination of multimedia tools, engagement activities and art towards this end.

The national behaviour change programme had three objectives:

1. Raise awareness nationally about affected families and their needs, particularly among the adult population and among families with children;

2. Empower conflict-affected families and children with coping mechanisms;

3. Increase awareness among conflict-affected families about support services available to them.

**METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH**

The intervention applied a multifold strategy utilizing a number of multimedia tools. Communication activities were tailored to each objective, with the various components addressing different segments of the audience and beneficiaries. To ensure an evidence-based approach, key messages and topics were based on the results of a baseline opinion survey, and results of the intervention were assessed through an end-line opinion survey. Strategic partnerships were developed with several actors - leading media companies (TV channels, print press and digital platforms), the largest film production company in the country, the main national art centre and a leading publishing house.

**Video advertisements**

Aimed at increasing awareness among families and the general public about children affected by conflict, social video advertisements were aired on national television. These emotionally compelling videos emphasized the key message that ‘every child needs care, protection and love’. The advertisements depict young children enjoying happy, healthy childhoods, which are suddenly devastated by conflict. The videos end by highlighting key statistics about the number of children who are affected and in need of support. These videos reached over 24 million people and became one of the most viewed social advertisements on Ukrainian television that year.4

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2 Detector Media, 2016. Non-governmental organisation Detector Media is a media platform and an influential think tank. It strives to address the real needs of the Ukrainian society, Ukrainian and world media community. As of 2017, the organisation combines the roles of a mass media outlet and analytical center of the Ukrainian media sphere and is proud to be among similar think tanks at the international level.

3 Data from national surveys as of 2016.

4 The video advertisement may be accessed at <https://goo.gl/a8QVF8>.
Website

A website was launched to increase awareness among the affected population about aid services available to them. The website was strategically placed on a highly visited web platform of a top TV channel. It was also promoted through targeted digital advertising in the affected regions. Real life stories and news about services on psychosocial support, family protection centres and humanitarian kits for IDPs have been broadcast on the top TV news channels and published in major newspapers reaching conflict-affected regions with an estimated audience total of 15 million people.

Social mobilization

The response also involved the implementation of social mobilization activation that engaged directly with children and families in the affected communities through a direct virtual link between average citizens and people from affected populations. Over 80 personal stories about overcoming challenges were gathered from individuals of various regional origins, backgrounds and age groups. The stories were collected via a short story contest for children called 'Tiny Stories', and the stories that won the contest were published in a children’s book which was then delivered to community centres, schools, kindergartens and libraries in the affected regions. The selected stories can be accessed at <https://goo.gl/cSLis4>.

An estimated 500,000 children have access to the book’s stories and can engage with its motivational content. Popular national celebrities were involved in the promotion of the book. These celebrities also shared their personal stories about social inclusion in videos that were aired on national TV and social media reaching 14 million people. The videos featuring celebrities sharing their personal stories about social inclusion can be viewed at <https://goo.gl/FwxgZ9>.

Art exhibition

The public advocacy component was implemented with storytelling through an art exhibition entitled 'What Is Your Name?' which showed the life of children during the conflict in eastern Ukraine. It was hosted in Mystetskyi Arsenal, the main art centre in Ukraine, and featured documentary photos, videos, real stories and art installations made by a mix of professional artists, amateur artists and children. It even included innovative virtual reality documentary videos. More than 3,000 people have visited the exhibition, and over 5 million viewers were reached through media reports about the exhibition and its events. ‘What Is Your Name?’ was an exhibition dedicated to the families of internally displaced persons in Ukraine and their integration into society, as an element of peacemaking. © UNICEF Ukraine / 2016
RESULTS

UNICEF ads run during the campaign. The intervention demonstrated that an effective way to address challenging topics such as tolerance and inclusion is through the targeting of multiple audiences and the use of a varied mix of tools.

Overall, the intervention reached over 82 per cent of adults in Ukraine through traditional and digital media tools. According to a post-campaign survey, IDPs were better informed since the campaign about available community centres (from 24.5 per cent in October 2016 to 31 per cent in March 2017) and access to education kits (from 42 per cent to 68 per cent).

About 44 per cent of IDPs post-campaign believe that the attitude of host communities towards them is ‘very good’ (compared to 30 per cent pre-campaign). The estimated level of acceptance in host communities towards IDPs increased from 69 per cent to 93 per cent.

UNICEF Ukraine entered a new programme cycle in 2018 and it continues to address the needs of families affected by conflict. Within this new programme cycle, the issue of social inclusion is being assessed from an intersectoral aspect, and plans are underway to address it in a comprehensive matter.

LESSONS LEARNT

- The intervention demonstrated that an effective way to address challenging topics such as tolerance and inclusion is through the targeting of multiple audiences and the use of a varied mix of tools.

- Acceptance of each component supported the overall effect of the intervention.

- Through the implementation of this intervention, various partnerships with national and local stakeholders have been established that could be further used for the development programme in Ukraine.

- The multifold and multi-tool approach can be used in various emergencies, and contextualized according to regional specifics.

- The introduction of art as a storytelling tool for very difficult topics has proven effective in bringing national attention to issues which society prefers remain invisible.

- The topic of the campaign is quite a sensitive one for members of the media, who tend to polarize and politicize conflict-related stories. As such, it was a challenge to build multilateral partnerships with the private sector, the media and the management of arts organizations. One of the tactics used to address this was to build the capacities and skills of media professionals in ethical reporting about conflict-affected children.

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