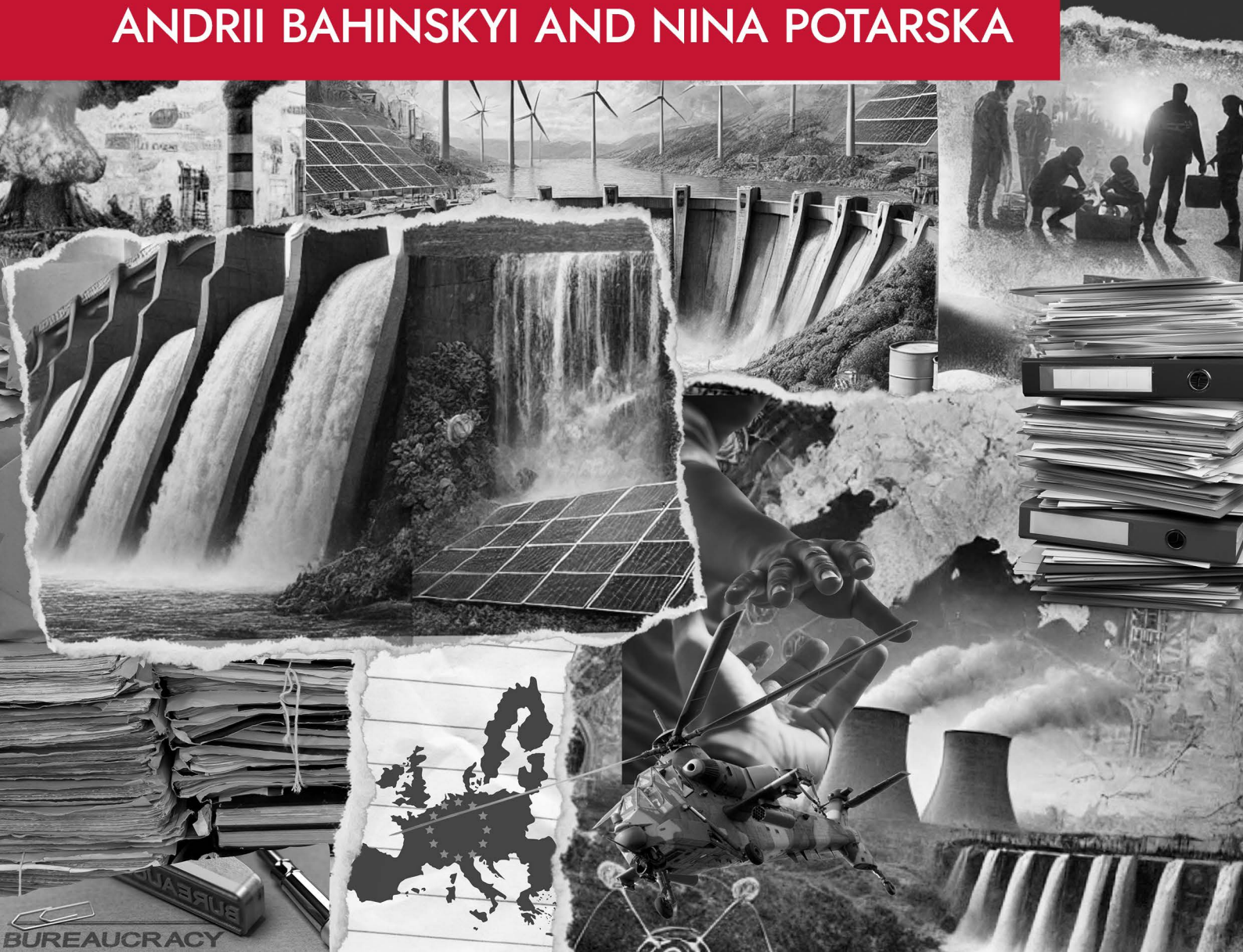


WORKSHOP REPORT

# UKRAINE: WAR, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

ANDRII BAHINSKYI AND NINA POTARSKA



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# **UKRAINE: WAR, CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM**

By Andrii Bahinskyi and Nina Potarska

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Contact the researchers:

Andrii Bahinskyi      andrei.baginsky@gmail.com  
Nina Potarska        ninapster@gmail.com

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[info@alameda.institute](mailto:info@alameda.institute)

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## **1. ABSTRACT**

The workshop report addresses issues arising from the climate-humanitarian crisis resulting from the Russian-Ukrainian war. Workshop participants reflect on the challenges arising from the destruction of ecosystems in Ukraine and reveal the problems of humanitarian response in conditions of armed conflict. Considerable attention is also paid to climate change and its impact on vulnerabilities caused by the war. Workshop participants provide a current assessment of the climate-humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, based on their own research. The features of international humanitarian assistance during the years of full-scale invasion are considered. This allows us to identify the connection between humanitarian reform and humanitarian operations in Ukraine in the context of the local impact on people victimized by the war in the perspective of reparations and recovery.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The Russian-Ukrainian war is accompanied by significant challenges for Ukraine's natural environment and ecosystems. According to the Ministry of Ecology and the Environment of Ukraine, by August 2022, damage to the natural environment amounted to more than 60 billion euros, and the number of cases of damage to Ukrainian ecosystems was estimated at almost 5,800.<sup>1</sup> More than 150 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> were estimated to have been released into the atmosphere as a result of the hostilities by 1 September 2023, and about 25% of Ukrainian territory is mined.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, the consequences of the war and destruction of the environment are felt directly by Ukrainians themselves, and in combination with climate change, certain new types of vulnerabilities are emerging - part of the territory is not suitable for either living or agriculture. One researcher even calls the Russian-Ukrainian war an

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<sup>1</sup> Ukraine's environmental damage from the war reached 60 billion euros, <https://unn.ua/en/news/ukraines-environmental-damage-from-the-war-reached-60-billion-euros>

<sup>2</sup> Climate damage caused by Russia's war in Ukraine, National Center for GHG Emission Inventory of Ukraine, [https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/20231201\\_ClimateDamageWarUkraine18monthsEN\\_1.pdf](https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/20231201_ClimateDamageWarUkraine18monthsEN_1.pdf)

“environmental war”.<sup>3</sup> However, in general, according to participants in this research, the conditions of survival in the war, society does not sufficiently reflect on the topic of climate change. Greater awareness of the consequences of the climate crisis is characteristic of social groups whose business is directly related to the climate – representatives of agricultural holdings, farmers, individual farms, and so on.

Globally, it is not only Ukraine that is experiencing these consequences. Before the war, Ukraine contributed about 40% of its grain to the UN World Food Programme (WFP). Ukraine is a country that has very strong international ties, and the war as a crisis has quite tangible consequences for other countries, for international relations and markets. According to various estimates, about 45 million people are experiencing hunger because of the war in Ukraine, in particular because of the disruption of traditional trade ties and the difficulty of transporting raw materials for food<sup>4</sup>. High metal contents were found in food produced in the border regions, such as soy, which are constantly being shelled by the occupiers; this leads to losses as Ukrainian producers cannot export at pre-war volumes.<sup>5</sup> Before the war, Ukraine contributed about 40% of its grain to the UN World Food Programme (WFP). In other words, the consequences of this war are unprecedented, and one researcher even calls the Russian-Ukrainian war an “environmental war”.<sup>6</sup> Natalia Mamonova shows that the vulnerabilities of Ukrainian agriculture as a result of the war are largely exacerbated by the fact that Ukraine is embedded in a system of international agriculture that is fragile and neoliberal. This neoliberal character is manifested in the fact that different countries within the international agricultural business system have a certain specialization, and therefore, when a country falls out of this

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<sup>3</sup> Nevit, Mark. Environmental War, Climate Security, and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis, *Ohio State Law Journal*, Vol. 84:6 (2024), 1361

<sup>4</sup> The impact of Russia’s war against Ukraine on climate security and climate action, Independent Experts' Analysis, <https://alpanalytica.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Independent-Experts-Analysis-The-impact-of-Russias-war-against-Ukraine-on-climate-security-and-climate-action-9-Feb-23.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The State Production and Consumer Service found soy with a high content of metals in Ukraine. Named the reason, [https://glavcom.ua/economics/finances/derzhprodspozhivsluzhba-vijavila-v-ukrajini-soju-z-visokim-vmistom-metaliv-nazvano-prichinu-1007774.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawFQQKtleHRuA2F1bQJxMAABHW7B7R-wkP3Tb4o3SEjF1zxvylagvaQV908fSa\\_dGJDgMsMIGn570tQQuA\\_aem\\_GM1py5iY7AG9D5VZ4iokUA](https://glavcom.ua/economics/finances/derzhprodspozhivsluzhba-vijavila-v-ukrajini-soju-z-visokim-vmistom-metaliv-nazvano-prichinu-1007774.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawFQQKtleHRuA2F1bQJxMAABHW7B7R-wkP3Tb4o3SEjF1zxvylagvaQV908fSa_dGJDgMsMIGn570tQQuA_aem_GM1py5iY7AG9D5VZ4iokUA)

<sup>6</sup> Nevit, Mark. Environmental War, Climate Security, and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis, *Ohio State Law Journal*, Vol. 84:6 (2024), 1361



formula, it is very difficult to deal with the consequences of such a fallout, and the international economic system itself is not very conducive to this. Someone falls out of the game and may not have a chance to come back. For example, fuel supply in Ukraine has largely depended on Russia and Belarus, the countries that are now involved in the war as aggressors.<sup>7</sup>

According to the Ministry of Ecology and the Environment of Ukraine, as of August 2022, damage to the natural environment amounted to more than 60 billion euros, and the number of cases of damage to Ukrainian ecosystems is estimated at almost 5,800.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of this workshop was to look at the Russian-Ukrainian war in the context of climate change and the limitations of the humanitarian system in responding to military action. This idea brought together representatives of Ukrainian civil society, international organizations operating in Ukraine, environmental and social experts, and representatives of the academic community. In addition to the workshop, two interviews were conducted with representatives of local civil society organisations (CSOs) in Ukraine.

### **3. CLIMATE CHANGE AND WAR**

The workshop began with a discussion of the fossil fuel factor as a driver of the Russian-Ukrainian war. At the beginning of the war in 2022, Russia earned more than 740 billion euros from fossil fuel exports, and European Union (EU) countries bought more than 190 billion euros worth of fossil fuels from Russia.

Workshop participant Dr. Svitlana Krakovska, a climate scientist and head of the Ukrainian delegation to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), emphasized the concept of “fossil fuel war”, highlighting the nature of the Russian-Ukrainian war as one that threatens ecosystems and at the same time demonstrates an aggressive threat from a country that finances military spending through fossil fuels. This indicates another interdependence: in a situation where the price of fossil fuels increases, the aggressor can use more resources

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<sup>7</sup> Ukrainian agriculture in wartime. Resilience, reforms, and markets, <https://www.tni.org/en/article/ukrainian-agriculture-in-wartime>

<sup>8</sup> Ukraine's environmental damage from the war reached 60 billion euros, <https://unn.ua/en/news/ukraines-environmental-damage-from-the-war-reached-60-billion-euros>



for war, while at the same time, the increase in price can also drive reduction of consumption and, accordingly, reduce emissions. Many countries used to using cheap gas from Russia have made limited efforts to adopt climate-neutral resources. The war has forced rapid changes, which are not always effective from either the climatic or economic perspective.

In analysing the consequences of war, Dr. Krakovska noted that it is necessary to distinguish between the terms “climate”, “climate system” and “weather”. For example, the blowing up of the Kakhovka Dam in 2023 is undoubtedly an act of ecocide by Russia, which affected both weather and the climate system in Ukraine.. However, for a climate scientist, quantifying its impact requires the use of research tools and modeling, which also requires resources. The Kakhovka Dam, which was destroyed as a result of the explosion, provided not only irrigation processes for farming, but also water evaporation that turned into precipitation; damage to it has thus affected the climate system within the region. However, more time and research is needed to assess the effects of the explosion not only at the regional but also at the global level of climate change.

Existing climate change adaptation initiatives in Ukraine will need to reckon with the impacts of the war. For example, the Government of Ukraine, represented by the Ministry of Environmental Protection and the Natural Resources of Ukraine, in cooperation with Ukrainian researchers, created the first climate change adaptation strategies. This project is funded by the European Union and is intended for long-term support in increasing the capacity of the state authorities of Ukraine at the local and the regional level in the development and implementation of key reforms arising from the Association Agreement<sup>9</sup>. Dr. Svitlana Krakovska and the experts of the APENA 3 project are developing a strategy for adapting to climate change in 3 pilot regions of the state: Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and Mykolaiv. In the front-line Mykolaiv region, the draft Climate Change Adaptation Strategy for Mykolaiv region was presented by the local authorities.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> With the EU support first climate change adaptation strategies in Ukraine were presented, [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu-support-first-climate-change-adaptation-strategies-ukraine-were-presented\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/ukraine/eu-support-first-climate-change-adaptation-strategies-ukraine-were-presented_en)

<sup>10</sup> Report on the development of documents on adaptation to climate change in the Mykolaiv region, <https://www.facebook.com/ecologmk/posts/pfbid0o6hE9EHAdMxbdSzqwvEEanwtHpiJ3fTawapJre8GsJD43skU7hNSwpd2HhBuz4LSI>

The action plan for the Mykolaiv region includes 172 activities with a total budget of more than 150 million euros. Among these measures are "the development of early warning systems about weather phenomena, the creation of monitoring systems, the creation of special departments and structures, and assistance to scientific institutions."<sup>11</sup> Among the threats posed by climate change, especially for the southern regions of Ukraine, are droughts that have a negative impact on crop production.

In sum, war and climate change create dual, mutually reinforcing vulnerabilities. In addition, increased spending on war automatically means less spending on climate change.

#### **4. AIR QUALITY, EMISSIONS AND POLLUTION**

Workshop participant Dr. Alexander Vorbrugg, Senior Researcher, Institute of Geography, University of Bern, emphasized that as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war there are very different sources of pollution - heavy metals, rocket fuel, explosives, etc. One of the tasks that groups of researchers in Ukraine set themselves is the question of the impact of these substances and pollutants on ecological systems and human health. These substances are dynamic, they move thanks to water, they can move over considerable distances to other areas and cities, and affect people. Separate groups of researchers and public organizations (for example, Ecodia) coordinate efforts to systematize information on types and types of pollution.

Air pollution is a central concern. According to workshop participant Mila Yutskevych, a civil and environmental engineer and currently a Fulbright Scholar at North Carolina State University, the impact of the war on air quality was noticed immediately after the full-scale invasion, not only by Ukrainian but also by foreign climate research services. The increased emission of greenhouse gasses and air pollution is the result of the movement of military vehicles, continuing military operations, the effects of explosions, and the use of diesel (rather than gasoline or electric power) for military procedures and processes, which also have a significant impact. The movement through the area of the Chernobyl exclusion zone raised a very significant amount of radioactive dust, which was registered and noticed in Ukraine and

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<sup>11</sup> How much can adaptation measures to climate change cost for the Mykolaiv Oblast, <https://mepr.gov.ua/skilky-mozhut-koshtuvat-y-zahody-z-adaptatsiyi-do-zminy-klimatu-dlya-mykolayivshhyny/>

neighboring countries.<sup>12</sup> The use of diesel generators for alternative power supply also adds emissions to the atmosphere.<sup>13</sup>

These various forms of air pollution will have profound but as yet poorly understood consequences for individuals. Yutskevych is undertaking research on air quality in Kyiv (chosen because this was where the best network of local air quality research channels and the most information could be obtained). To date, this kind of research has been limited: mainly Western researchers have primarily been interested in the topic of the health of military personnel, who were sent to all kinds of hot spots in the world, but not in tracking and improving the condition of the local population and ecosystems both inside and outside the combat zone. Yutskevych found that the first months of the war showed a clear reduction in pollution in Kyiv. This was because in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion, the number of people living in Kyiv decreased significantly — from 4 million people to almost 1 million for a period of 2-3 months, until the Russian troops withdrew from Kyiv and people began to gradually return to the capital of Ukraine. Even those who initially left the city, however, have been exposed to emissions of various types of chemical elements that ended up in the air as a the bombing of residential, industrial and infrastructural complexes. The impact of harmful substances on the health of the civilian population as a result of bombings, also observed in other armed conflicts in different regions of the world, is long-term as well as immediate<sup>14</sup>

Harms are cascading. If, for example, one building is destroyed and nearby buildings remain, people continue to breathe in what has been released, not only in the form of dust particles, but also chemicals contained in munitions or emitted during the course of the military operation. In addition to having to extinguish the fire, firefighters using water, or using

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<sup>12</sup> Chernobyl: Why radiation levels spiked at nuclear plant, [https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-60528828?fbclid=IwY2xjawGDcV5leHRuA2FibQixMAABHXk2DBttEEilpsLyH6mluf5f-kVHV4WCo1EVjR2ItXHPoMwVpXjNSt8W9w\\_aem\\_GLBnb3iP6LP6rkfhpt5JIQ](https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-60528828?fbclid=IwY2xjawGDcV5leHRuA2FibQixMAABHXk2DBttEEilpsLyH6mluf5f-kVHV4WCo1EVjR2ItXHPoMwVpXjNSt8W9w_aem_GLBnb3iP6LP6rkfhpt5JIQ)

<sup>13</sup> Climate damage caused by Russia's war in Ukraine, National Center for GHG Emission Inventory of Ukraine, 24 February 2022 – 23 February 2024 by Initiative on GHG accounting of war 13 June 2024, <https://en.ecoaction.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Climate-Damage-Caused-by-War-24-months-EN.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> For example, the release of asbestos dust by the bombing of Gaza: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/10/8/death-sentence-asbestos-released-by-israels-bombs-will-kill-generations>

specialized fluids or substances, will also affect the water in the area. Accordingly, chemical substances that can get into underground water will move to rivers, and then end up in the sea. This will not only pollute water in Ukraine, but will also affect water quality throughout the region. If we add here threats to ecology, such the destruction of forests, then we can record the impact on biodiversity as a whole.

As this example shows, water pollution is closely linked to other forms of pollution and has far-flung consequences. According to research by the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure have destroyed “more than 1,947 linear kilometers of water mains,” while “25 water treatment plants have been partially damaged or completely destroyed. This leads to the challenge of both renewing Ukrainians’ access to clean water and replacing and renewing the water infrastructure, which is worn out and outdated.”<sup>15</sup>

Interviews respondents pointed to the significant environmental and everyday consequences of the blowing up of the Kakhovka Dam. For example, in Kryvyi Rih, an industrial city in Eastern Ukraine, which is not far from the front line, the situation with water is different - in some areas of the city, in the absence of electricity, access to water disappears because the pumping stations do not work. Residents are forced to buy filtered water on their own, while the water provided by local services is technical. The usual processes that the filter stations use to ensure water quality cannot cope with the presence of heavy metals in the water caused by the war. Due to this, the erosion of infrastructure and water mains is also accelerated as a result. In Kryvyi Rih, the demolition of the dyke also reduced the supply of water to local industrial enterprises. Such enterprises are poorly modernized, so the city suffers from emissions, and emissions are caused in particular by accidents, which can be attributed to poor access to water. Such facts, according to interview respondents, remain outside the attention of international humanitarian organizations.

Among the key problems that the ecosystems of Ukraine will face in the coming years is demining. According to UNDP, as of August 2024, there were around 1,286 civilian victims

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<sup>15</sup> Water supply in Ukraine: merging humanitarian response with development

Interview with Oleksandr Sienkevych, Mayor of Mykolaiv, Ukraine by Giorgio Kaldor, <https://www.renewablematter.eu/en/water-supply-ukraine-merging-humanitarian-response-with-development>

of mines and explosive remnants as a result of the war. There are currently at least 4,000 deminers in the country, but there is a shortage of trained specialists.<sup>16</sup> Humanitarian demining has a strong focus on building the strategic and operational capacity for demining operations. The process requires the training of specialists, the creation of a system for assessing mined areas, the provision of demining machines, drones, metal detectors, and protective equipment. The National Mine Action Authority (NMAA) of Ukraine considers that 25 percent of Ukraine's territory has been exposed to the war and although survey activities will continue to better define the true nature and extent of contamination, the cost for clearance of explosive ordnance across Ukraine is currently estimated at US\$37.6 billion.<sup>17</sup>

Given that Ukrainian agricultural production provides food for more than 400 million people in the world, the demining issue has a global dimension. The Ukrainian government's goal of demining 80 percent of controlled territories by 2030 requires stable funding. At the same time, international demining budgets show that the process is quite volatile and has its peaks and troughs. Accordingly, long-term financing is problematic, and the way out of the situation may be investments in innovative technologies and public-private partnerships.<sup>18</sup>

The strategy of demining is one of the political challenges, which consists in the fact that it is necessary to first of all determine which territories to demine first, what are the criteria of the areas that should be demined, for which population groups and in whose interests. According to the All-Ukrainian Agrarian Council, among the key needs of farmers for recovery is the need for demining of agricultural territories, which was noted by 30% of respondents.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> In Ukraine, tackling mine action from all sides to make land safe again, <https://www.undp.org/european-union/stories/ukraine-tackling-mine-action-all-sides-make-land-safe-again>

<sup>17</sup> Ukraine Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099184503212328877/pdf/P1801740d1177f03c0ab180057556615497.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> From Economic Recovery to Global Food Security: The Urgent Need to Demine Ukraine, <https://institute.global/insights/geopolitics-and-security/the-urgent-need-to-demine-ukraine>

<sup>19</sup> UAC presented a survey on the urgent problems and needs of the de-occupied agricultural sector, <https://uacouncil.org/en/post/uac-presented-a-survey-on-the-urgent-problems-and-needs-of-the-de-occupied-agricultural-sector>

All of these issues have long-term implications, raising questions of redress, accountability, and justice. Debates on how to hold Russia accountable, in particular for the crime of ecocide, and how reparations should be organized for this continue. At the same time, Ukraine is improving environmental legislation in accordance with EU norms.<sup>20</sup> There has also been consideration of the links between health impacts and environmental damage. Mila Yutskevych emphasized that people may start demanding personal reparations, including those who have never been directly in the combat zone, but nonetheless have suffered injuries and physical damage from the war. Public and individual health impacts may be monitored to help to engage social programs to take care of clean air and of the impact on people's health, as well as influence reparations to people whose health was directly affected by this war.

## **5. THE INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM IN UKRAINE AT THE LOCAL LEVEL**

However, as pointed out by one of the interviewees for this research, a widespread critique is that the entire humanitarian sphere, international organizations, plus intermediary organizations that distribute resources, come to a country – in this case Ukraine – already with a preconceived humanitarian response. Rather than focusing on specific needs, they come with ready-made answers. That is, they simply make a standard scheme for all countries and react in the same way.

This criticism has been directed towards the international aid response in Ukraine and its ability to contribute to the relief and recovery effort. It has also been claimed that the processes of international assistance to Ukraine are not sufficiently coordinated between the EU, the USA and the countries of the G7. The demand from the side of Ukrainian civil society is that "International partners, governmental and non-governmental, should avoid "elitism", bias, and selectivity in involving civil society and try to expand the range of organizations and other

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<sup>20</sup> Evans, T. The Ides of March: Ecocide in Ukraine, <https://www.londonukrainianreview.org/posts/the-ides-of-march-ecocide-in-ukraine>

subjects with whom they consult. This should include local communities and local organizations” .<sup>21</sup>

An important problem, according to respondents, is the disconnection<sup>22</sup> of expertise from the Ukrainian context, the irrelevant use of experience and cases of other countries that were at war, and the mechanical projection of this experience onto Ukraine. A significant number of programs of international humanitarian organizations in Ukraine begin to lose their effectiveness already at the stage of needs assessment. It has been suggested that international humanitarian organizations prefer cooperation with local state actors, bypassing the role of NGOs. As a result, views on needs are often not formed properly, but rather international organizations come with their strategies and plans, imposing what to do. Unreliable and misleading data and reporting are obtained, because the process is not adapted to the context of Ukraine. Added to this is the fact that many sociological studies for donors are published exclusively in English, and do not take into account the needs of Ukrainian-speaking readers.

Where collaboration exists between Ukrainian and foreign organisations, the relationships tend to reflect inequalities. International humanitarian organizations traditionally register their own contractors when entering a country. In Ukraine, they faced a slightly different situation, because there are many organizations here, Ukrainian civil society organizations are quite developed, and international humanitarian organizations had no options, in principle, not to contact in any way. But they chose a very interesting approach. They began to attract local organizations calling them “implementing partners”. This means that, in principle, they consider local organizations as not meaningful partners for cooperation, but as contractors responsible only for “implementation”.

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<sup>21</sup> Public access to decision-making regarding Ukraine’s recovery in the context of environmental protection and climate change mitigation, Analytical report, [https://ua.boell.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/report\\_public-access-to-decision-making\\_2023.pdf](https://ua.boell.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/report_public-access-to-decision-making_2023.pdf)

<sup>22</sup> Vorbrugg & Bluwenstein, Making sense of (the Russian war in) Ukraine: On the politics of knowledge and expertise, *Political Geography*, 98:102700, June 2022, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361413741\\_Making\\_sense\\_of\\_the\\_Russian\\_war\\_in\\_Ukraine\\_On\\_the\\_politics\\_of\\_knowledge\\_and\\_expertise](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/361413741_Making_sense_of_the_Russian_war_in_Ukraine_On_the_politics_of_knowledge_and_expertise)



This is also related to the problem of approval, reporting and formality of requirements for projects carried out by local CSOs. Administrative work is often associated with procurement for events, for example, which involves time and effort due to lengthy procedures. Respondents pointed to a project that involved holding three or four meetings for discussions and was agreed by donors for seven months. For reports, it is very often necessary to show people who are engaged and also to show some interesting activities, so that all photo reports are different. Thus, one of the international organizations demanded that 20 different people be present at two events organized by a local CSO, 10 people for each event and that there should be no situation where the same person attends two events in a row. Additionally, budgets are agreed by international organizations six months before the start of the project yet procurement issues for CSOs are complicated by the fact that in a country at war, prices change due to inflation, and some goods may not be available for sale. Delays therefore also contribute to financial burdens placed on CSOs.

Another problem faced by CSOs is the excessive burden from international donors, demands to do significant administrative work, which is not paid additionally, in addition to expert activities. In the approaches of international organizations, the procedure for selecting local contractors of organizations takes quite a long time, especially when it comes to more complex, rather than humanitarian, operational problems. Financing issues related to development may take more than 1 year, during which time the social situation in conditions of intense hostilities may change radically.

Political complications may also arise. Notably, observance of the principle of neutrality as a basic principle of international humanitarian organizations on the ground is problematic. For civil society organizations, this principle suggests that it is necessary to consider two opinions, to make some sort of balance. This creates difficulties for humanitarian response in Ukraine because, for example, women cannot be helped because they are considered combatants, and therefore, according to international humanitarian law, they do not have the opportunity to receive clothes, shoes, and medicines that civil society organizations provide them.

## **6. CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS**

In general, a certain disappointment within the Ukrainian civil society organizations was caused by the manner in which the humanitarian response to the challenges of the last two and a half years of war took place. Often, activists encountered assistance and responses that were not relevant to the challenges on the ground. It was clear that the international humanitarian system is quite inert, especially in the conditions of high-intensity armed conflicts. When such requests are raised from the bottom up and then come down from the top down, there are distortions in how they are then implemented that can be seen "on the ground". All too often, the needs of the people who suffer the most from the consequences of war fall out of focus. While this can be seen in immediate relief response, it is arguably also present in the limited consideration of long-term issues connected to climate and environment. International humanitarian organizations, which are leaders, pay very little attention to the climate on the ground and often focus on general data.

Over the last 10 years of the Russian-Ukrainian war, in-depth interviews with people who live very close to the front line show that to the statistical data it is worth adding everyday stories that would show how their experience, in particular, in the aspect of the humanitarian and climate crisis, which reflected how everything looks in reality.

An important step in improving the activities of international humanitarian organizations should be the adaptation of programs to the Ukrainian context. One of the key elements should be a needs assessment with the involvement of Ukrainian experts. Considerable attention must be paid to war victims. People who have moved from the war territories to other regions of Ukraine, due to the destruction of ecosystems, should hope for initial assistance from the state and international humanitarian organizations. The issue of individual reparations for people who have deteriorated their physical and mental health have deteriorated during the war should also gain further development. The influence of representatives of marginalized groups on decision-making should be made tangible, not formal. Local recovery plans, including environmental ones, must be properly drawn up and implemented.

