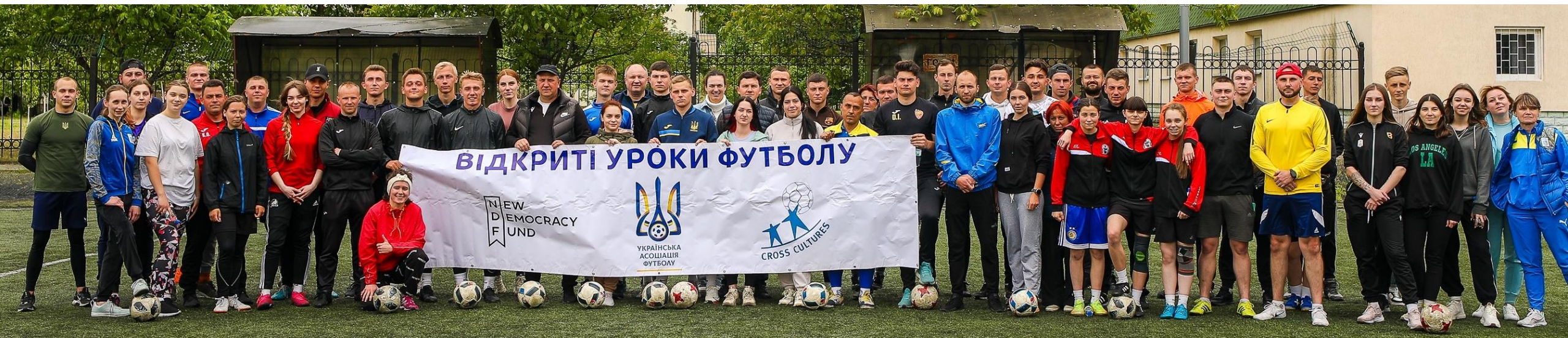


Open Fun Football - Youth Volunteerism & Resilience in Ukraine

Young Ukrainians are eager to contribute to their country's recovery and support their fellow citizens during the ongoing war, however, despite their strong desire to engage, they often face barriers to actively participate. These include being perceived as passive victims, lack of qualifications, and the absence of viable platforms for action. The gap is starkly evident in the UNDP report showing that while 72% of youth express a willingness to participate in recovery efforts only 1% are actively involved.

To address this issue, Cross Cultures, the Ukrainian Football Federation and All Ukrainian Foundation for Children's Rights have trained young men and women as youth leaders focusing on (a) psychosocial recovery, (b) social cohesion, and (c) democratic participation taking point of departure in Fun Football. By providing them with the skills, network, and opportunities needed to rebuild their communities, the intervention has enhanced the participants' resilience, leadership capacity, and civic engagement. The project has utilized Local Youth Hubs established by Cross Cultures' partners and network of volunteers across 18 regions of Ukraine.





Youth Leadership Education in Kyiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts:

140 youth leaders have learned about supporting war-affected children and contributing to community recovery in regional and local seminars. The regional seminars enable youths from different oblasts to share experiences, exchange perspectives, and learn from each other.



Action learning at regional seminar in Kyiv oblast:

The Youth Leadership Education is based on an action-learning approach, where theoretical knowledge is put directly into practice. By developing, organizing and implementing Fun Football activities, participants gain hands-on experience that helps them develop essential skills in communication, leadership, and problem-solving, applicable both within- and outside the sporting arena.



Fun Football Festivals organized by youth leaders in Volyn and Kyiv oblasts:

Children are among the most vulnerable groups in times of war and are highly exposed to risks of exploitation, violence, PTSD and other mental health disorders. Currently an estimated 2.2 million Ukrainian children are in urgent need of psychosocial support and child friendly spaces. The project has reached more than **15,000** children in 18 regions, including children from host communities, IDPs and children of combat soldiers, providing them with a much-needed refuge from the war.



Weekly Fun Football in
Ivano-Frankivsk oblast.



Life skills and psychosocial support activities in Ivano-Frankivsk and Vinnytsia oblasts:
During Fun Football events, the youth leaders also provide life skills training such as mine awareness and psychosocial support in addition to movement-activities. In this way, Fun Football is an effective means of mobilizing children around a range of different activities.



Life skills activities during Fun Football Festivals:
Through the project, the youth leaders have become part of a diverse network of volunteers and collaborated with specialists on incorporating crucial life skills activities into the Fun Football Festivals thereby reaching thousands of children.



Top: Army personnel teaching mine awareness in Odesa oblast.

Bottom: Paramedics teaching first-aid in Zaporizhzhia oblast.



State Emergency Service personnel teaching war-time safety precautions during a Fun Football Festival in Chernivtsi oblast



State Emergency Service personnel teaching traffic safety during a Fun Football Festival in Ternopil oblast



Psychosocial activities during Fun Football Festivals:

The youth leaders also collaborate with school psychologists on incorporating mental health components and psychosocial support into the Fun Football Festivals.



Top: Sumy oblast

Bottom: Vinnytsia oblast



Psychosocial, cultural and life skills activities at local Youth Hubs:

In addition to Fun Football, the Youth Hubs serve as gathering points for cultural, psychosocial and life skills activities organized by the youth leaders and practitioners from Cross Cultures' volunteer network.



Top: Psychosocial activity with school psychologists in Volyn oblast.

Bottom: Mine awareness training with youth leaders and the State Emergency Service in Odesa oblast.



Top: Ukrainian folk dance at the Youth Hub in Volyn oblast.



Bottom: Peer-to-peer dialogue on how to manage anxiety and anger at the Youth Hub in Kyiv oblast.



Left: Creative workshops with youth leaders at the Youth Hub in Ternopil oblast.

Right: Hiking with youth leaders in Zakarpayska oblast.



Drawing classes with youth leaders at the Youth Hub in Ternopil oblast.



Meetings for caregivers at the Youth Hub in Ivano-Frankivsk:

Finally, the Youth Hubs function as a meeting point for parents and caregivers, ensuring that they are well-informed on the activities that their children attend while also providing opportunities for psychosocial support activities.

