

Forum “HAVEN III Showcase: Local Recovery Planning Based on Evidence, Participation and Grant Support for Local Initiatives”

Introduction

The forum “HAVEN III Showcase: Local Recovery Planning Based on Evidence, Participation and Grant Support for Local Initiatives” took place on 5 March 2026 in the city of Dnipro. The event was organised by the teams of international non-governmental organisations IMPACT and ACTED within the framework of the HAVEN III project (Humanitarian Action through Volunteers, Enablers and Networks, Phase III) and was dedicated to exchanging experiences and knowledge on supporting territorial communities in recovery and development planning processes in the context of the ongoing war. The event brought together representatives of ministries, regional administrations, local self-government bodies, non-governmental international organisations, think tanks, civil society organisations, and experts. Participants discussed national and regional planning frameworks, the practical experiences of communities implementing these frameworks, approaches to working with data, the results of the mini-grants programme, and the next steps in supporting local recovery planning.

Panel Discussion 1. State Policy on Early Recovery and Local-Level Planning: Challenges and Priorities

Discussion participants: *Vitalii Protsenko, Director of the Department of Regional Policy and Reintegration of Territories, Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine; Kateryna Shuvsarska, Head of Regional Digitalisation, Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine; Liudmyla Hrabchylyeva, Acting Director of the Department of Economic Development and Trade, Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration; Maksym Kucherenko, Deputy Director of the Department of Economic Development and Trade, Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration.*

Moderator: *Nadiia Mikhno, Senior Assessment Officer, Resilience and Spatial Planning Unit, IMPACT.*

The first panel discussion focused on discussing of national planning frameworks, regional priorities, and the practical needs of hromadas. One of the central themes was preparation for the new planning cycle and the role of hromadas in this process as early as 2026.

The representative of the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine stressed that the state is moving towards a revised area-based approach, which is intended to form the basis of the 2028–2034 planning cycle and will respond to the main challenges arising from the ongoing war, while also supporting the priority of Ukraine’s European integration process. In 2025, changes were introduced at the level of state decisions to the State Regional Development Strategy, which is the main strategic document at the national level and guides regions and hromadas in their planning and development, in order to define territorial types according to security criteria – namely frontline territories, which include either areas of active hostilities or areas of possible hostilities. For these territories, the main priorities were outlined, in particular:



Figure 1. Panel discussion #1

- development of defence and civil protection infrastructure;
- rapid restoration of critical and social infrastructure;
- war-risk insurance to prevent depopulation.

It was also noted that In 2026, work is continuing on defining and refining the functional types of territories – including recovery territories, territories with low

socio-economic indicators, urban settlements, rural hromadas according to various criteria, and a number of other specifications. The Ministry for Communities and Territories Development will prepare targeted support programmes for these territories. In 2026, the State Fund for Regional Development will finance functional types of territories with due consideration to security-related factors. Following extensive preparatory work, the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development is preparing an updated methodology for developing the State Regional Development Strategy, along with methodological recommendations for regions and hromadas, and a separate planning approach for temporarily occupied territories. Particular emphasis was placed on the fact that the hromada development strategy should become the single core document at hromada level, while overlapping documents should be integrated into its implementation framework.



Figure 2. Panel discussion #1

The representative of the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine outlined priorities in the area of hromada digitalisation. Priority areas discussed included the importance of appointment of digital leaders within hromadas, the development of electronic services, and the introduction of internal procedures for working with open data. The Ministry of Digital Transformation is currently working actively and productively on drafting a bill that will define the specific features of the formulation and implementation of state policy in the field of digitalisation and digital development, as well as the framework for the rollout of digital reforms. It was also noted that the Ministry continues to expand its regulatory, training, and methodological support for enhancing the skills of digital leaders through CDTO Campus, the Diia Digital Community portal, educational

series, and partnership programmes. Digitalisation was presented not only as a technical track, but also as an indicator of the institutional capacity of hromadas.

Representatives of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration emphasised the priority of focusing on planning in wartime conditions. It was noted that over 87% of the Zaporizhzhia region's territory is occupied, and that more than 800,000 people have been forced to leave their homes. In these circumstances, the region is concentrating its efforts on areas that directly affect people's return and the resilience of territories: safe education, healthcare, veteran services, and support for hromadas operating close to the front line.

The economic dimension of these challenges was also presented separately. More than 5,500 businesses have relocated from the region, and the number of active businesses has declined by more than half. In response to these challenges, the region has introduced business support programmes, including grants, interest compensation, co-financing of hromada initiatives, and tax incentives.

Another part of the discussion addressed the issue of relocated hromadas. Representatives of the Zaporizhzhia Regional Military Administration stated that these hromadas are being integrated into the regional development system, and that dedicated project solutions are being developed for them, including in the area of public investment. An important support instrument has been the restoration of 16 relocated Administrative Service Centres, which already provide a significant share of administrative services in the region. In addition, joint decisions with central government bodies made it possible to reopen registries and reduce the critical pressure on property rights registration.

In the final part of the panel discussion, participants reached a shared conclusion that international support is most effective when it is based on well-prepared documents, clear priorities, and the real capacity of hromadas and regions to implement projects. For the central level, the key issue is aligning planning with investment instruments; for the digitalisation agenda, it is strengthening hromadas' capacity to work with data and services; and for the frontline regions, it is adapting these approaches to conditions of constant uncertainty.

Panel Discussion 2. Communities in Wartime: Recovery Planning for Resilience

Discussion participants: representatives of local self-government authorities of the Berestynska, Matviivkska, Komyshevaska, Mykhailo-Lukashivska, Stepnenska, Savynska, and Prolisnenska hromadas.

Moderator: Zemfira Mamedova, Assessment Officer, Resilience and Spatial Planning Unit, IMPACT.

The second panel discussion focused on the discussion of practical experience of hromadas in Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia oblasts regarding recovery planning in wartime conditions. Participants highlighted that cooperation with the HAVEN programme provided hromadas the opportunity not only to develop strategic planning documents, but also to achieve concrete results at the local level. These included the creation and restoration of public and youth spaces, support to education, social and administrative infrastructure, as enhanced data literacy, information management, and use of GIS tools.

One of the key outcomes discussed was the involvement of residents in setting priorities. For some hromadas, this participatory component became the most visible effect: initiatives proposed by residents were implemented through mini-grants, and strategic documents began to be seen as a basis for further action rather than just a formal requirement.

Participants also emphasised that for hromadas operating near the front line or those that had experienced occupation, strategic and spatial documents are needed to attract investment and articulate a vision for future recovery and development beyond exclusively focusing on immediate humanitarian needs.

The main challenges most frequently faced by hromadas:

- security-related uncertainty and the constant risk of deterioration;
- staffing shortages, including a lack of project managers;
- youth outmigration and population ageing;
- the need for safe educational infrastructure;
- the difficulty of simultaneous work on the development of different types of hromada documents;
- the need for housing and services for internally displaced persons;
- difficulties in maintaining basic services.



Figure 3. Panel discussion #2

During the discussion on the support required, participants were unanimous: hromadas require not only funding, but also longer-term partnerships and stronger capacity building support.

The most frequently mentioned needs were:

- expert assistance in preparing strategic and spatial planning documents;
- support in drafting hromada charters;
- mentoring in the preparation and implementation of grant projects;
- funding for local initiatives and mini-grants;
- support for veteran spaces and services.

Participants also underlined that under current conditions, intermunicipal cooperation is more realistic than territorial consolidation – through joint service delivery, exchanging experiences and knowledge, mutual expert support, and the use of existing cooperation mechanisms.

A shared conclusion across the panel was that even in wartime, hromadas cannot stop. Planning, local initiatives, and partner support remain tools for preserving people, services, and the potential for future development.

Presentation. Evidence-Based Approach to Recovery Planning

Speakers: *Nadiia Usik, Senior GIS Officer, IMPACT; Liliia Yurkiv, GIS Specialist, IMPACT.*

During the Forum, an approach to hromada recovery planning developed by the IMPACT team and grounded in the systematic use of data was presented. Within the HAVEN III project, a data ecosystem was developed for participating communities, combining information from local self-government bodies, state registries, open sources, Earth observation data, as well as primary data collected through surveys and focus group discussions. A key practical outcome of this work was the interactive HAVEN III dashboard, developed for each participating community. The dashboard brings together map-based data on demographics, infrastructure, services, public spaces, economic activity, civil protection, and natural risks, providing communities and development partners with a comprehensive resource on hromada characteristics. It was presented as a practical tool that can support planning, analysis, and decision-making, while also being regularly updated as the situation evolves (*the link to the dashboard is provided at the end*).

Presentation. Support for Local Initiatives Through the Mini-Grants Programme

Speakers: *Yevheniia Krivchun, Partnership and Local Plans Development Manager, ACTED; Oksana Suprun, representative of Savynska hromada; Iryna Nichaieva, representative of Prolisnenska hromada.*

Across HAVEN II and HAVEN III, the mini-grants programme became an important tool for translating hromadas' strategic priorities into concrete action. Overall, 72 initiatives have been supported through grants ranging from £3,000 to £6,000, provided to volunteers and local civil society organisations (CSOs). The programme focused on initiatives linked to hromada recovery plans and development strategies, combining financial support with capacity development. Alongside resources for project implementation, hromadas also received training in grant writing, fundraising, communications, leadership, youth policy, and social entrepreneurship. The supported initiatives covered a broad range of areas, including public and youth spaces, inclusive and social infrastructure, greening, energy resilience, and environmental solutions. The presentation underscored that even relatively small and flexible grants can have a meaningful effect when they are clearly connected to hromada strategic documents and reinforced through training, mentoring, and the active engagement of local actors.

Panel Discussion 3. Lessons Learnt and Next Steps in Supporting Local Planning and Recovery

Discussion participants: *representatives of Nonviolent Peaceforce, International Organization for Migration, Center for Civilians in Conflict, Restart, CEDOS, Legal Development Network, and UN-Habitat.*

Moderator: *Oliver Lough, Deputy Country Coordinator, IMPACT.*

The third panel discussion was dedicated to exploring the experience of organisations working with hromadas in the fields of recovery planning, spatial development, and strengthening local capacity. The discussion centred on three issues: aligning local planning with national frameworks, strengthening hromadas' capacity to work with data, and scaling successful approaches.

One of the key themes was the lack of alignment between planning systems. The representative of UN-Habitat stressed that in Ukraine, strategic and spatial planning often exist in parallel, which complicates the preparation of documents, duplicates data, and slows project implementation. In this context, he underlined

the importance of rapid needs assessment, data harmonisation, and further improvement of the regulatory framework.

The representative of IOM noted the importance of simultaneously supporting local self-government bodies, local partners, and civil society organisations, as well as developing new financing mechanisms, including through the engagement of the private sector and crowdfunding. A substantial part of the discussion focused on data, research, and hromada capacity. Representatives of IOM, CEDOS, and LDN stressed that effective planning should rely on both quantitative and qualitative data. The discussion addressed the importance of research, digital

tools for data collection and verification, and the fact that for many hromadas, working with data remains difficult due to a lack of people, time, and practical skills. For this reason, training should be practical, tailored to hromadas' capacities, and combined with ongoing support.



Figure 4. Panel discussion #3

A separate part of the discussion focused on the protection of civilians as a component of recovery planning. The representative of CIVIC stated that risks for civilians change rapidly, and planning therefore needs to include constant identification of new challenges, the work of local groups, and rapid response mechanisms. The importance of exchanging experience between hromadas was also emphasised.

Overall Conclusions of the Forum

Discussions that took place during the HAVEN III Forum demonstrated that support for local recovery planning is most effective when it combines strategic direction, evidence, practical implementation tools, resident participation, strengthened local capacity, and partnership between hromadas, the state, and international actors. Dialogues between participants also demonstrated that beyond planning documents and funding, hromadas need comprehensive support, including training, coordination tools, digital platforms, and mechanisms for rapidly adapting to changes in the security situation. The Forum confirmed that even in wartime, hromadas are not only responding to immediate challenges but actively working towards a long-term vision for development.

Another important theme was the role of local organisations and local initiatives. Participants noted that local actors often understand the needs of their hromadas best, and that support for civil society should be an integral part of recovery programmes.

The key needs identified included:

- strengthening the organisational capacity of local CSOs;
- stable funding for local initiatives;
- support for physical spaces for interaction;
- involving hromadas in defining their own priorities.

The representative of Restart separately drew attention to the growing importance of veteran policy as an area requiring sectoral analysis and solutions at different levels – from regional to local.

In the final part of the discussion, participants agreed that scaling successful practices is possible when local experience is translated into methodologies, recommendations, and standardised approaches that can be used in other hromadas. At the same time, it was agreed that standardisation should take unique local contextual factors into account, combining structure with sensitivity to the conditions of each individual hromada.



[White book HAVEN III](#)



[Interactive dashboard](#)