Independent Evaluation Report

Children's Resilience Fund (Phase II) Strengthening CSOs in Ukraine

By Maksym Klyuchar and Khrystyna Rybachok

INTEGRITY ACTION

CROWN AGENTS UKRAINE
Procurement and supply management

Kyiv / Ottawa November 2025

Authors: Maksym Klyuchar and Khrystyna Rybachok

Integrity Action
Integrity Action is an independent non-governmental organisation.
Company registration number: 4884328 (England and Wales)
Charity registration number: 1120927
info@integrityaction.org
www.integrityaction.org

Cover image: One of the therapy sessions supported by CRF Phase II and delivered by a partner-CSO

Contents

Acronyms

AI	Artificial intelligence
CAID	Crown Agents International Development
CAU	Crown Agents Ukraine
CMO	Context-Mechanism-Outcome framework
CRF	Children's Resilience Fund
CSO	Civil society organisation
DAC	OECD Development Assistance Committee
FG	Focus group
GBP	United Kingdom Pound sterling
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HR	Human resources
IA	Integrity Action
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDP	Internally Displaced Person/People
KII	Key informant interview
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OD	Organisational development
PII	Personally identifiable information
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
TOR	Terms of Reference
UAH	Ukrainian hryvnia
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive Summary

Background. The Children's Resilience Fund (CRF) Phase II (September 2024 - October 2025) was a grant-making and capacity-strengthening initiative led by Integrity Action in partnership with Crown Agents Ukraine. It was funded primarily by a private foundation, with additional support from other private-sector partners for specific components, such as the external evaluation.

CRF Phase II was built on the results and lessons learned from Phase I, which ran from September 2023 to May 2024. With over £1.6 million committed for grant awards, the CRF Phase II team initially supported 16 CSOs[1] (seven of which had also participated in Phase I) and expanded the scope of technical and Organisational Development (OD) support.

The partner-CSOs implemented diverse, locally rooted projects that broadly fell within four thematic areas: rehabilitating children, supporting caregivers, improving access to essential services, and strengthening child protection systems. While most projects focused on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), others worked with law enforcement to address child sexual abuse or help children access social benefits.

> *"For me, the CRF as a programme is all about children. But the association is that it is some kind of flower garden. […] The projects are very different, they solve different problems – challenges that children and not only they face. Different depth, different breadth." – partner-CSO representative*

Implementation of Phase II was bravely and selflessly carried out against the background of the ongoing war in Ukraine. CRF and its partner-CSO projects continued to demonstrate steady implementation progress despite operating in these highly challenging conditions, as evidenced by reports, evaluator observations, key informant interviews, focus groups and interactive exercises held between July and October 2025. The programme has persisted in delivering activities and value to children and their caregivers in a context where project implementation was constantly challenged by safety and security risks, including threats to life and injuries, and heightened vulnerability and stress among children, staff and beneficiaries that could lead to psychological burnout.

According to reports submitted to the donor and in reflections throughout the key informant interviews and focus groups, partner-CSOs have consistently noted a severe shortage of qualified personnel, which has slowed recruitment and, at times, disrupted service continuity, while inflation and increased service fees from external vendors have caused delays and compelled grantees to seek more cost-effective alternatives. Daily disruptions caused by aerial raids, missile and drone attacks have become routine obstacles that teams had to work around to sustain delivery.

Despite this environment, the implementing team of Integrity Action (IA) and Crown Agents Ukraine (CAU), as well as the grantee teams, were able to co-create and deliver an intervention that brought value to Ukraine's children and caregivers and had local, regional, and even national-level impact.

Why this report. In line with the Terms of Reference, Integrity Action commissioned an independent end-of-programme evaluation of CRF Phase II to "*both prove and improve*" the approach to design and implementation of similar interventions in the future. A team of two external consultants was engaged to

---

[1] One of the grant was terminated pre-term, and hence the evaluation captured 15 participating partner-CSOs and their projects as the focus for the evaluation

assess programme performance and draw lessons that could inform a potential Phase III or similar intervention by other actors working with conflict-affected children in Ukraine.

Methodology. The evaluation team adopted a conflict-sensitive local systems evaluation approach, anchored in the six OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The approach was designed to be attuned to local power dynamics, social vulnerabilities and systemic barriers affecting service delivery and inclusion in a conflict-affected environment. Within the framework of this approach, the CRF and its IA and CAU combined implementing team were treated as part of a wider ecosystem of actors striving to support children and caregivers in wartime Ukraine, rather than as a stand-alone mechanism.

Three analytical "Pillars" (thematic clusters of issues) were used to structure the evaluation. Pillar 1 focused on CRF performance as a programme and examined how the CRF Phase II was designed and delivered, including grant-making arrangements, support to CSOs beyond grant funding and the value of the OD component. Pillar 2 looked at project-level effectiveness and efficiency and relied on four in-depth case studies to understand what selected projects achieved for children and caregivers, how they worked with marginalised groups and what challenges they faced. Pillar 3 considered the value of the programme and its distinctive features and explored how CSOs perceived CRF compared to other donors, what worked well and what could be further enhanced, as well as what changes could be beneficial to make any future Phase even more effective.

Across the three Pillars, the evaluators drew on 24 key informant interviews (KIIs), 15 focus groups and validation sessions, an online questionnaire, observation of three trainings as part of the OD component, two interactive exercises at the CRF Uzhhorod learning event, and desk review of CSO reports, self-assessment tools and CRF implementing team reports. The findings are based on purposive sampling, self-reported data, observations and document analysis. Limitations of the study are presented in greater detail in the methodology chapter of the report.

Overall programme performance in a war context. On the basis of a thorough analysis of working documents, internal reports, questionnaire results and many hours of interviews, focus groups, validation sessions and interactive exercises, the evaluation concludes that the **consortium led by Integrity Action and implemented in the field by Crown Agents Ukraine has successfully delivered the elements of CRF Phase II that fall within the scope of this evaluation**. The joint IA and CAU team has managed a complex and demanding grant-making programme amid a changing institutional set-up and tight deadlines, while maintaining a high level of programmatic integrity. It has combined strategic flexibility and adaptiveness with adherence to good practices in ethics and oversight, thorough localisation and a high degree of trust, laying foundations for more successful and resilient partner-CSO teams.

Pillar 1: CRF as a programme. Under Pillar 1, the evaluation found that CRF Phase II has been a **well-designed and well-implemented programme** that offered more than traditional project-based grants. Partners described the CRF implementing team as attentive, responsive and humane in its approach to partner-CSOs. The combination of financial support, flexible funds, mentorship, a rich OD offer and some opportunities for networking created a comprehensive support package that many CSOs had not previously experienced.

The programme design allowed for diversity of thematic focus and organisational profiles, which was appreciated by partners and reflected in the four broad thematic project areas. At the same time, the evaluation notes that greater thematic consolidation in any future phase could make it easier to assess the cumulative effect across streams of work.

The **OD component emerged as one of the strongest features of CRF Phase II**. It was a dedicated and intentional intervention that was profoundly appreciated by partner-CSOs. The evaluation considers that OD objectives were fully achieved. Partners emphasised that OD support was systematic, practical and immediately applicable. Training series and tailored coaching enabled organisations to improve fundraising skills, monitoring and evaluation (MEL) capabilities, human resources (HR) systems, approaches to gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), safeguarding, strategic communications, as well as information protection and cybersecurity.

Analysis of baseline and endline self-assessments shows that self-perceived organisational efficacy, professionalism and quality of project design and implementation increased more where CRF provided support: the positive change was on average 1.09 points (10-point scale) higher in thematic areas where organisations received CRF OD assistance than in areas they addressed on their own.

Evidence from self-assessments and KIIs indicates that CSOs did not simply learn new concepts but translated them into practice. Organisations reported, for example, adopting updated strategies, strengthening accounting and reporting systems, formalising job descriptions and investing in communications capacity – including a new brand for one of the partner-CSOs, winning new projects based on updated MEL frameworks, and launching fundraising campaigns across multiple countries. Several partner-CSOs reported feeling better prepared to engage with larger or more complex donors and greater confidence in applying for competitive calls.

Across the 18 thematic areas in the OD self-assessment, organisations reporting the largest improvements "greatly" attributed that growth to CRF interventions in 11 areas (61%) and "partially" attributed it to the OD programme in a further 6 areas (33%), with only one area where the greatest perceived growth was not linked to CRF activities.

The evaluation also highlights the added value of the GBP 4,000 flexible fund per CSO, which partners widely appreciated as an opportunity to address specific capacity gaps beyond project activities. Investments ranged from specialised accounting software and taxation advice to internal training on mine safety and psychological first aid, and, in some cases, supervision for psychologists working with traumatised children. This instrument was seen as a distinctive element that contributed to organisational resilience.

Areas for fine-tuning include improvements to the information-sharing protocols, enhanced onboarding for new CSO teams, and further reflection on tranche structure and rules for eligible costs, including for flexible funds. These issues, nevertheless, do not detract from the overall positive assessment but point to opportunities for further improvement.

Pillar 2: Four case studies to illustrate partner-CSO struggles and success. Pillar 2 focused on four case study organisations, selected from among the 15 grantees using criteria agreed with the implementing team. The selection reflected geographic and thematic diversity, different scales of operation and varying degrees of prior engagement with CRF. It included organisations working at national and regional levels, some of which had participated in both Phase I and Phase II, and combined projects focused on mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) with a legal protection initiative for children.

The evaluation team used a system-in-the-room approach to the degree possible to explore how each organisation functioned within the wider ecosystem and how CRF support contributed to its ability to deliver for children. A distinctive feature of this Pillar was the inclusion of beneficiary perspectives through focus groups and validation interviews with parents and caregivers, which allowed the team to explore whether and why children and families experienced improvements in their well-being, resilience or social inclusion.

Across the case studies, projects offered structured psychosocial support, safe spaces for play and learning, rehabilitative camps, legal and advocacy assistance for protecting rights in international legal mechanisms, and support to parents in navigating services. One illustration is the Law and Democracy camp, where entry and exit assessments showed that over 70% of participating children improved on key indicators: anxiety levels fell in 82% of cases, 85% of children reported increased feelings of support and interaction, and 82% reported sleeping better. Parents and caregivers in other case studies also described positive changes in children's emotional state, social skills and sense of safety, as well as improved access to entitlements and services.

At the same time, the case studies highlight the intensity of demand and the pressures facing Ukrainian CSOs. Limited and short-term funding was identified as the principal challenge by all organisations, in a context where the number of CSOs and volume of applications to open calls in the relevant thematic areas have grown dramatically since 2022. The evaluation also documented the dual stress experienced by project teams, who are themselves living through war while supporting children and families affected by trauma. Staff spoke of sleepless nights during air raids, fear for loved ones and the emotional difficulty of working with children who have lost parents or family members. The report captures stories of partner-CSO exposure to multiple layers of trauma and lessons learned on the need to care even more for those who deliver the care to the children at the level of organisational strategy and operations.

Against this backdrop, CRF's model of 12-month support with an element of flexible funding and human-centred communication was seen as particularly valuable. It allowed organisations to sustain services over a meaningful period, adjust when needed and focus on quality rather than constant "firefighting for funds". While the evaluation stresses that the achievements documented in the four case studies are illustrative and cannot be extrapolated onto the whole cohort, many of the tendencies and lessons are likely to be relevant to other partner-CSOs and to the wider non-profit and charitable landscape in Ukraine these days.

Pillar 3: Summarising what worked and looking ahead.
Under Pillar 3, the evaluation examined how partner-CSOs perceive CRF Phase II compared to other donors, and what they see as its distinctive features. The **evidence from the online questionnaire, KIIs and focus groups indicates very high satisfaction**. Satisfaction with CRF Phase II was almost universal, and 73% of respondents stated that, on average, CRF was "much" or "slightly" better than their experiences with other donors or grant-making programmes.

In the partner-CSO online questionnaire, CRF support beyond funding – such as mentoring, OD support, experience-sharing and informal advice – was rated as either "extremely useful" by 10 organisations or "mostly useful" by the remaining 5, meaning every respondent-organisation found this added layer of support highly valuable.

CSO partners highlighted several aspects that set CRF apart. Respondents valued CRF's humane approach and the quality of relationships with the IA and CAU teams, which they described as respectful, supportive and focused on learning. Second, they appreciated the combination of grants with structured OD and technical support, which they saw as comprehensive and unique in its breadth. Many also emphasised the relative simplicity and clarity of reporting requirements, which helped them to focus on delivering for children rather than on extensive and demand-ridden paperwork.

The evaluation concludes that **CRF Phase II was the right intervention, at the right time and with the right focus**. It provided targeted, high-quality support to organisations working with some of the most vulnerable children and families in Ukraine, while also investing in their long-term capacity to deliver such support beyond the lifespan of the grants.

Elements that counterparts recommended changing or enhancing. While overwhelmingly positive about CRF Phase II, partner-CSOs, the implementing team and other stakeholders also offered constructive

suggestions to make any future phase even stronger. Many of these relate to programme architecture and learning rather than to fundamental design.

Partner-CSOs expressed a desire for more systematic networking and peer-learning opportunities, capitalising on the diversity of the cohort. They suggested more frequent and structured spaces to exchange methods, tools and lessons across organisations.

There were some suggestions on how the OD component could be further refined. Suggestions included a more tailored sequencing of training spread over a longer time, better alignment between OD topics and each organisation's development stage, and more time for in-depth work on selected priorities.

Partners also encouraged the CRF team to consider softening the rules governing eligible costs, including the flexible fund, to cover strategic investments in fundraising, communications and narrow specialist expertise for programme design. Despite this being a standard procedure for almost all grant-making programmes in Ukraine, there were calls to review tranche arrangements so that final payments do not create undue financial strain as projects approach completion.

All the accumulated suggestions – be that from the partner-CSOs or the evaluation team – are best understood as refinements that capitalise on an already strong base. They aim to increase impact and sustainability rather than to fix any essential problems.

Overall conclusion. Taken together, the findings from all three pillars lead to the evaluation team to a clear conclusion: **CRF Phase II has been a highly successful programme that supported children in Ukraine and their caregivers at a time of profound crisis, while significantly strengthening the capacities and resilience of the CSOs that serve them**. It was, overall, implemented with integrity, flexibility and care by the IA and CAU teams, and was unanimously valued by partner organisations.

Partner-CSOs expressed almost universal "full satisfaction" with CRF Phase II as a programme, with no organisation indicating that it would abstain from participating in any future CRF Phases.

The evaluation team, therefore, **sees a strong case for continued and expanded investment in the CRF model**. Subject to funding, extending support over a longer period and, where appropriate, increasing the level of flexible and potentially institutional support would enable partner-CSOs to consolidate gains, plan strategically and continue to provide high-quality, inclusive services to conflict-affected children and their families or caregivers. The suggestions for improvement set out above and in the main report are intended to help an already outstandingly strong programme realise its full potential in any future Phase or iteration.

Organisation of the report. The report begins with a detailed **methodology chapter** that explains the evaluation approach, core questions, analytical pillars and instruments, as well as ethical safeguards, conflict-sensitivity measures, and research limitations. It then presents the **main findings** organised by pillar: Pillar 1 on CRF performance as a programme, Pillar 2 on project effectiveness and efficiency through four case studies, and Pillar 3 on the value and distinctive features of CRF Phase II. A dedicated chapter summarises **recommendations, lessons and suggestions for further iterations of programme design** in a table format, while classifying these proposals and assigning criticality. The annexes include the Terms of Reference, the case study selection rationale, team roles, the work plan, full evaluation instruments and the detailed agenda of the Uzhhorod learning event.

1. Evaluation methodology

To carry out the end-of-programme evaluation for the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF) Phase II, the evaluation team proposed a conflict-sensitive local systems evaluation approach in the inception report. Consequently, the team aimed not only to assess grantee performance or retention of organisational development (OD) and programme design skills but also to evaluate, where possible, how each actor, including the CRF team itself, functioned within a dynamic and interconnected local ecosystem influenced by conflict in Ukraine.

The evaluation approach was based on the six DAC criteria of *relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability*. It also ensured that the tools used were sensitive to local power dynamics, social vulnerabilities, and systemic barriers that affect service delivery and inclusion in a conflict-affected environment. This evaluation design was appropriate for the CRF context, where the success of interventions depended on the ability of multiple actors to collaborate, adapt, and contribute to resilience outcomes for children and their communities. For the evaluation, the CRF implementing team (Integrity Action and Crown Agents Ukraine) was considered an essential part of the local system, enabling the evaluation to demonstrate and enhance the value of the CRF, as outlined in the original Terms of Reference (TOR).

1.1 Core evaluation questions and aligned evaluation pillars

The evaluation was initially guided by three core questions set out in the TOR, each aligned with a specific analytical pillar within the evaluation framework. Together, these questions aimed to assess the effectiveness, relevance, and sustainability of the CRF's approach to supporting partner-CSOs working with conflict-affected children. As outlined in the TOR, the evaluation placed varied emphasis on each question, as reflected in the weights shown below and in the resulting level of detail in the findings. All questions and related clusters aimed to speak to the intended outcome of CRF Phase II: *"CSOs are more effective, sustainable, and have enhanced capacity to design and implement services that respond to the diverse needs of all girls and boys"*[2].

Table 1: Alignment of Original TOR Core Assessment Questions with the three Evaluation Pillars and Weight

Evaluation Question Clusters	Evaluation Pillar	Weight
1. How effectively has the CRF Phase II enhanced grantees' abilities to design and deliver projects that respond to the diverse needs of children? What key factors enabled or hindered such effectiveness?	Pillar 1: CRF performance as a programme	40%
2. How effectively have selected grantees been in delivering their project goals? To what extent (if at all) have children or families experienced improvements in their wellbeing, resilience, or social inclusion; and/or have other stakeholders experienced improvements in their skills or practices? In what ways have grantees identified and engaged with marginalised groups in their projects, and how successful have these approaches been?	Pillar 2: Project Effectiveness & Efficiency	35%
3. How well does the CRF align with grantees' needs and aspirations, and to what extent (if at all) has this contributed to organisations' long-term ability to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period? Which aspects of the CRF have been most and least valued by grantees and other stakeholders? How has it compared to other funding or support mechanisms they have experienced, and what improvements would they recommend for future iterations?	Pillar 3: Value of the programme and distinctive features	25%

---

[2] While the Theory of Change Diagram in the TOR lists 4 distinct outcomes, it is this particular one that has been defined by Integrity Action as the focus for the evaluation.

Each of these pillars was approached using a distinct but interlinked set of instruments (see Annexes) designed to ensure triangulation of evidence and adherence to Integrity Action's PICTURE principles[3].

This three-pillar structure ensured that the evaluation could provide a comprehensive and balanced analysis, addressing both the internal strengthening of CSOs and the external results of their work, while also generating insights into the CRF's broader institutional value and strategic relevance.

---

[3] The principles are used to define quality evidence and include the following: Precise, Inclusive, Credible, Triangulated, Useable, Results-focused, Ethically collected, analysed, and used.

1.2 Evaluation Instruments and Expanded Evaluation Questions

The following table summarises the sequence of evaluation stages, activities, links to the evaluation Pillars, types of instruments utilised, and cross-links between them to minimise the load on the partner-CSOs. It was built collaboratively with Integrity Action in line with the updated and clarified focus of the key research questions under each of the three Pillars noted in the original methodology proposal and TOR.

Table 2: Expanded list of evaluation questions, evaluation instruments used and notes on the application of the tools

	Evaluation question (both TOR and as expanded in consultation with Integrity Action)	Instruments	Notes on the tools
Pillar 1 - CRF performance as a programme	How well has the **CRF team implemented the programme** in terms of supporting the CSOs beyond the remit of only implementing a high-quality project? Has this support (financial, mentorship, organisational development / capacity development interventions, links and networking) **allowed the partner-CSOs to extract value** a) beyond the projects they implemented, b) for their future work – with or without CRF? How effectively has the Children's Resilience Fund enhanced grantees' abilities to **design and deliver projects** (not only CRF – but beyond the program) that respond to the diverse needs of children? Has CRF contributed to organisations' **long-term ability** to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period?	**1) Donor report** desk review **2)** Key informant interviews (KIIs) with the **CRF field team** / Crown Agents Ukraine to cover aspects of field delivery and operations lessons learned **3)** KIIs with the **CRF home office team** to cover lessons learned, aspects of programmatic design, perceptions of effectiveness beyond the individual projects and the cumulative effect of CRF **4)** KIIs with seven **individual experts and expert training groups** who delivered the organisational development component of CRF Phase II **5)** Baseline and end-line **self-evaluation organisational development questionnaires** as filled out by the CSOs **6)** Focus Groups with the **CSO leaders or project managers** (three sessions for 5 participants) to ask questions about their perception of how well the program has delivered **7)** Focus Groups with **CSO staff who attended organisational development sessions** (trainings, individual consultations)	Some of the tools under this Pillar were also used to touch upon Pillar 3 – for example, the three Focus Groups with CSO leaders and project managers had two elements to them: • Exploring opinions on how the CRF team implemented the programme (Pillar 1) • Considering which aspects of the CRF have been most and least valued by grantees and other stakeholders, and how has it compared to other funding or support mechanisms they have experienced, and what improvements would they recommend for future iterations (Pillar 3) As such, Pillar 1 in terms of findings reporting has been selected as a place in the report to note all the **Recommendations** – as many of the themes in Pillar 3 echoed Pillar 1 observations.

		8) Observation / shadowing of three different thematic **capacity development sessions**	The team observed training sessions on Communications, Human Resources and ICT and Information Protection
		9) Grantee report desk review	
Pillar 2 - Project Effectiveness & Efficiency	How well have the partner-**CSOs implemented their projects**? What worked / did not / why? Have there been any **positive or negative externalities**? What were the situations and what can we learn from them? To what extent (if at all) have **children or families** experienced improvements in their **wellbeing, resilience, or social inclusion**? What about the other stakeholders? Have **marginalised groups** been identified and engaged within the CRF projects if and when appropriate?	**1) Grantee report** desk review (particular emphasis on the four CSOs selected for the case studies) **2)** the 2.5-day field visits to the identified partner-CSOs (Kyiv and outside of Kyiv): • KII with **CSO lead** in the field location or virtually • KII with the **CSO line expert** / specialist in the field location or virtually • FG with 3-4 **parents** of the beneficiary children (where possible and appropriate) • KIIs with **additional parents** in the field location (for validation, where possible and appropriate) • KII with the **other donors** or sister-CSOs that know the project well or sister-CSO that knows the work of the given organisation well • KII with the **government counterpart** (where possible and appropriate) **3)** For the CSOs outside of the cohort of the 4 selected ones for the in-depth analysis – **results of the Uzhhorod sessions**. Observations and notes of trends (common, repeating topics) in the way that CSOs provide feedback	Four CSOs that were selected[4] in accordance with a set of criteria agreed with Integrity action have included: • Law and Democracy • Save Ukraine • Regional Center for Human Rights • MOM plus ME Two alternates were kept in store: • SOS Civil defence • Chiricli Every KII conducted included at least 1-2 questions that related to • Pillar 1 ("thinking beyond this particular project, do you think the CRF has allowed this partner-CSO to grow and extract value for future work – with or without CRF"?) • Pillar 3 ("what aspects of the CRF have been most and least valued by grantees and other stakeholders?")

---

[4] For the criteria and the process for selecting the partner-CSOs as case study organisations, please see Annexe 2

Pillar 3 - Value of the Programme and Distinctive Features	**Was this the right intervention** (needed by the ultimate beneficiaries, beneficial for CSOs) to do? How well has the CRF **addressed the partner-CSO needs and aspirations**? What has **worked well** and why? What has **not worked well** and why? What are the **lessons learned** from other donors / similar programmes that the partner-CSOs have worked with that CRF could replicate / consider? Which aspects of the CRF have been **most and least valued by grantees** and other stakeholders?	**1) Online questionnaire** completed by the leaders or project managers of all 15 CSOs[5]. **2)** Focus Groups with the **CSO leaders or project managers** (three sessions for 5 participants) to ask questions about their perception of how well the program has delivered **3) "Let us create a perfect CRF Phase 3" exercise** at the September event in Uzhhorod – to elicit a "dream Phase 3" and explain why it has these and not other features.	Instrument 2 captures both Pillars 3 and 1 as noted above

[5] While originally the evaluation team was tasked with working on 16 partner-CSOs, one of them was phased out from the Programme before the evaluation mechanisms were set in motion.

1.4 Data collection, management considerations and ethical safeguards

Throughout the evaluation, the team operated in line with Integrity Action's Data Protection Policy (March 2022) and the principles set out in the UK Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The work was conducted with due regard to ethical responsibility, individual rights, and data security, particularly given the sensitivity of operating in a conflict-affected setting with vulnerable populations.

Consistent with Integrity Action's approach to handling personal data, the evaluation process was designed to minimise the collection and exposure of personally identifiable information (PII). All instruments— whether for KIIs, FGs, or online surveys—were designed to avoid collecting direct identifiers.

While the team was open to it in principle, there were no encounters with child respondents, and therefore data-handling risks pertinent to minors did not materialise. Instead, interviews were conducted with parents, caregivers, or other adult stakeholders. They were informed that their children could, if they wished, be present and contribute to their parents' or caregivers' interviews, but they would not be actively engaged or asked direct questions by the evaluation team.

Where contact details were required (e.g., for scheduling), they were stored on encrypted cloud platforms (OneDrive) with two-factor authentication enabled. The team stands by its commitment to destroy such data securely no later than 12 months following acceptance of this report.

All qualitative data collection activities strictly followed a structured verbal informed-consent process. Prior to beginning all KIIs, the interviewer provided a verbal explanation of the respondent's rights, including the right to refuse participation, skip questions, withdraw at any time, pause and reschedule, or change the mode of the interview (e.g., conduct it in person rather than via Zoom). Respondents were informed of the purpose of the evaluation, how the data would be used, and the measures in place to protect their identity. They were also asked for their permission to use an artificial intelligence (AI) tool (FireFlies.ai) for transcribing the conversation. While no written consent was collected, explicit verbal confirmation was requested and recorded to confirm both consent to the interview and agreement to audio recording for transcription purposes. Although no such cases arose, the team had a process in place should respondents decline recording.

To further protect confidentiality, no direct quotations or data in this report have been attributed to named individuals. Wherever feasible, organisational names were also withheld or generalised to reduce identifiability. This non-attribution policy was designed to encourage candid input, minimise the risk of reputational repercussions, and reduce self-censorship.

All practices described above were grounded in Integrity Action's PICTURE principles, ensuring that all data were precise, inclusive, credible, triangulated, usable, results-focused, and ethically collected.

Table 3: Key informant interviews, focus groups and interactive exercises that served as qualitative data sources for the evaluation

	Organisation	Role / Thematic area	Type	Timing (hours)
1	Crown Agents Ukraine	Programme Officer	Key informant interview	1:45
2	Crown Agents Ukraine	Finance Officer	Key informant interview	1:05
3	Integrity Action	Monitoring & Evaluation Specialist	Key informant interview	1:10

4	Integrity Action	Head of Operations (Programme Delivery)	Key informant interview	1:15
5	All partner-CSOs (15)	"CRF as a Programme - its performance, outlook and lessons learned"	Focus group sessions (4)	6:45
6	All partner-CSOs (15)	"Organisational Development component: lessons learned"	Focus group sessions (4)	4:35
7	Independent consultant	Trainer - Gender Equality and Social Inclusion	Key informant interview	1:25
8	Independent consultant	Trainer - Monitoring, Evaluation and Programme Design	Key informant interview	1:15
9	Independent consultant	Trainer - Safeguarding	Key informant interview	1:30
10	Independent consultant	Trainer - Strategic Communications	Key informant interview	1:25
11	Independent consultant	Trainer - Human Resources	Key informant interview	1:35
12	Independent consultant	Trainer team - Fundraising	Focus group session	1:30
13	Independent consultant	Trainer team - Technology, Cybersecurity and Information Protection	Focus group session	1:25
14	Law and Democracy	Director	Key informant interview	2:10
15	Law and Democracy	Project manager	Key informant interview	1:15
16	Law and Democracy	Beneficiary parent	Key informant interview	0:40
17	Law and Democracy	Beneficiary parents	Focus group session	1:10
18	Law and Democracy	CSO partner representative	Key informant interview	0:20
19	Law and Democracy	Psychologist / MHPSS provider	Key informant interview	0:50
20	MOM plus ME	Director	Key informant interview	2:45
21	MOM plus ME	Project manager	Key informant interview	0:40
22	MOM plus ME	Communications officer	Key informant interview	0:45
23	MOM plus ME	Private sector partner	Key informant interview	0:30
24	MOM plus ME	Donor	Key informant interview	0:50
25	MOM plus ME	Beneficiary parents	Focus group session	1:10
26	Save Ukraine	Director	Key informant interview	1:40
27	Save Ukraine	Project manager	Key informant interview	0:40
28	Save Ukraine	Beneficiary parents	Focus group session	0:45
29	Regional Center for Human Rights	Director	Key informant interview	1:25
30	Regional Center for Human Rights	Project manager	Key informant interview	1:25
31	Regional Center for Human Rights	Government partner	Key informant interview	0:30
32	All partner-CSOs (15)	"What Have We Learned? A Shared Reflection on the CRF Journey"	Interactive session at the final event in Uzhhorod	1:30
33	All partner-CSOs (15)	"Let us create a perfect CRF Phase 3!"	Interactive session at the final event in Uzhhorod	1:30
34	Integrity Action and Crown Agents Ukraine	Implementing team	Validation sessions to refine recommendations	2:00
			Total:	**51:10**

1.5 Conflict Sensitivity and "Do No Harm"

Given the ongoing war, the evaluation team prioritised risk mitigation above all else, even when this required adapting tools and approaches or foregoing certain data. For example, the team decided not to proceed with the original plan to interview parents and caregivers of children who were returned to Ukraine after their forced deportation by the Russian Federation, following advice from multiple stakeholders about the risk of re-traumatisation. Instead, the team identified proxy channels through which relevant insights could be gathered. It maintained close coordination with counterparts and adopted methods that were appropriate and feasible in their respective operational contexts. While such cases were rare, the team made immediate pivots in approach and timelines where needed and preferred by stakeholders.

While Annexe 5 includes evaluation instrument templates that were closely followed, the team adapted the wording as appropriate and consistently reminded KII participants that it would adjust immediately to the circumstances, including shelling, aerial attacks, or other developments that could render work unsafe or disruptive.

Throughout the evaluation, the team adhered to the "do no harm" principle and practised non-violent communication in all interactions, particularly when engaging with emotionally charged or sensitive topics.

1.6 Limitations and Risks

Throughout the design stage and in the inception report, the evaluation team designed a simple risk matrix and identified potential limitations for the evaluation exercise. The table below summarises these risks and limitations and reports on how these considerations have played out as a result.

Table 4: Evaluation risks and limitations as envisaged and encountered in practice

Risk or Limitation	Potential Impact on the Evaluation	Real-Life Impact and Mitigation Measures
Security-Related Disruptions	Fieldwork could be delayed, cancelled for some of its components or reconfigured due to conflict-related risks (e.g., shelling, air raid alerts). This could limit the ability to collect in-person data or conduct site visits according to the pre-approved schedules.	The fieldwork mostly adhered to the schedule approved by Integrity Action, and minor delays and reschedules did not have a profound impact on the quality of the field visits, KIIs, focus groups and in-person consultations
Timing of the Evaluation	The evaluation work peaked over two summer months (July and August) which usually are very busy for the partner-CSOs, as these are summer vacations for the children. Moreover, data gathered in August or September 2025 would only be partial, as the CRF Phase II projects last until the end of October 2025.	The evaluation team used an iterative approach where the qualitative data gathered in July and August was validated at the September all-partners meeting in Uzhhorod. The evaluation team also triangulated the data received with the partner-CSO reports and later-stage focus groups (e.g., the Pillar 1 focus groups on organisational and capacity development held in mid-October).
Turnover or Unavailability of Key Informants	Loss of institutional memory or programme insight may occur if key informants have left or are unavailable for interviews or participation in questionnaires.	The evaluation team experienced this risk materialising partially in at least one of the partner-CSO cases. The team compensated for this by extracting additional information from the partner-CSO director.
Response Bias and Self-Censorship	Respondents may withhold critical views, fearing that the evaluation may affect future funding or relationships, no matter how persuasive the evaluation team is in explaining that there is nothing to be concerned about.	The evaluation team established an open and trustworthy relationship with all partner-CSO representatives and has not perceived a lack of sincerity or self-imposed limitations on information-sharing. Where appropriate, to maintain confidentiality and rapport, the team recorded a part of the conversation for the KII and then switched off the recording to take notes manually.
Limited Organisational Bandwidth to Participate	Participation may strain CSOs' time and resources, particularly during ongoing service delivery.	As noted, the evaluation began at a time particularly strained for the partner-CSOs (i.e., the summer months). At the same time, the evaluation team managed to negotiate with the partner-CSOs and

		identify the least disruptive schedules for field work. The team also resorted to combining some of the evaluation tools to reduce the load on partner-CSOs, but still collect the essential data. Despite these efforts, there has not been an equal number of key informant interviews for each of the selected four partner-CSOs.
Limited Generalisability of Case Studies	Findings from 4 case studies may not reflect wider trends across all 16 CSOs.	This risk was not entirely mitigated, as the CSO performance varied and targeting only 25% of the sample for in-depth exploration inherently led to issues with extrapolation. Also, as noted above, the selected partner-CSOs have agreed to a different number of interviews (between 6 and 3). At the same time, the team supplanted the case study development with desk analysis of the CSO reports and feedback from the Crown Agents team to triangulate conclusions. Despite these efforts, the Pillar 2 findings are presented as "illustrative" only.
Bias or inaccuracies based on the limitations of data sources	Evaluation results may not depict all the nuances of situations encountered in CRF Phase II implementation, facing cases where conflicting and mutually exclusive data is presented to the evaluation team	The evaluation team was working based on the approved methodology and sources of information, which included (but were not limited to) KIIs, focus groups, validation workshops, review of self-assessment forms, observation of trainings under the OD component, mid-term reports by the partner-CSOs, and by the CRF implementing team to the donor. On two occasions, the team encountered situations where reports and statements by partner-CSOs were challenged or provided an alternative explanation by the implementing team by referring to SOPs, contractual documents and other sources that were not part of the evaluation team review. The encountered issues were resolved between the draft and final versions of the report, and relevant anonymised concerns raised by CSOs were delivered to the implementing team for further consideration.
Ethical Constraints in Research with Children	Direct data collection from children is restricted at the choice of the evaluation team and to minimise risks.	The team refrained from involving children as interviewees. While it had a protocol, should the parents or caregivers want to offer their children to participate, no such cases emerged as part of the evaluation exercise.
Perception of Researcher Accessibility or Legitimacy	The hybrid team setup may affect credibility with stakeholders if one evaluator is not present in-country.	Despite potential risks, the evaluation team has not experienced any issues linked to this risk.

2. Main Findings

On the basis of a thorough analysis of available working documents, internal reports, questionnaire results and over 50 hours of 40 key informant interviews (KIIs), validation sessions, focus groups, and interactive exercises, the evaluation team believes that the consortium led by Integrity Action and implemented in the field by Crown Agents Ukraine has **successfully delivered the elements of the Children's Resilience Fund, Phase II, that fall within the scope of this evaluation**[6].

The consortium team, comprising experts from Integrity Action (IA) and Crown Agents Ukraine (CAU), has delivered a **complex and demanding grant-making programme** amid a changing institutional set-up, under tight deadlines and with a high level of programmatic integrity. The IA and CAU team for CRF Phase II has combined **strategic flexibility and adaptiveness** with adherence to good practice in ethics and oversight, thorough localisation and a high degree of trust, and in doing so has laid the foundations for more successful and resilient partner CSO teams, as evidenced by tangible examples.

Importantly, CRF Phase II was **implemented against the backdrop of the ongoing war** waged by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. As a result, partner-CSOs have faced staff shortages, unexpected staff rotation and the need to adapt continually to the realities of working in a war zone. The evaluation team documented several cases where a partner CSO began with one team and, due to unforeseen developments, had to replace that team, with inevitable consequences for established connections and routines. Despite this, 15 of the 16 original grantees successfully completed their projects, and the CRF as a programme **continued to function well under the direst circumstances**.

The CRF team has made every effort to accommodate the requests of partner CSOs and has used **highly flexible instruments to ease implementation stress and reduce the burden on grantees**. For example, the CRF implementing team allowed each partner CSO to use part of the GBP 4,000 flexible fund available to them to pay for the services of psychologists and therapists who worked with project staff to prevent burnout and support self-care after exposure to traumatic stories from beneficiaries. While not necessarily a capacity development intervention, this approach was noted by several partner CSOs as an investment by the CRF as a programme in the long-term ability of organisations to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period, by protecting staff and building organisational resilience.

Following subsections highlight findings and observations and link these to the recommendations, lessons and suggestions for further iterations of programme design presented in Section 3.

For ease of reference, we link these recommendations to the findings using numbers in square brackets. For example, **[17]** refers to recommendation, lesson or suggestion number 17 in the relevant table in Section 3. Please click on the number to be taken to the relevant recommendation and use the link at the end of the recommendation to be taken back to the Pillar 1 text.

---

[6] The evaluation team followed the guidance specified in the original Terms of Reference – including the three evaluation question clusters / pillars, and the primary focus on the following Outcome: *"CSOs are more effective, sustainable, and have enhanced capacity to design and implement services that respond to the diverse needs of all girls and boys"*. As such, the team did not engage all the grantees under the CRF Phase II (e.g., did not reach out to and consult the *Patients of Ukraine* CSO) and did not evaluate the medical equipment procurement component of CRF.

2.1 Pillar 1 - CRF performance as a programme

The evaluation team adopted a twofold approach to answering the interrelated research questions under this pillar and has grouped the relevant observations and findings within two broader thematic areas: (1) programme design and administration and (2) implementation of the Organisational Development component.

By doing so, the team moved from more general observations about issues such as the CRF team architecture, the identification and selection of grantees, and the determination of the programme's thematic focus and objectives, to narrower aspects of CRF implementation. The latter includes the design and delivery of the Organisational Development component, the selection of its trainers and the establishment of baseline capacity levels among participating partner CSOs.

*How well has the CRF team implemented the programme in terms of supporting the CSOs **beyond the remit of only implementing a high-quality project**?*

*Has this support (financial, mentorship, organisational development / capacity development interventions, links and networking) allowed the partner-CSOs to **extract value** a) **beyond the projects they implemented**, b) for their **future work** – with or without CRF?*

*How effectively has the Children's Resilience Fund enhanced **grantees' abilities to design and deliver projects** (not only CRF – but beyond the program) that respond to the diverse needs of children?*

*Has CRF contributed to organisations' **long-term ability to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period**?*

The following table summarises the sequence of findings and observations within Pillar 1 and shows how they relate to the research questions.

Table 5: Pillar 1 research questions and structure of the findings and observations

Pillar 1 research questions	Category of observations and findings	Selected deep-dive questions that were considered
How well has the CRF team implemented the programme in terms of supporting the CSOs beyond the remit of only implementing a high-quality project?	Programme design and administration	- Was the CRF implementing team structured and staffed adequately to successfully implement the programme? - How and why were these grantees selected? Did selection mechanisms set the course for high-quality project implementation down the road? - How was the process of 1) cooperation initiation and 2) day-to-day operations conducive to high-quality project implementation?
	Implementation of the Organisational Development component	- How well was the planning and implementation done for the Organisational Development component in various aspects (selection of the trainers, calendar planning, delivery sequencing, etc.)?
Has this support allowed the partner-CSOs to extract value a) beyond the projects they implemented, b) for their future work – with or without CRF?	Programme design and administration	- How flexible was the CRF team in providing or allowing for external support to the partner-CSOs outside of the grant agreement and its planned activities?
	Implementation of the Organisational Development component	- How helpful was the Organisational Development component in strengthening partner-CSOs for their future work? How do we know? - Are there examples when this support, despite the relatively short time span, has already resulted in practical achievements and tangible cases of value for the partner-CSOs?

How effectively has the Children's Resilience Fund enhanced grantees' abilities to design and deliver projects (not only CRF – but beyond the program) that respond to the diverse needs of children?	Programme design and administration	- Has the day-to-day accompaniment and support of the CRF team built the abilities of the partner-CSOs to build more robust, better-designed and implemented projects that respond to the diverse needs of children? How exactly?
	Implementation of the Organisational Development component	- What are the perceptions of partner-CSOs regarding organisational growth they have experienced due to the participation in the Organisational Development component activities? - Is there a difference in the reported change that is attributed to the CRF Organisational Development component as opposed to the change that took place without OD support? - What was the perceived progress along the range of different thematic areas?
Has CRF contributed to organisations' long-term ability to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period?	Programme design and administration	- Was the CRF as a programme designed with long-term ability of the partner-CSOs in mind (e.g. through strategic use of networking or attempts to institute referral systems)?
	Implementation of the Organisational Development component	- How well did the CRF team identify the needs of the partner-CSOs to offer a good fit of topics relevant to the support of conflict-affected children beyond the funding period? - Is there evidence that the skills obtained through the Organisational Development component have strengthened the long-term ability to support conflict-affected children?

2.1.1 Program design and administration

The CRF implementing team, comprising dedicated officers from Integrity Action (IA) and Crown Agents Ukraine (CAU), has worked to ensure that **partner-CSOs have a seamless experience and receive extensive mentorship and capacity development support**, extending beyond the formal Organisational Development component. The evidence suggests that CRF Phase II was **delivered very effectively in a highly complex and shifting context**. Despite major institutional changes, IA and CAU rapidly configured joint business processes and successfully launched the programme, including grantee selection, during wartime.

A key strength of the architecture has been IA's reliance on **CAU's Kyiv-based team, whose local expertise, knowledge of Ukrainian regulations and close understanding of CSO realities** under war conditions have been central to sound implementation, including the early detection of irregularities. The small, lean joint team operated based on high trust, collegiality and appropriate delegation, with institutional boundaries largely invisible to external actors.

The grantee cohort of initially sixteen, later fifteen organisations, **functioned reasonably well, with stakeholders highlighting the distinctive freedom given to CSOs to design activities they considered right** for their beneficiaries. This devolution of decision-making, grounded in partners' own theories of change, emerged as a hallmark of CRF Phase II. Ideas for further refinement include a more participatory selection process, possible two-stage applications in longer phases and measured encouragement of coalitions.

Financially, the programme **combined standard project-based grants with a widely appreciated flexible fund** of GBP 4,000 per CSO, used for systems strengthening and staff well-being. Stakeholders saw scope to

broaden eligible uses and fine-tune procurement and disbursement practices, but overall viewed the arrangements as flexible, thoughtful and highly supportive given the wartime pressures.

As described in this subsection, partner-CSO teams have **reported high levels of satisfaction with the way in which programme implementation was organised**. The observations below are presented for the consideration of the implementing team as suggestions to further enhance an already robust and highly appreciated experience for the grantees.

Architecture of the Implementing team

The evaluation team noted the complex and challenging environment that the IA and CAU consortium had to navigate at the outset of CRF Phase II, particularly in its earliest stages. Administrative issues, including the closure of the parent institution of Crown Agents in the United Kingdom, the reemergence of Integrity Action as an independent organisation, and the establishment of Crown Agents Ukraine's own operations, all coincided with the launch of Phase II and would have tested any implementation consortium. Nonetheless, the **institutional resilience and adaptability of both teams, together with the prompt configuration of business processes between IA and CAU, were instrumental in launching Phase II and initiating core programme processes** such as the selection of grantees.

Since IA does not have a permanent physical presence on the ground in Ukraine, it has relied successfully on the CAU team in Kyiv, which is **well-positioned to deliver programming for and with partner-CSOs**, given its deep understanding of operational realities in wartime Ukraine and of the limitations that partner-CSOs may face in implementation. Respondents from both teams frequently emphasised an **atmosphere of trust, appropriate delegation and collegiality** in handling operational challenges as they emerged.

At the same time, the evaluation team noted that many of the protocols and operational procedures in place, despite allegedly mentioned in the comprehensive cooperation agreement between CAU and IA, were rooted in **goodwill and established personal relationships** between IA and CAU experts, rather than in more formalised standard operating procedures, decision-making protocols and mechanisms for formal verification. The evaluation team has taken note of what could, in theory, evolve into a principal-agent problem if the consortium continues to rely on unwritten, largely personality-based processes instead of more formalised mechanisms. At the same time, the team recognises that this collegiality, trust and delegation have been crucial in creating an environment in which institutional boundaries between the dedicated IA and CAU teams were almost non-existent. For future iterations, particularly if staff changes occur for any reason, it may be important to translate the current trust-based systems of coordination, verification and operational decision making into more formal mechanisms. **[1]**

The strong side of the IA and CAU consortium has been its reliance on **local expertise and knowledge for field implementation**, including Ukraine-specific regulations and legislative requirements, coupled with the knowledge of the national CSO practices and approaches to project design and delivery. The nuanced local expert knowledge has also been instrumental in identifying potential irregularities, leading to one case involving the pre-term cancellation of a grant for one of the partner-CSOs. As such, any future arrangements of the programme implementing team should continue relying extensively, if not almost exclusively, on the local expertise in programming that works with supporting Ukrainian CSOs. **[2]**

It is the evaluation team's understanding that a lean structure was used for CRF Phase II design and implementation. In practice, this meant that a small, dedicated team from IA worked alongside an equally compact CAU team to design, steer and deliver the programme. While this arrangement was fully warranted given the dynamic conditions and the very short timeframe for Phase II implementation, subsequent programmes with a similar design **could include an element of co-design or at least a sounding board process** with dedicated government institutions, such as the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the Ministry of

Social Policy or the Office of the Ombudsperson, as well as Ukrainian private sector and civil society actors. Many Ukrainian corporate actors already support initiatives focused on philanthropic giving or on partnering with foundations and civil society organisations in thematic areas that are relevant to the CRF. It is the team's understanding that this decision would have to be discussed with any future donors of potential subsequent CRF iterations. **[3]**

Another consideration that was voiced in key informant interviews is that the links and ties to other donors / international technical assistance / humanitarian interventions, including coordination with their teams, **knowledge of programming, and avoidance of duplication**, could be further strengthened. There are multiple ways to ensure such coordination – from participating in thematic coordination sessions held by UNICEF or OCHA to inviting experts from other programmes to be on the Advisory Council or exploring joint events for partner-CSOs from different cohorts: the CRF and non-CRF partners. One of the respondents suggested that Phase I was more proactive in such coordination and engagement of other implementing partners. **Proactive cataloguing of projects and initiatives** supported by other donors and implemented under the auspices of other humanitarian initiatives can allow the CRF team to capitalise on potential synergies, take note of ideas and approaches, offer partner-CSOs additional connections, and avoid potential activity duplication. **[4]**

Identification and selection of the grantees

There was no consensus among the various stakeholders as to the **optimal number of grantees in a CRF cohort or Phase**. Some respondents noted that a group of sixteen organisations is entirely manageable and even suggested that the number could be increased to twenty grantees, while others were less persuaded. A smaller number of grantees would, in principle, allow for larger allocations per organisation and, it is hoped, a more visible and tangible impact, compared to a situation in which the same funding pool is allocated to a larger number of partner-CSOs, thereby limiting each individual budget. At the same time, having a single full-time focal point for all grantees means that, **particularly at peak times, there can be an overwhelming volume of requests, correspondence, clearances and feedback** from partner-CSOs. While the thematic division of tasks between the two CRF officers at CAU has been extremely helpful, together they did not amount to two full-time positions, since one of the officers allocated only half of her time to CRF. That said, with some rare exceptions, particularly in relation to communication with grantees, the CRF Phase II arrangement with an initial group of sixteen and subsequently fifteen organisations[7] has worked reasonably well. **[5]**

A distinguishing feature that came through strongly in most key stakeholder discussions was the **freedom given to partner-CSOs** to propose activities and interventions they considered to be the **"right thing to do for the right beneficiaries"**, with only a few isolated cases noted in which an activity was not approved or disallowed. The evaluation team identified this **spirit of trust and the devolution of decision-making on best-fit solutions**, in line with partner-CSO visions and theories of change, as a clear distinguishing feature of CRF Phase II programming. The implementing team's trust and confidence that partner CSOs have the capacity and expertise to determine what the best-fit interventions are was strongly emphasised in all CSO consultations, both individual key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus groups. At the same time, a more engaged stance from the combined IA and CAU team could **potentially increase the quality of incoming grant proposals**, drawing in part on lessons learned from previous phases. The evaluation team discussed the possibility of establishing a two-stage application process, with stage one comprising a three-page concept note to provide an initial view of the proposed ideas, and stage two consisting of a co-designed, agreed-upon application with the semi-finalists. A critical consideration in this regard is the **timeframe available for such a practical alternative**, in which potential grantees receive extensive feedback and project

---

[7] As noted before, this count does not include the case of the Charitable Foundation "Patients of Ukraine", which is beyond the scope of the evaluation, as agreed with the Integrity Action team.

ideas are, in effect, co-designed with them at the second stage. Should there be an opportunity to implement any further CRF phases over a period of eighteen to twenty-four months, such an approach could be beneficial in many respects. **[6]**

CRF Phase II **did not feature any formal coalition-based projects**, and yet there were initial signs that some of the partner-CSOs had begun developing natural programmatic connections, such as unofficial beneficiary and client referrals (please see Pillar 2). The evaluation team received mixed feedback about the need or desirability of encouraging coalitions and networks more actively – including as an approach to allocating grants at the application stage. **[7]**

The ultimate selection of partner CSOs to become grantees under CRF Phase II appears to have **combined an open competition with the return of some Phase I partner CSOs**. While the final decisions on the selection modality need to be discussed with the donor or donors allocating funds for any potential subsequent phases, it would be beneficial to **streamline the selection and decision-making process**. One practice that has proved beneficial in the past, and which relates to the considerations above on mechanisms for involving external actors, is to submit **incoming grant proposals to an external Advisory Council or Expert Board** before making a final decision on which projects should be supported. Stakeholder discussions with the implementing team indicated that, although there was no pressure from the donor under Phase II to select or avoid particular grantees, there was a concern about disappointing the donor by not allowing certain applicants to proceed. While all final grantees passed due diligence screening, there was a lingering perception of disappointment that some Phase I partner CSOs did not pass the screening process and were therefore not recommended for support. **Establishing a more participatory process for screening and selecting grantees** for funding in any subsequent phases is highly advisable. **[8]**

Thematic focus and objectives

One of the characteristic features of CRF Phase II, as observed by the evaluation team, has been the **thematic diversity of projects** that were implemented by partner-CSOs. While that has made comparison of performance and eliciting intermediate outcomes complicated[8], this very diversity in themes, approaches, and instruments has made CRF Phase II what it is: to borrow an image from one of the CSO focus groups, a flowerbed of wildflowers – versatile and unique but united by one goal. While such diversity and versatility can be presented as a distinguishing feature of CRF as a programme, greater unification of themes and topics that CRF, as a mechanism, would like to support in the future could make **assessing the cumulative effect of the programme easier** (through greater comparability of the results in thematic streams). **[9]**

The review of programmatic materials, including the self-assessment grid for organisational development (OD), has revealed a **significant focus on issues of gender equality** (including considerable details discussing gender and sex, as well as gender identity). In addition to this, one of the thematic OD training series was dedicated to issues of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). While the evaluation team does not debate the crucial importance of GESI issues, CRF could explore ways to cast a wider net and frame a **broader focus on human rights, including the rights of the child, parents and caregivers**. **[10]**

Types of costs allocated and cost limitations

The versatility of organisations represented in the CRF Phase II cohort suggests that there is potential to adopt a **more nuanced approach to providing grant assistance**. While most donors and international technical assistance / humanitarian assistance programmes operate project-based granting schemes, there are cases of so-called **"core support" or "institutional support"**. Two well-known examples are the initiatives

---

[8] One of the reasons for resorting to the case study evaluation method under evaluation Pillar 2 may be that the thematic versatility and difference in size and maturity levels of partner-CSOs would make benchmarking complicated, if not unachievable.

supported by the Royal Swedish Embassy in Kyiv and, until recently, the Pact-implemented and USAID-funded ENGAGE Programme. Unlike project-based support, where funding is tied to the achievement of milestones and the implementation of pre-approved activities, institutional support focuses on enabling the selected CSOs to deliver on their mission without having to worry about funding sources to pay their rent, staff salaries or accounting and administrative expenses. That type of funding is strongly associated with longer-term sustainability and a more equal partnership relationship, as opposed to the dominant position of the implementor and donor in a project-based arrangement. [11]

All relevant stakeholders noted in key informant interviews, focus groups and private conversations their **appreciation for the initiative to set aside GBP 4,000 (approximately UAH 220,000) as a flexible fund** that each partner-CSO could use to strengthen their capacities and invest in purchases that supported them beyond the immediate remit of the approved project activities. Examples of such investments include specialised accounting software licences for financial reporting automation, financial and taxation-related consultations for accountants, consultations from an external media and communications trainer, services of an organisational strategy consultant, payment for language courses for project personnel, and internal trainings on topics such as first aid, mine safety and the provision of emergency psychological support to people affected by traumatic situations. Some partner CSOs also invested in the well-being and mental health of their staff and specialists, for example, by hiring an additional supervisor ("a psychologist for other psychologists") to ease their workload and help prevent trauma and burnout among specialists working directly with children suffering from trauma.

At the same time, the possible **uses of such flexible funds could be expanded** in comparison to what was allowed under Phase II. Some of the partner-CSOs emphasised that fundraising, partnership-building and application processes for complex grant calls require not only staff costs, but sometimes upfront expenditures. These could include, for instance, **media-production costs for reels and shorts, payment for targeted online advertising on social media, or the purchase of services from a narrow-expertise specialist, such as a proposal designer or proofreader**. While it was unclear to the evaluation team whether such expenses were unclaimable as part of the GBP 4,000 flexible funds package, or whether these ideas came to the partner-CSOs after the flexible funds were already spent (as an afterthought), this request and proposal were noted by the evaluation team.

Finally, CRF Phase II is not unique in limiting or disallowing certain activities or items to be included in grant applications and through the flexible funds arrangement. For example, some of the partner-CSOs reported their inability to use the funds for **infrastructure or repairs, vehicles** (a school bus was quoted) **or office equipment**, such as laptops or printers. Additional consultations with the implementing team revealed that the queries were dealt with on a case-by-case basis, and some minor renovations were, indeed, allowed. Overall, CRF in its future Phases or iterations could consider unifying and further structuring its approach to the rules for accountable use of the flexible funds, as well as their size. [12]

Finally, Ukraine's grant-making processes **commonly use a tranche-allocation mechanism**, in which the last (usually the third or fourth) tranche is paid out after all costs have been incurred and confirmed through invoices. That means, in practice, that the grantee needs to either invest their own costs (i.e. usually costs of a different grant that the organisation has ongoing) or ask the vendors to sign the papers that they have received payment, when in fact the payments have not yet been made – which very few vendors would agree to as this poses a serious risk for their tax obligations and accounting practices. The CRF Phase II approaches have not deviated from the standard Ukrainian practices and **have envisaged that the third (final) tranche would be paid out to the partner-CSOs upon completion of their projects and activities therein**. The tranche structure was clearly noted in the relevant grant agreements as they were signed by the partner-CSOs. Nonetheless, as the evaluation team was interviewing partner-CSO representatives both through key informant interviews and focus groups, and gathering feedback through an online questionnaire, there were at least three instances where a certain degree of surprise was expressed by the partner-CSOs with regard

to this practice. The evaluation team is unsure whether the partner-CSO representatives providing these comments were new to the process, were not the ones who originally reviewed and signed the agreement, or were not aware of this mechanism for any other reason. [13]

2.1.2 Organisational Development component

The Organisational Development (OD) component of CRF Phase II was a dedicated and intentional intervention that was profoundly appreciated by the partner-CSOs. It was designed to allow the grantees to choose thematic learning in groups and individually, to extract value beyond the projects they implemented for their future work (with or without CRF funding), and to increase the quality of future projects undertaken by these CSOs, both in terms of programme design and improved support to conflict-affected children. **The evaluation team considers that this objective was fully achieved**. No stakeholder expressed any doubt that the OD component should be included in any subsequent iterations of CRF. All key informant interviews, focus group discussions, feedback sessions and questionnaire responses were unanimous that the OD programme was helpful and left a lasting impact on the CSOs.

"I wanted to say that this knowledge will remain with us. For example with [a certain topic] we were provided with a bunch of materials that we can use and I feel as if I had studied in Program Management for five years at university. It's all so concentrated and very cool!" – partner-CSO specialist who took part in the OD component training

A questionnaire spanning all 15 partner-CSOs registered **satisfaction levels ranging from 7,8 to 8,4 points on a 10-point scale of satisfaction with the seven thematic learning streams**, and the evaluation team has further explored the data from self-evaluation instruments – including the baseline self-assessment and the endline questionnaire. The self-evaluation instrument (both baseline and endline) has included a greater number of topics, as several thematic areas were sometimes folded into one larger training course (e.g., programme design, MEL and, partially, programme management). Furthermore, some of the themes ultimately became part of several training courses – trainers for Human Resources, GESI and Safeguarding mentioned elements of "staff mental health and wellbeing" as topics that were brought up in their courses.

Analysis of the quantitative data from the baseline and endline self-assessments allows the evaluation team to confidently state: **the self-perceived organisational efficacy, professionalism and quality of project design and implementation have palpably increased**. Importantly, the positive change was **on average 1,09 points greater in cases where CRF provided support as compared to cases where organisations were addressing the 18 thematic areas noted in the self-evaluation alone**.

In 11 out of 18 thematic areas **(61%) the organisations** reporting the largest improvements have noted that they **"greatly" attribute that growth to CRF interventions**. In 6 out of 18 thematic areas (33%), the partner-CSOs reporting greatest improvements in skills and abilities have at least "partially" attributed the self-perceived change to the OD programme by CRF. There was **only one case** when a partner-CSO, demonstrating the largest perceived growth, noted that such **improvements were not due to CRF activities** and ongoing support within the OD component.

Table 6: Self-assessment results demonstrate a more significant growth for those partner-CSOs that benefited from CRF OD interventions

Thematic area	CRF support average improvement	No CRF support average improvement	Biggest change reported (endline score minus baseline)	Support received for biggest change case?	Attribution of biggest change case to CRF?	Topic part of formal training (7 thematic OD courses)?*
1. Strategic leadership	1,42	1,00	3,00	Yes	Yes, in part	No
2. Programme design	1,33	0,33	5,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
3. Programme management	0,92	0,00	3,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Partially
4. MEL	1,64	0,00	4,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
5. Sustainable development practices	1,00	0,83	4,00	No	No	No
6. Safeguarding	1,55	0,00	4,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
7. Financial management	1,25	0,14	3,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	No
8. Fundraising	1,25	0,00	3,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
9. External communications	1,60	1,00	3,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
10. Human resources management	0,88	0,00	2,00	Yes	Yes, in part	Yes - core agenda
11. Technology	1,91	0,75	3,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
12. Risk management	1,29	0,25	2,00	Yes	Yes, in part	Partially
13. Staff mental health & wellbeing	1,27	0,25	4,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Partially
14. Strategic approach to GESI	2,09	0,00	4,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
15. Organisational culture	1,10	0,50	2,00	Yes	Yes, in part	Yes - core agenda
16. Transformational approach	1,00	0,33	2,00	Yes	Yes, in part	No
17. Gender-sensitive MEAL	1,82	0,25	5,00	Yes	Yes, greatly	Yes - core agenda
18. Intersectional approach	1,33	0,17	2,00	Yes	Yes, in part	Partially

"Core agenda" means that a given thematic area was included as a significant element of the 7 thematic training streams delivered by the CRF-commissioned trainers; "Partially" means that the trainers noted that a theme was present as they delivered their material; "No" should not be taken to mean that the partner-CSO never received any support on a given topic from the trainers – for instance, they still could have benefitted from individual consultations with the CAU team or from using the flexible funding of GBP 4,000 to purchase services of a consultant on a given topic. In this case, "no" would only mean that there was no dedicated training stream capturing the given thematic area holistically or in part.

Analysis of responses broken down by partner-CSO demonstrates that **three of the organisations** (20% of the pool) **are responsible for 67,5% of all cases where maximum improvement was reported** in the self-assessment. The remaining six organisations reporting improvement are responsible for 32,5% of maximum improvement scores.
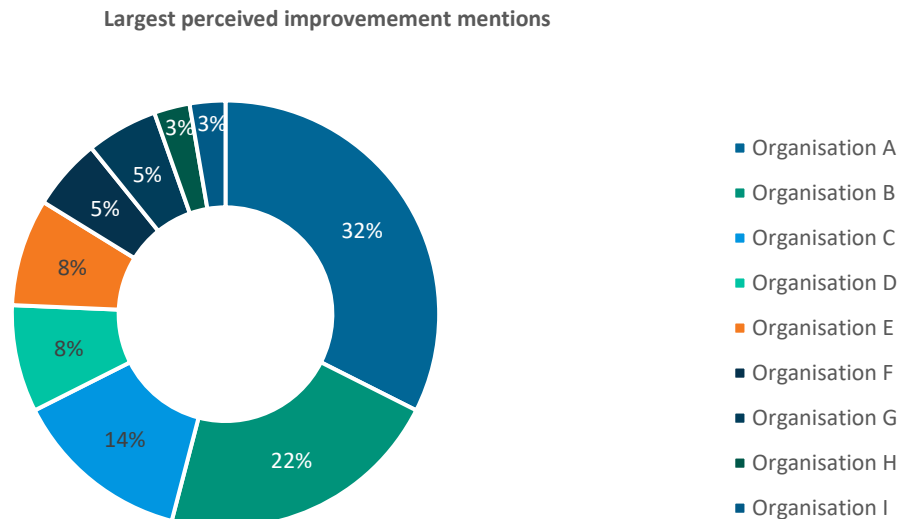
Largest perceived improvemement mentions

Figure 1: Three of the partner-CSOs have reported the largest perceived improvement

In addition to self-reported development in the 18 thematic areas through the self-assessment instrument, the partner-CSOs also singled out at least three categories of results that emerged from the OD component through key informant interviews and in offline consultations:

Updating policies and internal documentation. Organisations updated and developed policies - for example, one partner-CSO revised its gender equality policy with a trainer's support, which enabled a successful application for additional funding. Another partner-CSO prepared a dedicated document on gender equality and non-discrimination, updated rules of conduct for staff of social-educational centres, and revised the code of conduct for all project employees. One more partner-CSO reviewed and adjusted internal policies on child safeguarding and protection. Yet another one developed its own monitoring and evaluation policy, which an OD programme expert reviewed and provided valuable comments. Work was also initiated on HR and volunteering policies, using training materials to draft a new volunteering policy. While developing these policies, teams identified breaches in business processes related to data retention—for example, when sending humanitarian aid via a national postal provider.

Applying knowledge in project work and fundraising. Knowledge gained from monitoring and evaluation training was immediately applied to prepare another project application, which was successful. One partner-CSO introduced cross-border crowdfunding tools, encouraged by a trainer, and recorded a first successful case raising funds for a trip for families from a war-affected city. Another partner-CSO applied advice on increasing small monthly donations, and this approach has proven effective and is already showing results. The fundraising trainer also conducted a website audit for a partner-CSO, identifying ineffective fundraising tools. Thanks to the trainings and individual consultations, another partner-CSO began shifting from person-dependent processes (as in a start-up) to function- and position-based workflows and adopted a more advanced platform for task management.

Impact on the team and internal support. With the flexible funds that may also be considered an element of OD support, partner-CSOs addressed needs such as rebranding (which broadened target audiences and is typically not funded by other donors), holding internal trainings on basic first aid, mine safety, and psychological first aid for people affected by traumatic situations, and providing team members with access to confidential psychological counselling from an external expert as an important form of support.

Given the very positive feedback on the OD component, the following sections **do not question its widely recognised value** but instead **present reflections and suggestions on how the schedule and delivery methods might be adjusted to help partner-CSO teams derive even greater benefit** – beyond the already stellar reviews from the grantees.

OD logic and expectation-setting

Consultations with the partner-CSOs and the implementing team suggest that the OD component within Phase II has been significantly expanded and intensified as compared to Phase I. As such, even the partner-CSOs that had experience under Phase I **were not always prepared for the increased intensity and depth of information presented** under each of the seven thematic OD streams. Some of the respondents noted that the depth and quality of the material delivered was comparable to that of a university course. While this rigour and quality of the material were universally appreciated and deemed as valuable, a clearer understanding of the partner-CSOs of what to expect, the level of preparation needed to make full use of the trainings, and the types of issues that can be brought to individual consultations can help partner-CSOs extract maximum value from learning and plan ahead. **[14]**

Linked to this is an important point on which the evaluation team received mixed feedback. In most interviews and consultations, stakeholders **stated that participation in the OD component was left to the discretion of the CSOs**. On closer examination, however, this did not appear to be the case for all partner-CSOs. Some respondents reported **feeling that their participation was expected** (a self-imposed sense of obligation), while others noted that they had been told explicitly that participation was mandatory. Further consultations with the implementing team suggested that partner-CSOs were told in February 2025 (several months before the OD component launch in practice, with trainings commencing) that they needed **to select four thematic areas and attend them**. The time gap between the initial discussion and the actual launch of the OD component may have contributed to the lack of clarity and conflicting data the evaluation team observed. **[15]**

Establishing the OD needs and depth

While the process of self-assessment for OD is a welcome practice and emphasises CSO ownership and commitment to self-development, it could be **accompanied by a CRF-driven and owned assessment**, which could be done in parallel to due diligence before clearing the grantee for grant signature. The **depth of such a rapid OD scan could also vary**, depending on whether it is an application for an individual project-based grant or a grant with significant elements of institutional support, a coalition-based grant or an individual submission. **[16]**

The OD component has generally been self-driving for the partner-CSOs, with the notable exception of a discussion as to whether there was an expectation from the grantees to attend as many training streams as possible. As such, the **partner-CSOs have mostly approached this process unevenly** in that different staff members could be present at different sessions, and a holistic, inner-coordinated approach was lacking. This situation was further complicated by the start of the OD interventions rather late in the process, with a lot of intensive learning over the summer period. **[17]**

Thematic focus

As noted above, the partner-CSOs have expressed their appreciation for all seven thematic streams under the OD component and noted their relevance. One of the themes that was notably absent from the thematic offering, but was noted as a foundation for some of the CSOs, was the **area of strategic planning, operational planning and budgeting**. For instance, one of the partner-CSO representatives noted that it would have been logical to have a foundational introduction into strategic planning and receive assistance with such a plan (creation or revision), and **only then dive into the realm of fundraising**, as fundraising principles, tools and

methods, as well as target audiences, would be highly dependent on the provisions of the organisation's strategic plan. [18]

As noted multiple times in this report, the flexible funding of **GBP 4,000 was a broadly welcomed instrument** for supporting the partner-CSOs, and some of them noted that they used this resource to hire specialised trainers beyond the seven thematic areas covered by the CRF OD component. Such a practice of thematic diversification could be encouraged and replicated in the next Phases or iterations of the CRF. [19]

Timeframe and OD component operations

One of the characteristics of the OD component that received the **most feedback from partner-CSO representatives and trainers alike** was the issue of **scheduling and time management for a very ambitious programme over a very short time span**. Due to great thematic versatility (seven thematic streams) and a relatively late start of training delivery, the training programme was concentrated in the late spring and all **summer months**, which are oftentimes the busiest ones for both the beneficiaries and the partner-CSOs (as these are the times for school trips and camps and activities, as children are let go for summer vacations).

While CRF has envisaged two training "waves", this approach did not always work as intended – with some training programmes being carried out over two cycles (e.g., GESI) and others having to significantly compress their proposed curriculum to make room for the next wave of thematic learning and consultations (e.g., MEL and Programme Design). Such **"compression"**, while professionally and ethically handled by the relevant trainers, could lead to **information overload and an overwhelming intensity of learning for some** partner-CSO representatives. One CSO representative reported that once they were done with the first training "wave", they were surprised to know that there was *more* to be engaged in. [20]

While the following consideration is largely a reflection of the key informant interviews with all seven trainers and training teams, it may also be extrapolated to the partner-CSO feedback. An **online calendar with a clear depiction of when the trainings are happening, how they overlap, whether certain time arrangements can be revisited and re-discussed between trainers and training teams** – all these elements seem to have appeared as an element of trial and error. Some of the trainers were reluctant to or persistently failed to mark their sessions on a shared calendar, for example. **Access of the partner-CSO representatives and OD coordinators [17] to a well-kept and streamlined OD component calendar** that includes both trainings and individual consultations, and constant encouragement and **nudging for all trainers** to keep the information there up to date, could create a more manageable and predictable environment, as well as serve as a tool of accountability. [21]

Analysis of trainers' final reports, as well as key informant interviews and validation with the partner-CSO representatives, as well as observation and shadowing done by the evaluation team suggests that there may be a need for an **OD component arrangement that considers the different skill levels of partner-CSOs**. In part, the current OD component setup addressed this through a two-pronged approach: 1) emphasising the voluntary essence of OD training participation (i.e., if a CSO was already knowledgeable or believed itself knowledgeable on a certain topic of a training, they could skip that particular session) and 2) working with all the seven thematic teams and trainers to make sure that adaptations are made to meet the "average level" of the partner-CSOs they have in their training cohorts. [22]

The trainers and training teams, despite the **great practice of weekly coordination meetings and detailed letters sent by IA to the trainer pool with CVs and descriptions of colleagues joining the OD component**, did not have the opportunity to develop the deeper connections and synergies that might have been possible. Through key informant interviews, the evaluation team explored whether there were instances in which partner-CSOs approached one trainer with a query that fell within their broad area of work but would, in fact, have been better addressed by another thematic expert who was delivering a different course (for example,

an HR trainer referring a CSO to the communications trainer on a specific communications-related issue). The evaluation team has not been able to identify such cases, while the idea itself was broadly supported by the trainers.

Several practical factors limited the **emergence of such a referral system**. First, trainers were contracted and began delivering their thematic capacity development support in two waves, which meant that, for some teams, there was little or no overlap with colleagues whose streams had already concluded. Second, trainers, despite initial introductions done by IA, had only a **partial overview of the specialisations and focus areas of colleagues working in other thematic tracks**, and although regular coordination was maintained through weekly meetings, this was not sufficient on its own to establish a structured OD referral mechanism. Third, trainers and training teams **were not specifically tasked with viewing the thematic learning streams as interconnected and complementary, nor with formalising pathways for cross-referrals between them**. Taken together, these factors suggest an opportunity in any future Phase to build on existing coordination practices and make it easier for trainers to connect partner-CSOs to the most relevant thematic expertise across the full OD offer between different trainers. **[23]**

The CRF implementing team has opted for a hands-on, closely managed and coordinated OD component, which has **delivered positive results and was an intensive investment in CSO capacities beyond the timeframe of CRF Phase II**. Yet, such a setup is not the only one possible at the macro-level. Ukraine has solutions in place (and functioning) that have delivered results for OD programmes over the years. One of them is the **ISAR Ednannia Marketplace system** (https://home.ednannia.ua/orgdevelopment), **which enables the CSOs to seek out experts or organisations delivering thematic capacity development and, through a system of vouchers, obtain the necessary knowledge and consultations**. Voucher systems like this one undoubtedly carry their own risks – fewer controls by the implementing team and the donor, less coherence, and, despite filters and a rating system, a chance that sub-standard learning experiences are delivered. At the same time, **the voucher system could allow the partner-CSOs to select the trainer whom they want** (as opposed to signing up for thematic learning with the trainer as selected by the CRF implementing team) and would allow the CSO team to determine the best time, place, modality, duration and content of the training or consultations they would like to receive. **[24]**

Evidence of change, including Kirkpatrick levels 3 and 4[9]

One request made to the evaluation team was to identify examples of outcome-level changes and developments that became possible due to the CRF OD component. Some of these examples were described in the introductory paragraphs, and more will be given in this sub-section. That said, there are several limiting factors in place to enable capturing data, especially for Level 4, which means that evaluators need to determine the "degree to which targeted organisational outcomes occur as a result of the [training] initiative and subsequent support and accountability package"[10].

The evaluation's main data-gathering efforts were carried out in July – September 2025, when some of the thematic OD component trainings were still ongoing, meaning that **meaningful, traceable and sustainable change would not have had time to materialise in some of the learning areas**. The seven thematic experts and expert teams have been unanimous that change would be **best captured 4-6 months after a certain training initiative was completed**, and not at the time of parallel implementation of projects, reporting and close-out. **[25]**

"Monitoring the practical use of these tools over time through follow-up surveys, interviews, or case studies will be essential to measuring sustained impact and the translation of learning into everyday practice" – Trainer end-of-assignment report

---

[9] Please see Kirkpatrick Partners. (n.d.). *The Kirkpatrick Model*. Retrieved October 26, 2025, from https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/the-kirkpatrick-model/
[10] Ibid.

The methods used for the OD component have been **highly conducive for initial knowledge build-up or strengthening**, and development of a bridge to practical application: the lecture series helped develop the knowledge and awareness, including the tools that could be put to practice; individual consultations were a format to immerse in practical application. One of the possible additions to these two formats could be a **formalised third approach of "learning by doing" or micro-projects**. **[26]**

Finally, one of the ways to encourage the trainers and training teams to collect outcome-level cases as opposed to incorporating that into programme performance evaluations could be to **build in such case collection into the terms of reference of the thematic experts** and into the final reporting as delivered by the thematic experts or teams. **[27]**

"[Name] was one of the most active and engaged participants, both during the plenary and practical sessions. In our individual meeting, we had a highly productive discussion, especially on how to apply the Theory of Change to new project proposals. She shared that they had already integrated this approach into their recent application and found it much more convenient for structuring results frameworks. I was very encouraged by this, as it showed that the knowledge was not only absorbed but also immediately put into practice, making this a strong example of sustainability. About a month and a half later, [she] wrote in our WhatsApp group that the project idea we had developed together during the individual consultation (and which the participants had also worked on during the group sessions) was approved by the donor."
– Trainer end-of-assignment report

Here is a brief account of some of the changes that were reported by the partner-CSOs as examples of what happened due to their participation in the OD component and with mentorship and advisory support of the larger CRF team (not only the thematic experts):

Due to CRF support the partner CSOs have
- *updated a multi-year organisational strategy and created a fundraising strategy;*
- *improved grant management practices and standardised accounting/reporting forms for future grants;*
- *adopted RBM principles and used training-of-trainers materials for internal capacity building;*
- *developed structured programmes for children's support groups and camps, with clear roles and job descriptions;*
- *enhanced reporting processes and restructured the organisation's website to enable donations;*
- *expanded and formalised a pool of contracted psychologists, strengthening service delivery capacity;*
- *piloted an innovative approach to restoring children's rights with plans to continue its application;*
- *increased capacity of junior specialists within the organisation, enabling readiness for new project work;*
- *integrated early childhood care and health approaches into national protocols and routine practices;*
- *refined case-management approaches to better reach and serve priority audiences;*
- *built confidence to implement large-scale projects; identified new target groups;*
- *developed a practical, repeatable "algorithm" for project implementation;*
- *updated or created policies on GESI, codes of conduct, and child safeguarding;*
- *drafted/updated an M&E policy and applied M&E learning immediately to win new project funding;*
- *initiated HR and volunteering policies using provided training materials;*
- *introduced and tested new fundraising channels (including international crowdfunding) with early successes;*
- *increased small donations through targeted tactics; audited digital donation tools to improve effectiveness;*
- *transitioned from person-dependent workflows to function/role-based processes;*
- *upgraded to a more advanced task-management platform for project operations;*
- *undertook successful rebranding to broaden the target audience;*
- *delivered internal trainings (first aid, mine safety, psychological first aid);*
- *provided access to confidential psychological counselling for project staff.*

Textbox 1: CRF has contributed to organisations' long-term ability to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period

Trainers - hiring, performance and synergies

Out of the seven trainers engaged in the CRF OD component, two were connected to the CAU team and one to the former team of Crown Agents / CAID – the trainers on Safeguarding, Communications and GESI. These three experts were **selected through an open and merit-based competition process**. Having experts who are known to the partner-CSOs and are trusted can help reduce the stress of learning by creating **a more conducive environment for knowledge retention**. At the same time, double care needs to be taken to ensure that all processes and procedures are duly adhered to and that the expert trainers are not allowed to unduly benefit from their CAU affiliation and the additional contract for expert services (i.e., to remain in compliance with parallel employment regulations within CAU). It is also crucial to establish that the authority that the CAU officer has over the partner-CSOs (for example, approving certain materials) does not conflict with their function as a trainer under the OD component. **[28]**

The OD expert cohort has generally maintained connections and established some ties, especially through the weekly coordination meetings. Key informant interviews with the trainers and trainer teams suggested that **the September event in Uzhhorod 2025 was seen as a highly appreciated opportunity for the trainers to know each other better and establish professional connections.** The evaluation team received several feedback points that such networking for the trainers to discuss their work, the partner-CSO stories and challenges was invaluable and could generate more synergies between the trainers, including a **naturally emerging referral system** (see [23]). **[29]**

2.2 Pillar 2 - Project effectiveness and efficiency

The evaluation under Pillar 2 adopted a different approach from those used in Pillars 1 and 3. As per the TOR, the evaluation team selected four partner-CSOs based on criteria agreed with the CRF implementing team. The evaluators then employed a "system in the room" approach[11], whenever it was possible, to assess the performance of the partner-CSOs within the framework of the grants allocated in CRF Phase II.

*How well have the **partner-CSOs implemented their projects**?*

*What worked / did not / why? Have there been any **positive or negative externalities**? What were the situations and what can we learn from them?*

*To what extent (if at all) have **children or families** experienced improvements in their **wellbeing, resilience, or social inclusion**? What about the other stakeholders?*

*Have **marginalised groups** been identified and engaged within the CRF projects if and when appropriate?*

This approach allowed for a deeper dive into how effectively partner CSOs implemented their projects, highlighting both success stories and challenges. The methodology for selection of case studies, outlined in Annexe 2, considered several factors, such as project outcomes and organizational growth with CRF support, the size of CRF funding secured, thematic and geographic diversity, ability to engage children facing multiple vulnerabilities. The summary of findings under Pillar 2, as presented below, is also **enriched by results of consultations with all 15 partner-CSOs**, including those voiced at the interactive sessions on 23 and 24 September 2025 at an all-CRF event in Uzhhorod, Zakarpattia oblast, Ukraine.

2.2.1. Summary observations and findings under Pillar 2

A distinctive feature of Pillar 2 is that, unlike the other Pillars, it **incorporates the perspectives of project beneficiaries** through key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents and caregivers of participating children. This enabled the evaluation team to explore whether, and why, children and families experienced improvements in their wellbeing, resilience or social inclusion. **Direct engagement with project beneficiaries offered deeper insight into the value of CRF-supported projects for those they were designed to serve.**

Beneficiary perspectives (parents and caregivers, without directly interviewing children) were included in three of the four case studies through KIIs and FGDs. In one case study, interviews with parents were not conducted to uphold the "Do No Harm" principle, following guidance from the partner-CSO. Within this Pillar, particular attention was paid to the different approaches grantees used to engage marginalised groups and how successful these approaches were. A key limitation is that findings are mostly drawn from four case study CSOs and cannot reliably be extrapolated to all CRF Phase II partners. At the same time, many of the tendencies, challenges and lessons that emerged are highly relevant to the wider CRF partner-CSO cohort and the CSO landscape in Ukraine more generally.

To what extent have children, their families or other stakeholders improved their wellbeing, resilience or social inclusion?

Across the case studies, projects offered structured psychosocial support, safe spaces for play and learning, rehabilitative camps, legal and advocacy assistance to protect rights through international legal mechanisms, and support to parents in navigating services. Interviews and focus group discussions, particularly with

---

[11] This approach envisages triangulating qualitative information from various sources – including project implementors, organisational leadership, representatives of the beneficiaries, other CSOs, government partners, businesses and donors. Sourcing information from a broader spectrum of key informants enables the evaluators to assemble a well-rounded narrative that is validated through multiple sources.

caregivers, **indicate that CRF-supported projects contributed positively to children's emotional and psychological rehabilitation and social integration.** The effect of CRF-supported interventions was frequently described as "strong" and "significant", with children becoming more emotionally stable, more confident and easier to engage.

One illustration is the Law and Democracy camp (see **2.2.2.**), where entry and exit assessments showed that over 70% of participating children improved on key indicators: anxiety levels fell in 82% of cases, 85% of children reported increased feelings of support and interaction, and 82% reported sleeping better. The camp also enhanced children's physical health and inspired some children to pursue sports afterwards. In one case, a child was inspired to buy a gym membership and pursued sports after the camp. Children attending Happy Bootcamps run by MOM plus ME (see **2.2.5.**), who had previously felt "second-class" due to institutional backgrounds, reported feeling the same as "home-raised children", which helped to restore a sense of equality. Some children, particularly adolescents, described feeling "liberated" and were no longer shy about performing or going on stage. Parents and caregivers in other case studies also reported positive changes in children's emotional state, social skills and sense of safety, as well as improved access to entitlements and services.

Art therapy (including work with clay, drawing and sculpting) provided by Save Ukraine (see **2.2.3.**) was highlighted as highly effective for psychological recovery, enabling children to develop emotional awareness and self-expression. For children with motor disorders, working with materials such as clay contributed to muscle development and was associated with improved formulation of thoughts. Legal assistance provided by the Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR) (see **2.2.4.**) also played an important role in safeguarding children's rights and supporting their recovery by amplifying their voices and offering hope for justice. **As a result of a CRF-supported initiative, RCHR successfully filed eight complaints covering twelve children with the relevant UN Committee** regarding child rights violations such as deportation, forced passport issuance and militarisation of Ukrainian children in occupied territories. This legal strategy, especially the filing of individual complaints on behalf of child victims, is considered a unique pilot for Ukraine, with potential for future expansion.

CRF-supported projects also **brought benefits to parents, caregivers and families**. Therapeutic approaches often engaged the entire family system, for example by helping caregivers reinterpret their experiences and enabling holistic progress for the family. Parents gained access to professional information and advice from experts on legal issues, social services and care for children with disabilities, helping them resolve bureaucratic challenges that they had previously been unable to address. Many parents found a crucial community of like-minded people where they could share experiences, exchange advice and receive emotional support, and where they felt "not alone". Some also experienced a temporary release, over a period of several days, from constant caregiving demands, such as cooking and cleaning.

Some CRF-supported initiatives contributed to institutional change by enhancing the capacity, efficiency and overall impact of government institutions. For example, collaboration between RCHR and the Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights under the Ombudsman's Office of Ukraine helped bridge gaps in government legal services for children affected by war and enabled critical legal work focused on child rights protection.

What challenges have partner CSOs faced during implementation?

Limited and insecure funding (in general, rather than under CRF) emerged as a primary challenge affecting all CSOs interviewed for the case studies, with implications for their operations, long-term planning and sustainability. This reflects a broader pattern across the Ukrainian CSO sector. Although development funding for Ukraine has increased from public and private donors in response to growing needs, competition for funds has risen sharply since 2022. With many new CSOs emerging after 2022, the number of applications for open calls has increased significantly. One interviewee cited an open call that received 900 applications

for only five grants. Scarcity of funding has also pushed some grantees to accept terms they might not have agreed to had they had greater choice of donors. For instance, many donors offer short-term project funding of five to six months while requiring reporting procedures that are as complex as those used for longer-term support.

Staff shortages and unexpected staff turnover during project implementation were frequently reported as wide-spread challenges. Some of the qualified staff decided to move abroad due to war-related challenges, concern for their families or children, or in search of better career prospects. In some cases, staff turnover on CRF projects disrupted project implementation, slowed progress and required additional management efforts to onboard new team members. Save Ukraine, for example, experienced three iterations of project manager appointments during the project lifecycle. Some initiatives, such as MOM plus ME's *"Soloveiky"* (nightingales) speech therapy programme, also faced difficulties in recruiting specialists to work with children in villages and remote areas. These experiences point to the need for proactive strategies to mitigate staff turnover, such as early succession planning, formalisation of internal policies and close collaboration with donors to sustain programme quality and continuity.

Another critical challenge for CSO partners was mental health strain and psychological burnout. This is closely linked to the broader context of Ukraine living under constant threat, with sleepless nights during air raid attacks and persistent fear for family safety. The burden on CSO teams is further exacerbated by the nature of their work, which involves supporting war-affected, marginalised and traumatised children. Under these circumstances, CSO staff need to serve as an emotional anchor for the children they support. One project manager noted that a participant in an upcoming camp had just lost his father, a Ukrainian defender, and expressed concern about how emotionally challenging it would be to provide the necessary support. Another expert described working with a child who had witnessed his mother being shot in front of him.

At the same time, some interviewees emphasised that they derive meaning from helping those in need and contributing to nurturing Ukraine's new generation. It is important to recognise that project teams are constantly exposed to dual stress: they are living through war-related trauma themselves while supporting others. In this context, it is essential to ensure that employees "help others while not burning themselves down". **Addressing multiple exposures to trauma requires mental health support for beneficiaries and project teams as part of organisational strategies**. Several partner CSOs suggested incorporating mental health support for staff working with vulnerable children, either through individual therapy sessions or group supervision for project psychologists. This, in their view, would help teams become more resilient and better able to sustain both their work and their own wellbeing.

What worked in CRF-funded projects?

Across all case studies and through broader consultations, **partner-CSOs consistently highlighted CRF's funding flexibility as a major advantage**. The donor's readiness to approve minor reallocations of funds within project budgets, for example where savings occurred, was particularly valued. When CSOs needed to adapt projects "on the go" in response to a changing context, CRF demonstrated notable agility, enabling more effective and context-driven support for children on the ground. Partners underlined that this flexibility was rooted in trust between CRF and its grantees and often generated unexpected results and positive externalities. Examples include the production of 500 booklets on child rights protection for Ukrainian schools by RCHR, a rehabilitation camp for Save Ukraine shelter residents, and increased funding for a programme venue for MOM plus ME.

CSO partners also emphasised the value of simple and straightforward reporting requirements, which helped them save organisational resources and focus on core activities. They appreciated the implementing team's human-centred approach and responsiveness when urgent clarification was needed or when partners required additional help to understand specific procedures and requirements. According to partner CSOs,

this flexibility, trust and human-centred approach lie at the heart of the CRF programme and would be essential to preserve in any potential Phase III.

One positive externality of CRF support has been the synergies and collaborations built among CSO partners, particularly within the selected case studies. A meeting early in the CRF project facilitated these partnerships. For example, RCHR works closely with two CRF partners, Save Ukraine and MOM plus ME. The collaboration with Save Ukraine, which began in 2022, is particularly strong. Save Ukraine facilitates the return of deported children, while RCHR prepares international complaints on their behalf. MOM plus ME invited RCHR experts to deliver child rights training within its Happy Bootcamp. CSO teams featured in the case studies expressed strong support for organising future joint all-grantee meetings, as well as thematic network meetings for CRF partners, should a Phase III of the programme take place.

CSO partners also noted the **value of CRF funding in supporting twelve months of operational activities, which is longer than typical short-term project support**. This medium-term funding helped partner CSOs refine their programmatic approaches, experiment and plan with greater certainty.

Interviews with CSO management and project staff indicate that OD trainings, particularly in areas such as gender policy, project management and fundraising, were considered useful, especially for organisations with limited grant experience. **A crucial lesson learned was the importance of formalising internal policies (for example, fundraising, procurement and gender policies) for professional scaling and ensuring consistency, particularly in contexts of staff turnover**.

What in the CRF-supported projects did not work as intended? What prevented the projects from achieving their goals or not achieving optimal outcomes?

Based on interviews and broader feedback through interactive exercises, the **challenges and difficulties faced by CRF-supported projects generally fell into two broad categories**: external logistical hurdles related to the ongoing war and travel, and internal administrative or organisational constraints related to managing resources and collaborating with the implementing team.

Importantly, feedback from parents and beneficiaries was overwhelmingly positive, with many stating that they experienced no inconveniences or issues in the organisation or delivery of programmes. The challenges identified were largely absorbed and managed by the implementing organisations.

The following external and logistical challenges were highlighted by interviewees:
- **Difficulties with transportation and ticketing.** Securing transport, particularly train tickets, for families travelling to camps was a major challenge. For one organisation, logistics were described as "the most difficult thing", and the process of obtaining tickets from Dnipro to Lviv was characterised as a "quest".
- **Security and location constraints.** Security considerations were a continuous challenge and required staff to remain constantly alert. One organisation struggled to find alternative locations to Kyiv that had bomb shelters and suitable facilities (halls, sports halls and similar) while remaining close enough to Kyiv to attract well-known guests and specialised experts.
- **Project continuity risk due to evacuation.** Considerations of security as interpreted by project beneficiaries affected project implementation, as families sometimes moved to safer areas or even abroad part-way through a project, which meant that the organisation could not ensure that the beneficiary completed the full treatment programme.

Several challenges also arose in relation to project management and implementation, although implementing organisations generally praised the donor for its understanding and support in resolving them:

- **Tranche payment practices and sustainability.** The CRF mechanism, in line with standard donor practice, required organisations to cover 10% of the budget upfront, with a delayed final tranche paid after reporting. This posed difficulties for one organisation that lacked internal funds for administrative expenses and was forced into challenging negotiations with suppliers on post-payment terms. The practice was described as causing "a lot of organisational problems" and placing organisations in dilemmas regarding compromises on transparent practice (see similar observations in Pillar 1 and recommendation [13]).
- **Communication gaps with the donor.** One organisation reported occasional delays in coordination and in receiving approvals for certain processes, describing some communication moments as "quite lengthy". This created minor strain, particularly around reporting periods.
- **Financial and budgeting constraints.** One organisation experienced difficulties in managing the budget after realising that it had allocated insufficient funding for venue rental in its original application. Addressing this issue required coordination with the donor to reallocate funds, transferring money saved under other budget lines to cover the venue shortfall.
- **Scheduling difficulties with OD training.** Coordinating OD trainings proved challenging (see Pillar 1 and recommendations [14], [15], [17] and [20]) because partner organisations were not informed at the outset about the time commitments required for each programme. As a result, staff often had to adjust their work schedules to attend sessions, and in some cases missed trainings altogether due to overlaps with project implementation responsibilities.

Have marginalised groups been identified and engaged within the CRF projects if and when appropriate?

Marginalised and vulnerable groups were clearly identified and actively engaged within all CRF-funded projects across the case studies and constituted the primary target groups of CRF-supported interventions. The projects focused strongly on children with physical disabilities and war-related injuries, as well as on those with developmental challenges such as ADHD or autism spectrum disorders. Children who are orphans or without parental care were the primary target group within the MOM plus ME Foundation. In addition, internally displaced families and those living in active combat zones, as well as children of defenders and war veterans, were specifically identified and engaged. Ethnic minority groups, such as Roma children, were also identified and included.

The projects utilised a range of methods and specialised approaches to ensure the inclusion and appropriate support of these groups. CSOs intentionally mixed groups to integrate children with varied needs, promoting the understanding that "children are no different" and fostering empathy among peers. Organisations worked to sustain an atmosphere of mutual respect among children, proactively addressing behavioural issues and preventing bullying based on any perceived differences. Psychologists further adapted activities for children with physical and mental health conditions to ensure that each child could participate meaningfully.

2.2.2. Law and Democracy. A Model of Ukraine where Children Heal and Belong

The Law and Democracy Foundation (L&D) was established in Lviv in the 1990s and has since worked successfully as a legal aid organisation facilitating access to justice for people with disabilities. Today, Law and Democracy remains among the very few Ukrainian CSOs operating in this narrower thematic domain.

For the team's native city of Lviv, the onset of the full-scale invasion was marked by the arrival of thousands of Ukrainians relocated from the south and east of the country to the relative safety of western Ukraine. Physically wounded and emotionally traumatised, many internally displaced persons (IDPs) were not ready to integrate into a new life.

In this context, L&D identified a growing need for the rehabilitation of one of the most vulnerable groups: children who had fled the horrors of war and were deeply traumatised. Building on its experience of supporting children with disabilities, the team decided to launch a children's rehabilitation camp. A unique place in the heart of the Ukrainian Carpathian Mountains was chosen as a venue for the camps: Syanky sanatorium in Lviv oblast. Since June 2022, Law and Democracy has held 11 iterations of the rehabilitation camp called "Everything Will be Ukraine!".

The L&D team decided to focus on children and adolescents aged 9–15 who had suffered from the war. The project paid particular attention to internally displaced children, those evacuated from combat zones, children who have been wounded or otherwise affected by the war, children from frontline areas, and children of Ukrainian defenders, veterans, those killed or held in captivity, as well as children with disabilities. Most of these children-beneficiaries of L&D programming face multiple, overlapping vulnerabilities.

"This camp is the best model of Ukraine, where every child is valued with all their characteristics, needs, and pains - receive care and acceptance, and where the talents and efforts of all children are valued." – Natalia, a camp psychologist.

Leveraging CRF support

Organising such an ambitious initiative as a child rehabilitation camp requires substantial resources, particularly funding. Initially supported by German funders in 2022, the L&D team actively sought additional donors. In this regard, CRF support has been instrumental, enabling the organisation to continue, adjust, experiment and improve. L&D has been supported by CRF since 2023 across both Phase I and Phase II with GBP 70,701 allocated in Phase I and GBP 129,000 in Phase II.

CRF has also invested in L&D's organisational growth through the organisational development (OD) component of the programme. In 2023, CRF supported the development of L&D's child protection policy to guide the organisation's work and ensure the safety and well-being of child beneficiaries. Capacity support continued throughout CRF Phase II. L&D took part in almost all trainings provided within the CRF OD component, with fundraising particularly valued for its practical usefulness to the organisation. Since attracting funds is the number one challenge for CSOs, and L&D is no exception, the team appreciated CRF's support in strengthening its fundraising capacity. Following the general training programme, L&D requested individual consultations with the trainer to receive guidance on developing its own fundraising policy. Project leader Dmytro Vitvitskyi notes that the development of a fundraising policy tailored to the organisation's needs was a crucial milestone in its history and an important investment by the donor.

In parallel to these developments, the organisation levelled up its communications capabilities. Partners and stakeholders noted that over the last year L&D's outreach on social media became more regular, the number of creative digital materials increased, and effective reach expanded, with some materials reaching up to 4,000 unique views. This capacity support strengthened the organisation's maturity and equipped it with the skills needed to address the many challenges encountered during project implementation.

How is the camp organised and why is it a success?

In today's context in Ukraine, children have experienced more than five years of isolation, initially because of COVID-19 and subsequently due to the full-scale invasion. Security concerns and displacement mean that over 35% of Ukrainian children study online. As a result, many children lack the communication and socialisation skills needed to interact with others.

One of the key challenges in setting up the camp was to create an environment where all children feel equal and accepted. The camp prioritises diversity and inclusion and pays particular attention to children with disabilities and diverse forms of inclusion. Among the participants, close to 60% are children with special

educational needs and/or disabilities, including mild to moderate musculoskeletal disorders, injuries and vision problems. Almost every group includes children on the autism spectrum, children with physical impairments or those with war-related injuries. It is therefore essential that the camp is a space free from violence and discrimination. To achieve this, organisers establish clear anti-bullying rules from the outset and work deliberately to create an atmosphere of teamwork and mutual respect. A supportive environment is nurtured in which children feel valued and accepted, which in turn fosters trust and openness within the group.

Beyond this, the camp emphasises positive practices that build a sense of trust and belonging. For instance, children enjoy an exercise called "Sun Hugs". Sun Hugs symbolise the emotional support and warmth that children receive in a safe environment. This approach fosters trust and openness among the children, allowing them to express their feelings and experiences more freely. It is also significant that nearly 80% of the organising team are internally displaced persons themselves. These specialists bring personal experience of living through the war, which enables them to understand better the needs of children and their families.

Dmytro Vitvitskyi, the project leader, acknowledges that one of the team's greatest challenges every time is selecting participants for a limited group from amongst all those eager to participate and in need of rehabilitation. Thanks to productive collaboration with local authorities, including in frontline areas, the team is able to reach those most in need of rehabilitation. Word of mouth from families whose children had previously participated in the camp also supports outreach. As a result, each camp cohort receives 250–300 applications for a maximum of 26 vacant spots, meaning that roughly one in ten applicants can be selected. Such a small group allows for bespoke support and adequate attention to each child. The team always prioritises the most vulnerable children, as they are in greatest need of rehabilitation. During the preparation stage, the team carefully studies each child's circumstances and communicates with parents to determine the needs and approaches most suitable for every participant.

Ultimately, the success of the rehabilitation camp lies in the application of a systemic approach to every stage of the process. This begins with the selection and preparation of the camp cohort, continues through the organisation of a rehabilitation programme that combines physical and psychological components, and is reinforced through post-camp activities. The project focuses on the holistic rehabilitation of children, with the camp aiming to restore both body and spirit.

The first step on arrival at the camp is a comprehensive health examination to assess each child's overall condition and identify any possible health issues. Special attention is given to ophthalmology and eye problems, which are common among children due to remote learning and much time spent indoors. Parents note that such comprehensive diagnostics are extremely valuable, since many families cannot afford proper medical check-ups for their children.

Another key to the camp's success is its individual approach to each child's rehabilitation. This involves not only knowing the child's name before the camp begins, but also understanding their specific characteristics, needs, conditions and talents, and adapting the approach accordingly.

At camp, mornings start at 7:30 a.m. with morning exercises. The programme then includes activities such as psychological rehabilitation, physical therapy, corrective gymnastics, aqua aerobics in the pool and mountain hikes or walks. The intensive schedule continues until lights out at 10:00 p.m. With such a lively routine, children simply have no time for gadgets or mobile phones.

"My son came home with a detailed diagnostic report, covering everything from eyesight to cardiogram and general blood analysis. As a mother, I now understand what I need to pay attention to." – mother of a camp participant.

"We underwent the examination at the camp, and they diagnosed conjunctivitis. We are grateful, because it is very important to detect such things in time." – father of a camp participant

"What amazed me most was how the staff already knew every child by name before we even arrived. They did their homework - and did it well." - father of a camp participant

For a month following the camp, the team of doctors, rehabilitation specialists and psychologists continues to provide online support for the children, offering consultations both to them and to their parents. This helps to consolidate the results achieved, repeat the exercises and explain them to parents. Post-camp support may also include engaging and assisting parents, for example by providing training and clarifying the specific needs or conditions identified in their children, as well as possible treatment advice. In addition, children often become friends and stay in touch after the camp. Some have maintained connections since the very first camps in 2022.

The results of the camp are impressive. **Entry and exit testing show improvements in more than 70% of children. Anxiety levels decreased in 82% of participants. A sense of support and interaction increased in 85%. Feelings of loneliness decreased in 84% and sleep improved in 82% of participating children.**

Project impact through children's stories

Feeling part of the community. A., 14 years old, arrived at the camp as a quiet and withdrawn teenager. Thanks to the camp, he experienced acceptance and trust, which allowed him to reveal his talents and unique qualities. He became an active participant in all activities, showing significant progress in socialisation and communication. A. attended every online meeting after the camp, always wearing his camp T-shirt, as if to show everyone that he is proud to be part of the camp alumni community.

Child from Donetsk oblast coping with multi-layer trauma. L. lost her father during a shelling. At the camp, she received physical rehabilitation to recover from injuries sustained during the attack. Psychological support helped her to stabilise emotionally and adapt to new living conditions. Through her participation in the camp, L. began playing volleyball, which contributed to her socialisation and the development of new skills.

2.2.3. Save Ukraine. The Art of Healing. Rebuilding Lives with Clay, Colour, and Compassion.

The Kyiv-based Save Ukraine organisation was established in 2014 with a mission to facilitate the safe return of Ukrainian children forcibly deported to Russia, Belarus or the temporarily occupied territories. Over time, the Save Ukraine team established itself as a national leader in child protection and rehabilitation. "Every child matters" is the principle at the heart of its work and continues to guide its interventions with children and families.

Today, Save Ukraine employs over 250 staff members, including in-house teams of psychologists. The organisation does not work through sub-granting, preferring to maintain direct control over service delivery. Its facilities include a central hub in Kyiv and two centres nearby, enabling it to provide a broad spectrum of support from rescue and immediate assistance through to rehabilitation and reintegration.

Leveraging CRF support

CRF partnered with Save Ukraine under both Phase I and Phase II. The organisation received GBP 70,696 and GBP 103,563 under Phase I and Phase II respectively. These substantial grant allocations placed it among the most heavily supported partner-CSOs across both Phases and reflect the high level of trust built between the CRF implementing team and its partner. The scale of investment in Save Ukraine also underscores its organisational maturity and track record.

Based on internal reporting, self-assessment results and positive recognition by peer organisations and development sector professionals, Save Ukraine was identified within the evaluation as one of CRF's high-performing partners. According to its self-assessment, Save Ukraine demonstrated a high level of organisational maturity, particularly in strategic and programme design, programme management and child protection. At the same time, the organisation identified human resource management and staff mental health as priority areas for further development, demonstrating the capacity for self-reflection and a readiness to grow. Despite the concentration of assistance in the capital, Save Ukraine has distinguished itself through its ability to reach beneficiaries across Ukraine.

Overcoming challenges faced by Save Ukraine

The realities of the ongoing war in Ukraine pose constant risks to Save Ukraine, its staff and facilities. In July 2025, one of the organisation's offices was damaged during shelling, disrupting operations, although fortunately no employees were injured. Following this incident, the organisation moved most of its activities to the centre in Hatne village in Kyiv oblast.

Partly due to security challenges, Save Ukraine has faced issues with staffing and staff turnover. Over the course of CRF-funded project implementation, the organisation at different times had three different project managers to oversee the CRF-funded grant. These sudden changes affected the pace of implementation and required additional management effort for onboarding. However, the organisation ultimately restored effective communication with CRF and achieved the expected results.

In some cases, security concerns also influenced decisions by families whose children were undergoing rehabilitation to move abroad prematurely, before the active phase of the rehabilitation process was completed. This has been a real challenge for the organisation, as Save Ukraine invests considerable effort in the rehabilitation of each child but cannot guarantee that the child will remain in the programme until stabilisation is achieved.

One of the principal challenges faced by Save Ukraine psychologists is helping deeply traumatised children and supporting their effective recovery. In Save Ukraine shelters, psychologists work with mentally and emotionally unstable individuals whose condition may deteriorate further during missile and drone attacks, air raid alerts, unstable schedules and exhaustion caused by lack of sleep. In these circumstances, psychologists require mental health support themselves, such as group supervision or individual therapy sessions. While approaches are tailored to each child, children tend to mirror the stress responses of their parents. Effective engagement of parents and caregivers is therefore an integral part of the Save Ukraine approach. However, when parents are unwilling to make efforts and work with their children, therapists have limited scope to achieve sustainable results.

Art therapy as a path to recovery

Save Ukraine operates on a "Three R" model of rescue, recovery and reintegration, ensuring a full-cycle approach to rehabilitation. First, children are returned from deportation or occupation using the organisation's networks and available mechanisms. Upon return, through the Open Healing and Ford Home networks, children and their families receive immediate support such as food, hygiene supplies, clothing and shelter. Once basic needs are met, the organisation focuses on rehabilitation and social reintegration, recognising that trauma lingers long after physical safety is restored.

Art therapy is at the heart of the Save Ukraine approach to children's recovery and reintegration and is embedded in the organisation's philosophy.

The centre in Hatne, a suburb of Kyiv, has established itself as an art space designed as an imaginative environment for children. For example, the centre features a large blue whale, a 250-metre tent where children create small whales from various materials under the guidance of art therapists.

"They need psychological rehabilitation. Art therapy is engaging, effective, and transformative." – Oleksiy Smorodynov, Save Ukraine Operations Director.

These sessions help children process trauma, become more aware of their emotions and rediscover joy and playfulness.

The Save Ukraine art therapy model has been recognised internationally, with partnerships spanning Germany, the Netherlands and Austria. The organisation's work is guided by international standards of art therapy and adapted to address the needs of children traumatised by war. In the future, Save Ukraine plans to combine creativity and innovation by adding 3D modelling to the therapy programme.

How did flexibility of CRF enhance project results?

Save Ukraine has valued the flexibility and agility demonstrated by CRF during Phase II. At the Save Ukraine team's request, CRF approved the repurposing of savings that arose during project implementation. **Due to these timely reallocations, Save Ukraine was able to organise a 14-day rehabilitation retreat for 20 children in the Ukrainian Carpathian Mountains, an activity outside the original project plan**. The camp had a profound therapeutic effect on children, supporting their rehabilitation in the relative safety of western Ukraine and without air raids. For many children it was the first time in months or even years that they were able to travel and feel carefree. Parents of children who attended the camp shared that it was the first time in a long period when they felt joyful and hopeful about the future.

In addition, project funding supported outreach and awareness-raising efforts, including a powerful art exhibition titled "Stolen Childhood", held in Kyiv in May 2025. The exhibition was built around a distinctive artistic idea in which adult artists reinterpreted children's drawings, sharing the experience of young survivors with the outside world. The exhibition underscored that protecting and rehabilitating Ukraine's youngest survivors of war is both crucial and urgent.

Including children of all abilities

Save Ukraine strives to assist children across all categories of vulnerability, not only those evacuated from war zones. The foundation also provides support to children of veterans and fallen soldiers through active collaboration with veterans' organisations. Its doors are open to the local community, especially children from Hatne or Irpin who show signs of trauma or abuse. Children with disabilities, developmental delays or survivors of sexual violence receive priority attention.

Save Ukraine intentionally mixes groups of children with and without disabilities to foster empathy, acceptance and values of care and inclusion. "He is just like you," staff remind participants, cultivating mutual

respect. Government agencies frequently refer children with complex trauma or disabilities to Save Ukraine, recognising its ability to deliver services beyond what state institutions can offer.

Dutch experts regularly collaborate with Save Ukraine, sharing good practice for working with children with disabilities. A significant part of the work involves supporting parents to accept and respond to their children's specific needs. As noted by Olena, a psychologist, approximately 80 per cent of a child's healing progress is determined by the resilience of their parent or caregiver. For that reason, psychologists devote time and effort to working with parents.

Measurable impact

Within Phase II, Save Ukraine supported 321 unique children and 205 adults. Among children in group therapy, from 70 to 80% show signs of developmental or educational delays. Art therapy and group psychology have proved effective in helping children become more socially active and engaged. There have been examples where a child who previously refused to take part in group activities gradually became more active within the group, which in turn contributed to improvements in school performance.

Moreover, there are cases where children begin to speak after long periods of silence. The available evidence indicates that art therapy helps children become more open and connected with others, as well as more joyful. In some cases, art therapy has revealed that children who appeared vulnerable and disabled were in fact gifted and talented. Psychologists who were able to create an atmosphere of friendliness and acceptance helped children to reveal their unique potential.

Steps toward healing

Attention to child's gift suggests path for recovery. Olena, a Save Ukraine psychologist, was working with a child with echolalia, a condition marked by repetitive speech. A boy would repeat everything he heard, and it was impossible to stop him. Olena was trying to help him when she discovered that the child had perfect pitch. With no musical training, he could replicate any piece of classical music by ear. The boy's musical talent has opened new pathways for his growth and ultimate healing.

Finding pathways that work. One of the boys in Save Ukraine therapy was nicknamed "33 Misfortunes" for his disruptive behaviour and lack of empathy. Aggressive and withdrawn initially, he would beat his peers and bully them. It later emerged that he had a neurological impairment and was diagnosed with shadowing in the frontal lobes. He could only grasp explanations based on logic and cause-and-effect relationships, while his emotions and capacity for empathy were underdeveloped. The approach that worked for him was to explain the consequences of his behaviour. With tailored support, he began to understand consequences and regulate his behaviour better.

2.2.4. Regional Center for Human Rights. Restorative Justice – a Pillar of Rehabilitation for Ukraine's Deported Children

The Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR) was established in 2013 in Crimea and soon relocated to Kyiv following the Russian annexation of the peninsula. The organisation focuses on advancing human rights through international and national legal remedies.

As of 2023, at least 19,500 Ukrainian children[12] had been forcibly deported to Russia, according to the Commissioner for Children's Rights. Reports indicate that Russia plans to re-educate these children, erase their identity and assimilate them into the Russian society.

With CRF support, RCHR launched an unprecedented legal initiative in response to the mass deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia. The project aims at restoring the justice for children forcibly taken from Ukraine by enabling their legal guardians to file complaints with international mechanisms, including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the International Criminal Court (ICC). This marks the first initiative of its kind in Ukraine.

The initiative was born out of a clear gap in international accountability. Currently, there is no state-supported mechanism for preparing complaints to international judicial or quasi-judicial bodies. In practice, legal services are largely limited to restoring lost or damaged documents, including those affected by forced changes of citizenship status.

Leveraging CRF support

RCHR was selected as a grantee under Phase II of CRF, receiving a grant of GBP 122,375. According to its self-assessment, RCHR demonstrated an above-average level of organisational development, with scores ranging between 7 and 10 across all organisational capacity dimensions. RCHR was one of eight Kyiv-based organisations supported in Phase II and brought a distinctive thematic focus to the portfolio. Unlike the majority of CRF grantees concentrating on resilience-focused programming, RCHR focused on improving access to justice and ensuring effective legal remedies for children.

"We were often asked in Geneva and New York why no complaints had been filed by children themselves. That's when we realized we needed to act. [...] A child's recovery is impossible without their voice being heard and justice restored. If the sense of justice and safety isn't reestablished, it can lead to feelings of revenge, especially in adolescents." – Kateryna Rashevska, RCHR Lead on International Justice and Legal Analysis.

This unique orientation filled an important niche within the broader CRF portfolio. Its combination of organisational maturity, strategic clarity and thematic distinctiveness positioned RCHR as one of CRF top performers. Highlighting its story enriches the overall understanding of CRF's impact, particularly in the areas of child rights and legal empowerment, which are otherwise underrepresented within the cohort.

The project supported by CRF includes three components. The first centres on legal action – that is filing legal complaints to international bodies such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the ICC. With CRF's support, RCHR submitted the first complaints and developed a legal strategy that allows parents and social workers to submit complaints on behalf of children, complete with evidence templates and submission algorithms. **As of October 2025, eight formal complaints had been submitted concerning 12 children, with 18 case assessments prepared**. These complaints address violations such as illegal deportation, forced Russification and institutionalised bullying in occupied territories.

The second component is educational and is designed to train children in international humanitarian law and their rights through interactive formats. The third component is dedicated to research. Under its auspices, the team developed a methodology to examine the psychological impact of deportation, including what experts call the "lost connection syndrome" - a trauma linked to severed ties with homeland, language and family. According to the experts, defining the "lost connection syndrome" enables more effective

---

[12] Radio Svoboda. (2023, March 28). Мінреінтеграції повідомило дані про депортованих до РФ дітей. Retrieved from https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-deportatsiya-dity-minreintegratsiyi/32339081.html

psychosocial rehabilitation by tailoring support to the child's specific trauma. In addition, it provides grounds for criminal proceedings, allowing deportation to be classified not only as a war crime but also as a crime against humanity. The team plans to submit this methodology to the International Criminal Court, as incorporating such documents into cases could result in deportation and forced displacement being qualified as a crime against humanity.

Challenges of everyday work with trauma-affected children

Interacting with child-beneficiaries presents significant challenges for the project team due to the need for a delicate and trauma-informed approach. RCHR interventions are guided by the "Do No Harm" principle. For example, one case involved a boy who witnessed his mother being shot in front of him. The child was deeply traumatised, and the team made a deliberate decision not to interview him directly, instead speaking with the child's legal guardian. At times, guardians request that complaints be anonymised, particularly when they have relatives still living in the occupied territories, and the team honours these requests.

Helping traumatised children and hearing their difficult stories places a significant psychological burden on the RCHR lawyers and project managers, leading to increased risk of emotional burnout. Providing psycho-emotional support to the project team is therefore essential, as it strengthens resilience and protects mental health. Experts working directly with children also require a safe and supportive space to share their experiences and process the challenges they encounter. Creating such opportunities as part of the next project would help ensure that the team can continue delivering effective support to their beneficiaries.

Flexibility of CRF project funding = positive externalities

Collaboration with Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science was not part of the original project plan but became possible thanks to the flexibility of CRF and the timely approval for reallocating some project funds. The Ministry proposed launching a national competition for teachers to develop lesson plans on international child law based on RCHR's child rights handbook. **As a result, 75 educators across Ukraine delivered these lessons to students from grades 1 to 8. CRF support enabled the printing of 500 additional handbooks for distribution to the winning schools**.

Due to the success of this pilot CRF-supported initiative, **UNICEF has expressed interest in scaling the handbook to every school library nationwide**. The wide dissemination of RCHR's handbook is a tangible and lasting project result, helping to ensure that children across Ukraine learn about their rights and the mechanisms available for child rights protection.

Strategic collaboration across CRF partners

RCHR works closely with other organisations in the field of child protection, forming a collaborative network that shares expertise and resources. While RCHR provides specialised legal support, its partners offer direct access to children and long-term rehabilitation services. This synergy helps to ensure more holistic care for affected children. RCHR works directly with two CRF partners - Save Ukraine and MOM plus ME - and has conducted a series of child rights training sessions for children supported by both organisations.

The collaboration with Save Ukraine, which began in 2022, is particularly strong. Save Ukraine facilitates the return of deported children, while RCHR helps to prepare international complaints on their behalf. A strategic meeting at the early stages of the CRF Phase II further strengthened this partnership. The RCHR team strongly supports organising future joint all-grantee meetings or thematic network meetings of CRF partners, should Phase III of the CRF programme take place.

Justice takes time but it matters

Based on RCHR experience, cases submitted to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child or the International Criminal Court may take up to five years to be reviewed. With a growing number of complaints, these timelines may expand even further. The team, nonetheless, hopes that submitting at least 50 cases from Ukrainian children could prompt a pilot review.

RCHR firmly believes that every child has the right to justice and protection. Their stories must be heard and documented in ways that do not retraumatise them. Children deserve moral and material compensation, and perpetrators must be held accountable.

"If human rights defenders speak about Russia's crimes against children on global platforms attracting funding and visibility for themselves but the child never receives a ruling affirming their rights were violated – then justice has not been restored." – Kateryna Rashevska, RCHR Lead on International Justice and Legal Analysis.

This project is not just about legal action. It's about restoring dignity, amplifying children's voices, and ensuring that their trauma is not ignored, but addressed with compassion and accountability.

Project results through children's stories

Family from Mariupol launches an ICC appeal. A mother and daughter were deported from Mariupol, and the child was subjected to Russification in Crimea. After their return, RCHR helped them prepare a complaint to the ICC. RCHR's approach is to explain the complexity and duration of the process to avoid raising unrealistic expectations. As Kateryna Rashevska, RCHR Lead on International Justice and Legal Analysis, recalls, the mother said, "We're not doing this for ourselves or for compensation. As a mother, I want to make sure this never happens to another child."

A boy bullied in occupation. A boy faced bullying in four different schools in the occupied territories. He refused to participate in Russian flag ceremonies or sing the anthem and openly called Russia an aggressor. His classmates threatened to kill him, evidence of which was found on his phone. His mother appealed to Russian police and the Ministry of Education, but nothing changed. The bullying was institutionalised and tolerated by school administrators. A complaint was filed on his behalf through international mechanisms. He now faces a long road of psychosocial rehabilitation.

A girl from Donetsk begins a healing journey. Invited to a high-level event, L., a girl from the city of Donetsk, was asked about her dreams – and burst into tears. Later, she found support, friendship and understanding among adults. She underwent rehabilitation and worked with a psychologist. This helped her realise that the attention she received was not fleeting. Because she had suffered specific violations and crimes, her case would not be ignored; it would lead to accountability.

2.2.5. MOM plus ME: Rebuilding Childhoods for Most Vulnerable Children

The MOM plus ME Charitable Foundation has been operating for 18 years, consistently focusing on supporting the most vulnerable children. Its work prioritises orphans, children deprived of parental care, and those who have temporarily lost parental guardianship. Through long-term commitment and targeted interventions, the Foundation has established itself as a key player in safeguarding and promoting the well-being of these child groups.

In 2007, the Foundation started off by organising festivals and providing targeted assistance to children living in orphanages. Over time, the programmatic focus shifted in response to emerging needs. During the COVID-19 pandemic and following the onset of the full-scale invasion, the MOM plus ME team made a strategic move towards supporting child rehabilitation and aiding foster and guardian families.

Partnership with CRF

MOM plus ME entered the partnership with CRF having previously worked with only one or two small-scale funders, with most financial support coming from the private sector and corporate social responsibility initiatives. The CRF Phase II grant was one of the first larger grants received by MOM plus ME and represented a turning point in the foundation's development.

The foundation was initially designated as an alternate grantee in the selection process and was later advanced to a full-scale partner-CSO to receive a grant of GBP 93,841 from CRF. This support enabled the organisation to build its capacity and institutionalise its internal procedures. Although not part of the original selection pool, the organisation demonstrated significant progress and growth over the course of implementation. At the outset, organisational self-assessment revealed a wide range of capacity levels, with scores as low as 2 in areas such as technology use and programme design and as high as 10 in sustainable development. This spectrum reflected both notable challenges and clear strengths, positioning the organisation as a compelling example of potential-led growth.

MOM plus ME focuses on supporting children who have lost parents or caregivers, a group recognised as one of the most vulnerable of all children's groups. This sensitive and high-priority mandate adds clear value to the CRF portfolio, ensuring that the needs of the most at-risk children are directly addressed. The foundation also supports children with disabilities, Roma children, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and children of veterans.

What challenges has the organisation faced during project implementation?

Initially, MOM plus ME encountered challenges that are common among organisations new to grant management and operations. One of the first issues was that the Foundation staff initially underestimated costs for some key budget items, such as venue rental. As a result, within the originally estimated budget the organisation was unable to secure a location that met programme requirements, including the availability of bomb shelters. Despite this initial setback, MOM plus ME identified solutions in collaboration with CRF: one of the participating families provided the necessary technical equipment for the camp free of charge, while CRF approved a reallocation of funds that allowed an increase in the budget line for venue rental.

Transport arrangements presented another logistical hurdle. During the high season, tickets proved to be limited or unavailable, while children needed to travel in clustered groups – close to each other and to their families. Although this challenge had not been anticipated at the outset, the organisation has distilled a key lesson on the importance of making travel arrangements well in advance.

A further challenge concerned adapting meals to meet the medical needs of children with specific dietary requirements due to health conditions. Many children also arrived with histories of malnutrition, having lived in low-income households. The Foundation has been working tirelessly to ensure every child received care and support tailored to their needs.

"Path to Happiness": A CRF-supported initiative

With CRF funding, MOM plus ME launched the Path to Happiness project, aimed at improving the psycho-emotional well-being of war-affected orphaned children. The initiative is built around two key components: the Happy Boot Camp and the Rooms of Happiness.

"Happy Boot Camp" is a four-day family-style rehabilitation retreat designed to support rest, reconnection and resilience-building for children and their caregivers. Participants include foster families, guardians, adoptive families, patronage families, and family-type orphanages. For many caregivers, especially in extended families, the camp provides a rare break from daily responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning and caregiving, creating space for meaningful interaction. The camp strengthens family bonds, especially in newly formed or expanded families, and supports large households in nurturing deeper connections. Anastasiia, MOM plus ME Director, describes Happy Boot Camp as the "soul" of the organization's mission.

"At Camp, we get to do what we never have time for at home - play with our kids and talk to them" – a mother attending the Happy Boot Camp.

Beyond family bonds, Happy Boot Camp also fosters peer-to-peer connections. Families find new friends and allies, and those just beginning their foster journey learn from more experienced caregivers, some of whom are raising up to ten children. These exchanges provide practical advice on navigating state support and coping with common challenges faced by adoptive families.

"We are re just starting our journey as a big family. Sometimes it feels overwhelming. But here I feel heard. I soak up everyone's experience like a sponge" – a mother attending the Happy Boot Camp.

The camp integrates an educational component, bringing in social workers and legal experts to guide families through state aid processes, documentation and available resources. Each camp is tailored to the specific needs of participating families, ensuring relevance and impact. Recreational activities such as "Happy Starts" and integration picnics bring moments of laughter, bonding and lightness to children and parents alike.

Each Happy Boot Camp hosts up to 15 families and 120 children, and it is the only camp in Ukraine where families attend together.

When the camp session is over, MOM plus ME continues to support families through humanitarian aid and targeted assistance. One standout initiative is "Soloveiky" (nightingales), a speech therapy programme developed as a reaction to the fact that many families could not afford such treatment. This initiative provides necessary and life-changing therapy for children that was previously inaccessible.

Rooms of Happiness

The "Rooms of Happiness" is another unique initiative of MOM plus ME funded by CRF. It focuses on children removed from abusive homes who often end up in hospitals under temporary protection status. Though physically healthy, they remain in hospitals, sometimes for six to nine months, which is far beyond the legal three-to-seven-day window. These children are emotionally devastated and isolated from education, development and family contact. Hospitals, unequipped to care for them long term, tend to see them as a burden.

The organisation's team is eligible to receive only minimal information about these children, usually limited to their name and age. The length of each child's hospital stay may vary, creating additional challenges for MOM plus ME in terms of resource planning and ensuring consistent emotional support. The MOM plus ME team and volunteers are often the only adults who spend time with these children, playing, talking and offering care. In some hospitals, the team has created play spaces and delivers toys, clothing and therapeutic sessions, including art therapy. One of the foundation's core goals is to help these children rebuild trust in adults and feel safe again. MOM plus ME is the only organisation in Ukraine working with this group. The Rooms of Happiness programme is entirely unique and currently operates in Kyiv, Dnipro and Zaporizhzhia.

The ambition of MOM plus ME is to grow and scale up its programs and ultimately evolve from a grass-roots community organization into a professionalised one. As noted, MOM plus ME began its donor journey with CRF, having previously worked with only one or two small-scale funders. The CRF grant marked a turning point, helping the foundation build capacity and organisational policies. The MOM plus ME Foundation is now focused not just on delivering services, but also on building internal systems and policies that will sustain its mission long-term.

While its experience with international donors is still developing, MOM plus ME excels in engaging the business sector. With over 20,000 Instagram followers and a strategic approach to donor relations, the Foundation has cultivated long-term partnerships with multiple private sector actors. One business representative serves on its board of trustees.

"Businesses don't have time for abstract pitches. They want to know how they can help real children. They want to hear success stories." – Anastasiia Hryshchenko, MOM plus ME Director

While the private sector tends to back tailored support to specific children, innovative programmes such as children's resilience initiatives and rehabilitation retreats are harder to fund. Continued grant funding therefore remains critical for MOM plus ME. Through its CRF-supported "Path to Happiness" initiative, the Foundation has delivered transformative rehabilitation to hundreds of vulnerable children, including orphans, foster youth and those affected by war, while empowering caregivers with tools, community and hope.

Project results through children's stories

A story of a family living close to the frontline. A foster mother, A., shared her experience of attending Happy Boot Camp twice. Her family, originally from Orikhiv in Zaporizhzhia oblast close to the frontline, had already undergone evacuation and trauma. After the first Camp, the emotional impact on her children was transformative. "It was a wave of emotions, a sky full of stars," she said. "Even my 19-year-old was engaged and excited." Following that experience, the family welcomed five more children, two sibling groups who had survived bombings and spent two and a half years in a Polish institution for children. The camp offered these new arrivals a chance to begin healing. The camp's structure, which organises children by age and interest, helps ensure that every participant feels included and engaged.

K. and Y.: siblings separated and re-united. K. and Y., a brother and sister separated by war and institutional care, were reunited after four years in a foster family. Initially, they did not recognise each other. K. had grown and changed, and A. had no memory of her brother. Both had endured trauma from their biological parents and the harsh realities of institutional life. Living near the frontline in Zaporizhzhia oblast, the family found strength and connection through the Happy Boot Camp. The children began to rebuild trust and form sibling bonds, while the parents received tools and support to nurture their new family. "Warm memories, new friends, and the feeling that they're not alone gave our family the strength to keep going," the family reported.

Restoring the sense of connection and belonging. One foster family from Kharkiv survived occupation and now lives in a remote village. Schools and clubs are closed, and the children have spent four years in isolation and online schooling. The Camp gave them a chance to socialise with peers and parents and begin healing from the war's impact. Happy Boot Camp helped them rediscover connection, joy and the simple power of being together.

2.3 Pillar 3 - Value of the programme and distinctive features

Was this the right intervention (needed by the ultimate beneficiaries, beneficial for CSOs) to do?

How well has the CRF addressed the partner-CSO needs and aspirations?

What has worked well and why? What has not worked well and why?

What are the lessons learned from other donors / similar programmes that the partner-CSOs have worked with that CRF could replicate / consider?

Which aspects of the CRF have been most and least valued by grantees and other stakeholders

Overall, the evidence under Pillar 3 (including the results of an online survey, individual key informant interviews, aggregated focus group results, and feedback from participatory exercises at the September event in Uzhhorod) suggests that CRF Phase II **was the right intervention, at the right time, and with the right focus**. Partner-CSOs reported a very strong fit between CRF priorities and their own thematic work and consistently highlighted the added value of support that went well beyond grant funding, including mentoring, organisational development (OD), informal advice and flexible funds. The OD component, discussed in detail under Pillar 1, stood out as working well through its tailored consultations, practical tools, policy development, and the opportunity for wider staff to participate, which many organisations linked directly to successful fundraising and stronger internal systems.

Survey data and consultations indicate that CRF contributed substantially to partners' long-term capabilities in areas such as project design, MEL and work with other donors, with most CSOs reporting that they had introduced meaningful changes to their programming and felt confident they could sustain these gains. Partner-CSOs also **valued the programme's trust-based approach, flexibility and responsiveness, and rated CRF communications, reaction to requests, integrity and overall focus as equal to or better than other donors in most respects**.

Satisfaction with CRF Phase II as a whole was almost universal, and all respondents expressed keen interest in participating in any future phases.

Alongside this strong positive picture, partner-CSOs **proposed practical refinements** as part of lessons learned and answering the question of what could be improved in the future. Among other themes, they suggested more structured and in-depth networking, smoother scheduling of OD activities, clearer and earlier guidance on reporting and procedures, modest adjustments to procurement and tranche arrangements, and more robust onboarding. These elements have been consistently framed as **improvements to an already well-regarded programme** rather than fundamental flaws.

Identically to Pillar 1, the findings are presented in two larger subsections: 1) responses to an all-partner-CSO survey and 2) summary of the findings from focus groups, interactive exercises and follow-up key informant interviews. The subsection presents fewer suggestions and recommendations, in part because many of the issues, challenges and operational-level feedback points have already been listed under Pillar 1, specifically in response to the question that relates to the **implementation of CRF as a programme**.

Table 7: Pillar 3 research questions and structure of the findings and observations

Pillar 1 research questions	Category of observations and findings	Selected deep-dive questions that were considered
Was this the right intervention (needed by the	Results of the online questionnaire	- How would you rate your participation in CRF Phase II?

ultimate beneficiaries, beneficial for CSOs) to do?		- How did your organisation benefit from the support provided by CRF other than financial resources?
	Partner-CSO considerations voiced through consultations	- How beneficial was CRF for the ultimate beneficiaries (i.e. children and their caregivers)? How did CRF help?
How well has the CRF addressed the partner-CSO needs and aspirations?	Results of the online questionnaire	- What aspects of CRF Phase II were the most valuable for you? Why? [opportunity to provide an extended answer] - How would you rate the 7 thematic areas of OD, where support was delivered through training and one-on-one consultations?
	Partner-CSO considerations voiced through consultations	- What support did CRF provide in addition to the OD component? How well did those supporting mechanisms and interventions work, and why? - Did CRF foster further development of your organisation for future programming? How?
What has worked well and why? What has not worked well and why?	Results of the online questionnaire	- What has worked well and why? What has not worked well and why?
	Partner-CSO considerations voiced through consultations	- What has worked well and why? What has not worked well and why?
What are the lessons learned from other donors / similar programmes that the partner-CSOs have worked with that CRF could replicate / consider?	Results of the online questionnaire	- How does CRF compare to other donor-funded programmes that you were part of in the given thematic areas? [areas listed]
	Partner-CSO considerations voiced through consultations	- What are the tools, instruments, approaches, lessons learned or programme design elements that CRF could replicate, adapt or adopt?
Which aspects of the CRF have been most and least valued by grantees and other stakeholders	Results of the online questionnaire	- What CRF elements have been the most useful and beneficial for you and the team of your CSO? [selection of top-2 areas]
	Partner-CSO considerations voiced through consultations	- What are the top three (alternatively, one, most important) things that you would like to change in the CRF Phase III if you had a chance? - What are the top three (alternatively, one, most important) things that you would say that any further Phase of CRF has to retain and continue?

2.3.1. Results of the online questionnaire on CRF Phase II perceptions and feedback

As discussed in previous sections, the CRF Phase II cohort of partner-CSOs has included versatile organisations that are at different levels of organisational development and experience of working with the donors.

3. How many donor projects, including those supported by CRF, have you implemented in the last 24 months? [indicate only your personal experience - not all of the organization's projects, unless you were involved in all of them!]
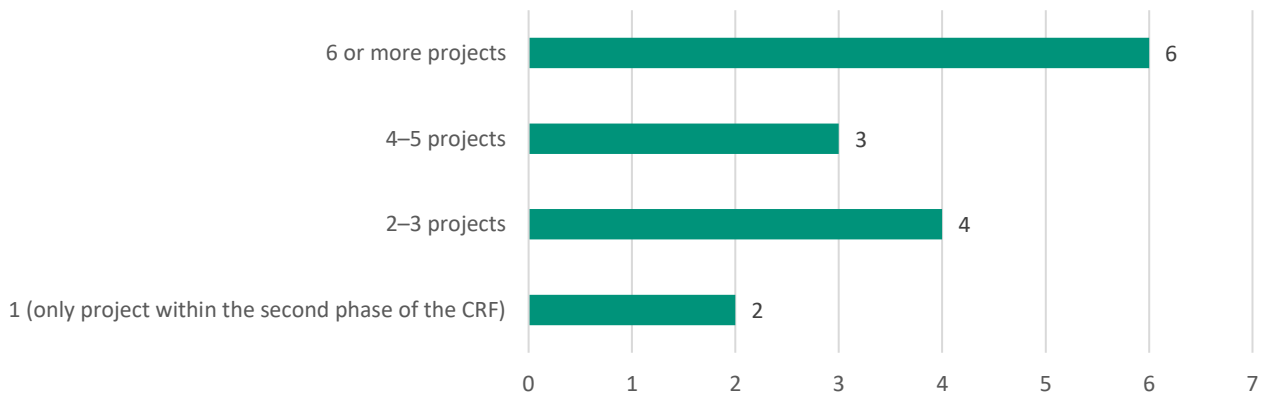
Figure 5: CRF partner-CSOs come from varied backgrounds, and some have more donor experience than others

In terms of aligning the CRF priorities with the themes partner-CSOs work on, the fit was almost universal, with 14 out of 15 responding CSOs noting "full alignment" or "partial alignment."

4. To what extent did CRF as a program align with the strategic priorities of your organization?
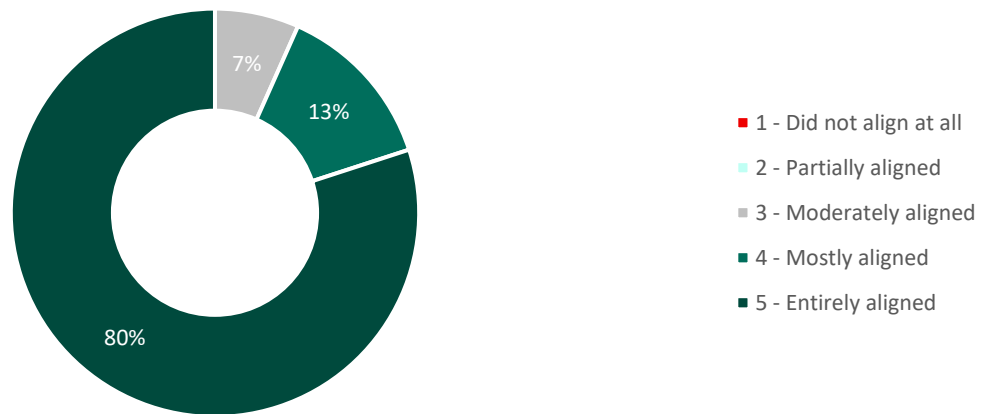
Figure 6: CRF was able to attract like-minded CSOs in its Phase II cohort

Echoing key informant interview and focus group data, the respondents noted that the CRF support beyond funding – i.e., the provision of mentoring, OD support, experience-sharing opportunities and informal advice – was either "extremely useful" (10 respondents) or "mostly useful" (5 respondents).
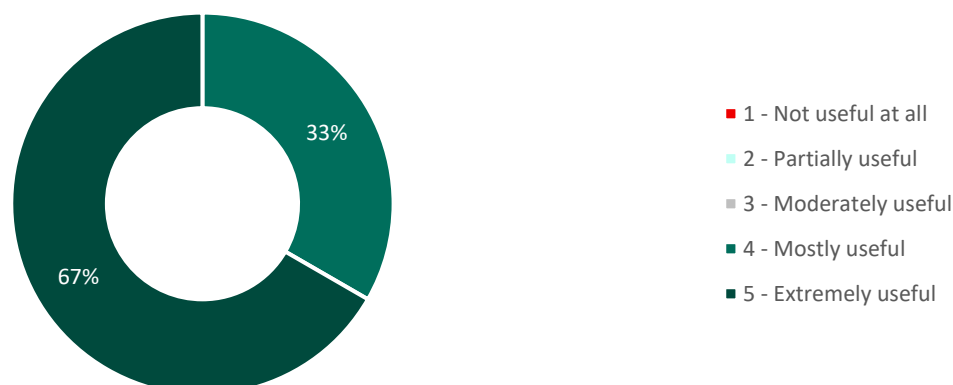
Figure 7: CRF partner-CSOs appreciated the support beyond grant funds

When asked to select up to 2 features that worked particularly well and were useful to the grantees, the respondents singled out the **OD component** (13 out of 15 respondents) and the **ability to have informal, prompt communication with the CRF implementing team** (9 out of 15 respondents). The evaluation team has received multiple comments about the desirability of more extensive networking; hence the absence of any responses for this particular option could potentially be interpreted as the fact that while the respondents would appreciate this aspect, they did not have enough opportunities for facilitated networking within CRF to assess this response option.

6. What elements of CRF support were most useful to you or your team during the project implementation? (choose no more than two)
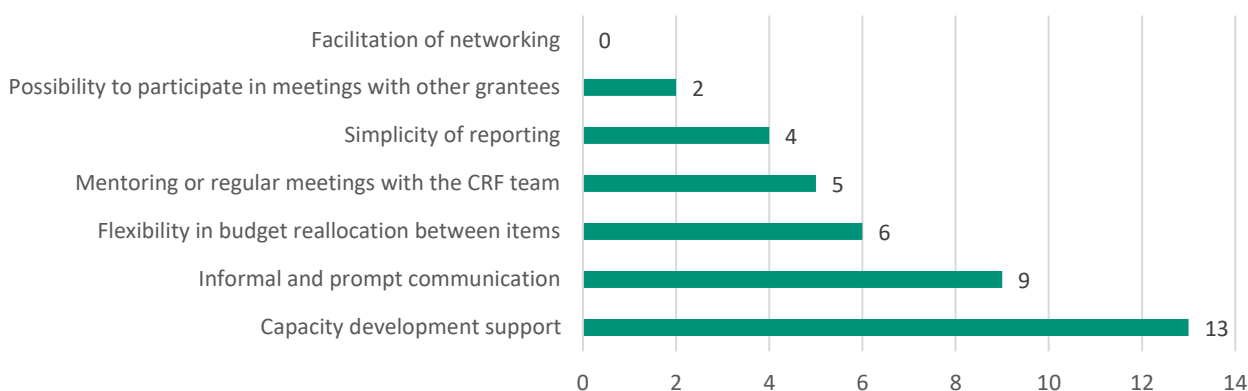
Figure 8: Organisational development, informal communication and flexibility in funding reallocation are the three features appreciated by the partner-CSOs

The respondents were also fairly positive as to the contribution of CRF efforts to the partner-CSO capabilities for long-term performance, such as project design, MEL, fundraising and work with other donors, etc. Thus, 5 out of 15 respondents noted that CRF has "strongly" contributed to such capabilities.

8. To what extent has the CRF contributed to the development of your organization's capacity in the long term (project design, monitoring and evaluation, work with stakeholders, donors, etc.)?

Legend:
- 1 - Did not contribute at all
- 2 - Partially contributed
- 3 - Moderately contributed
- 4 - Mostly contributed
- 5 - Strongly contributed

Values shown: 13%, 7%, 47%, 33%
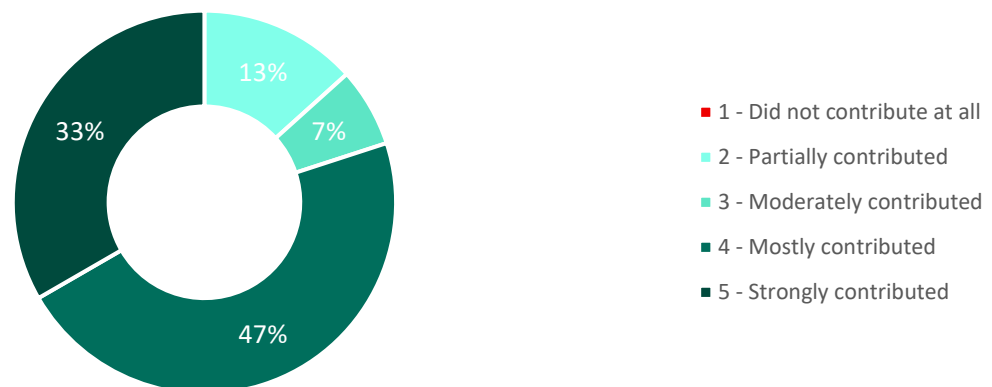
Figure 9: 12 out of 15 respondent-CSOs noted that CRF "strongly" or "mostly" contributed to their long-term capacity

The perceived level of changes in partner-CSO programming and implementation of projects is reported as significant, with 13 respondents noting that their CSOs have either introduced significant (2) or some (11) changes as a result of participation in the CRF Phase II.

9. Has your team's work in planning and implementing programs changed as a result of participating in the CRF?

Legend:
- Yes, we have introduced significant changes
- Yes, we have introduced some changes
- Yes, we have introduced minimal changes
- No, we mostly work as before
- Hard to say / not sure

Values shown: 13%, 73%, 7%, 7%

Figure 10: 1 out of 15 respondents noted that their CSO continues working as they did before participating in the CRF Phase II, with all others reporting various degrees of change

The partner-CSO representatives have also mostly expressed optimism about the sustainability of the changes introduced through participation in CRF Phase II programming.

10. Do you think your organization will be able to maintain these achievements after the CRF funding and support ends?
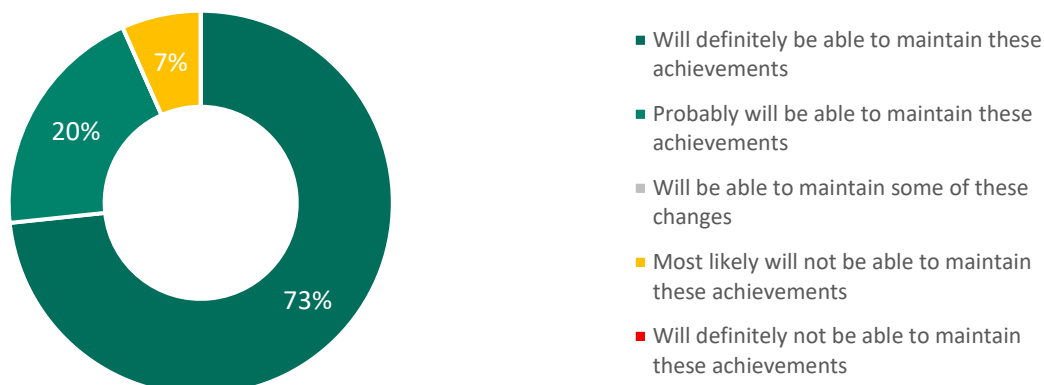
Figure 11: 14 out of 15 partner-CSOs believe they would "definitely" or "probably" be able to maintain the gains they have made with their participation in the CRF Phase II

Throughout the evaluation process, the team probed for whether the CRF design envisaged **creation of stronger networks of partner-CSOs for implementation of further projects and initia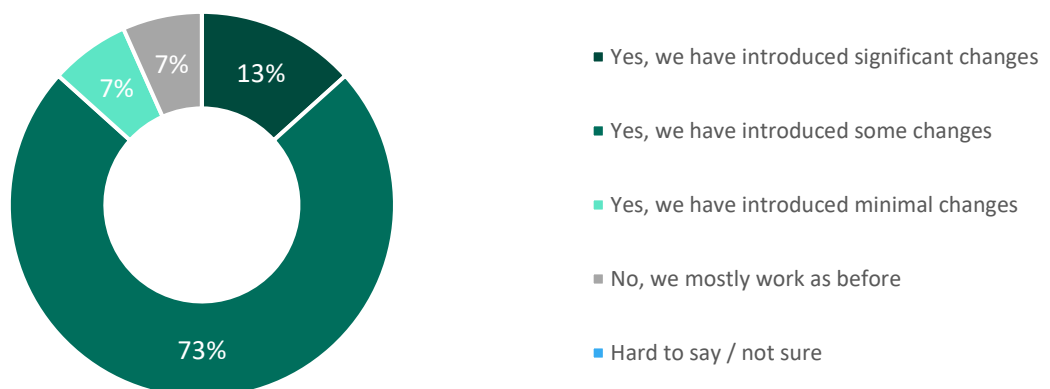tives** – with or without CRF support. The motivation to explore this area stemmed from a null hypothesis that greater investment in fostering networks, coalitions and joint programming through events and knowledge-sharing could make the CRF cohort larger than the sum of its parts[13]. Polling of the partner-CSOs showed that the organisations within Phase II did not perceive significant shifts in their networks or coalition-forming practices (only 34% reporting that such connections and networks appeared due to CRF efforts).

11. Do you feel that your organization or team has developed strong working relationships and networks with other grant-making organizations as a result of the CRF?

Figure 12: CSOs reporting on more active networking and coalition-building

---

[13] Please see more information on one of such CSO thematic networks here: Network of the CSO Hubs. (n.d.). *What is the Network?* Retrieved October 23, 2025, from https://www.hubs.org.ua/en/about-us/what-is-the-network/

Overall, the partner-CSO representatives spoke very highly of accessibility, approachability and willingness of the CRF field team to provide information, guidance and assistance as may be required by the grantee teams. The CRF team scored the following feedback on the questionnaire: **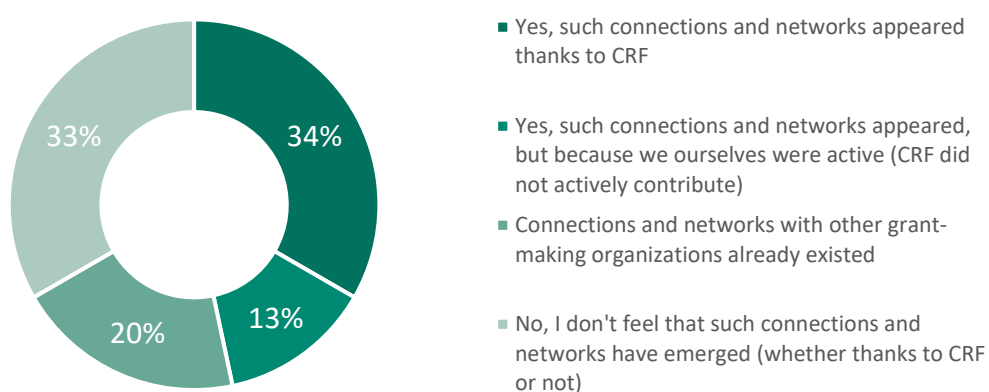communications** – 60% of the respondents noted that CRF was much better or better than other donors in this aspect; **reaction to requests** – 73% much better or better; **humane treatment of grantees** – 47% much better or better and 53% same as other donors; **flexibility** – 67% much better or better; **level of demands and standards** – 47% much better or better; **integrity and decency** – 40% much better or better and 60% same as other donors; and **focus of the programme** – 53% much better or better than other donors.

12. How would you rate CRF compared to other donors your organization has worked with recently in terms of overall ease of interaction?

- We have not worked with other donors over the last 3 years
- Hard to say / not sure
- CRF is much better than other donors
- CRF is slightly better than other donors
- CRF is identical to other donors
- CRF is slightly worse than other donors
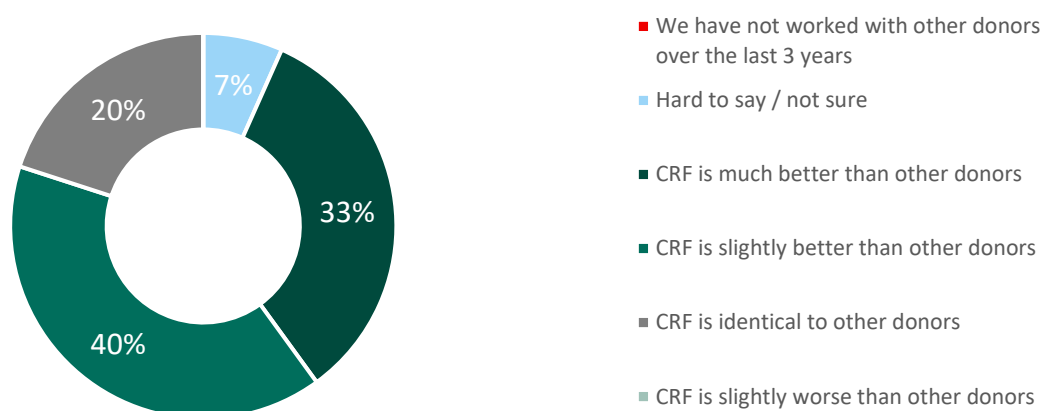
Figure 13: 73% of CSO respondents note that, on average, CRF was "much" or "slightly" better than experiences they had had with other grant donors

That said, a few partner-CSO representatives reported that **their queries went unanswered** or that they received responses that they should act as they saw fit in a given situation. Such reactions, while infrequent, reportedly caused anxiety over making a mistake and fear of being sanctioned for it. On balance, in that particular conversation, other partner-CSO representatives noted that they, in contrast, never had any issues with their queries being answered in full and on time.

The evaluation team has also taken note of several reports from partner-CSO representatives of **feeling "lost" and "let out" of initial instructions and thorough briefing/onboarding at the beginning of the programme,** and as the grant agreements were put in place. The evaluation team has relayed these concerns to the implementing team for consideration and identification of potential solutions.

While minor challenges, as the one above, were identified, the partner-CSOs almost unanimously reported their deep satisfaction with their participation in CRF and expressed interest in participating in any further Phases of the CRF programme.

Figure 22: The partner-CSOs report almost universal full satisfaction with the CRF Phase II as a programme

15. Would your team be interested in participating in the next phase of the CRF, if there is one?

Figure 33: No CSOs would abstain from participating in any further Phases of the CRF

2.3.2. Partner-CSO considerations voiced through consultations, key informant interviews and focus groups

The general sentiment expressed by partner-CSO representatives in KIIs and through focus groups suggests that **CRF Phase II was a highly valuable and appropriate intervention, particularly due to its comprehensive support that extended beyond providing financial resources for project implementation**. Interviewees frequently highlighted the CRF's success in providing stability and critical support for vulnerable populations, while also fostering significant institutional development within the partner-CSOs.

The participants of focus groups and in-person consultations noted that there have been numerous aspects that have worked really well in the CRF Phase II, and the feedback can be generally grouped into three categories.

Table 8: What has worked well as part of CRF Phase II and why?

Category of observations	Themes	Mechanism or why it worked well
Trust, Flexibility, and Responsiveness - the implementing team was perceived as having a highly humane, trusting and open	Trust in partners	Partner-CSOs reported feeling respected as professionals who knew their target groups and how to execute their projects. This approach minimised interference and provided "maximum help"

attitude and rapport with the partner-CSOs	Flexibility in implementation	The team was flexible and understanding when changes were needed due to external factors, such as worsening security impacting planned activities (like hippotherapy for children) or internal changes, allowing partners to redistribute budgets
	Speed of communication	Communication and approval, particularly for critical items like social media posts, were often extremely fast (sometimes within a day or two), preventing delays, with only minor exceptions
	Access to key staff	Some respondents noted that the key staff members of the CRF implementing team were available by phone and answered questions quickly
	Addressing administrative needs	On some occasions, the CRF implementing team demonstrated flexibility by agreeing to sole-source certain contractors or waive tender requirements for specialists (like experienced managers, accountants, or specialised trainers) upon receiving justified requests, which eased organisational burdens
OD component – as noted under Pillar 1 of the evaluation, the OD component (trainings, consultations, and flexible funding) was highly successful, often described as comprehensive, systematic, and unique in its breadth	Tailored and individual consultations	Individual, personalised consultations with trainers were deemed most effective and valuable because they focused specifically on the organisation's context and challenges. Experts helped solve tailor-made cases and formalise documents
	Practical application of knowledge	Trainings provided concrete, working tools and led to tangible results (c.f. some of the examples noted in Pillar 1)
	Organisational policy development	Partner-CSOs developed or updated crucial documents such as GESI/anti-discrimination, human resources, and safeguarding policies. In several cases, having these updated policies enabled organisations to apply successfully for new funding from other donors
	New approaches	Partner-CSOs introduced new practices like results-oriented management (RBM), improved media communication approaches, and began incorporating artificial intelligence into project activities. They also adopted the focus on developing theories of change for new projects, even when not explicitly asked for by donors
	Flexible funding for organisational needs	The flexible funds (GBP 4,000) could be used for organisational development needs, and that was a practice praised as extremely valuable
	Broader team inclusion	It was highly beneficial that staff members not directly involved in the CRF-supported project could attend the training, improving overall organisational capacity and knowledge transfer
Project and service delivery impact – the partner-CSOs reported that participation in CRF Phase II enabled them to scale up and professionalise their services	Multiple examples of enabled programmatic developments and support	One of the projects involved scaling up specialised services like art therapy consultations. CRF's flexibility allowed partner-CSOs to test new formats, such as running non-parent-accompanied retreats for children, which proved highly effective and sustainable for future work. Participation allowed partner-CSOs to define new target groups (e.g., children temporarily residing in hospital wards) and launch high-level human rights

| | | protection pilots (e.g., filing complaints with UN treaty bodies on behalf of abducted children). |
| | | Predictability of funding allowed some partner-CSOs to free up funds from other sources to invest in major infrastructure needs, such as renovating new buildings for children's camps. |

Many of the challenges and concerns that the partner-CSO respondents noted in their interviews, through focus group discussions and in private conversations, have already been mirrored in observations under Pillar 1. Below is a **condensed version of the findings**. The challenges and points of dissatisfaction primarily centred on the intense scheduling of the OD component trainings, insufficiently clear or timely clarification of reporting criteria, and financial constraints related to the final tranche arrangements.

Table 9: What has not worked well and why?

Category of observations	Themes	Mechanism or why it was an issue
OD component training intensity and timing – the scheduling and structure of the capacity development activities were the most frequently cited point of difficulty	Information overload and cramming	The large volume of high-quality training, consultations, and courses was often layered or crammed into the last trimester of the project cycle. This intensity made it reportedly physically impossible for partner-CSO staff to attend every thematic learning session they needed or wanted, leading to missed opportunities and difficulty processing the depth of information provided
	Suboptimal advance planning and informing	Partner-CSOs reported lacking detailed advance information regarding the training schedule, timing, and topics. This made it difficult for managers to plan staff involvement and monitor the effectiveness of capacity development
	Training format issues	Some found the content of certain courses either too foundational or too geared towards businesses or teams that could bear such expenses (e.g., ICT security elements), making it less relevant or implementable for smaller NGOs
Financial and reporting issues – specific financial mechanisms, policies or payment arrangements caused some stress and complications for certain partner-CSOs	Final tranche payment arrangements	While commonplace, the donor practice of withholding the last tranche until after the final report submission was reported as stressful. The partner-CSOs noted that they would have to cover final expenses (like services or staff salaries for the last period) using internal reserve funds or delay payments to contractors, which was difficult given the scale of the grants and wartime economic instability
	Tight reporting deadlines	For some partner-CSOs, the deadline for project implementation coincided with the deadline for final report submission, leaving no buffer time for final reconciliation or closing of the accounts
	Late report forms and criteria	Some partner-CSOs noted that they did not receive detailed reporting forms or clear criteria (especially for measuring qualitative effectiveness) until months into the project, making it challenging to retroactively collect necessary data on beneficiaries (e.g., by gender, age diversification)
Communication and procedural gaps - while praised for humanity,	Perceived Overload	Several partner-CSOs noted that the small number of CRF managers dealing with numerous grantees

the core CRF team was perceived by some partner-CSOs as overloaded, which affected communication on complex administrative issues; there were also reports of fear of making mistakes and not receiving detailed guidance to avoid possible issues		appeared overloaded, making some partners hesitant to contact them frequently for clarifications on administrative nuances. On the other hand, by not contacting the implementing team for clarifications, CSO-respondents noted anxiety over potentially being penalised for the decisions they were about to make
	Unclear policies and expectations	At least one partner-CSO experienced difficulty adhering to the branding policy, which prohibited partnering organisation logos in communications, hindering systemic cooperation with some of the stakeholders. The relevant branding policy was, allegedly, provided later on in the process of project implementation (i.e., after the grant agreement signature)
	Feeling of being lost without sufficient guidance for preparation for major events	The planning and expectation setting for mandatory events (like the Uzhhorod meeting) were sometimes unclear, including the formats and presentation expectations, as well as the need for translation, causing participant discomfort. Some found the facilitated evaluator session design, where they had to act as donors for the CRF Phase III, to be uncomfortable or ineffective.

Throughout the KIIs, focus groups and in-person consultations, the partner-CSOs also **shared some suggestions** that, according to them, could make CRF stronger. Many, if not all, of these considerations have been included as recommendations in greater detail in Pillar 1 of the evaluation.

Table 10: What could be done differently if you were to change one major issue in the CRF design?

Suggested change	Essence and reasoning
Greater emphasis on and resources for partner-CSO networking	There was a strong desire for more dedicated, organised networking opportunities, community building, and collaboration among partner-CSOs, potentially allowing them to apply for future grants as coalitions
OD component timeframe and organisational issues	Partner-CSOs suggested redesigning the capacity building component to span the entire project lifetime and be preceded by a more in-depth assessment of organisational capacities, potentially modelled on the approaches used within the USAID / Pact ENGAGE programme (i.e. physical visits and rapid OD scans in addition to one-way communication questionnaires)
Co-design of project architectures with the CRF team	Some partner-CSOs referred to the practice used by some donors that involves partners in co-designing the project proposals over several months, which is valuable for newer organisations. The partner-CSOs did acknowledge the very limited duration of Phase II and offered to use this approach in a longer Phase that could result in better project designs
Building in the centralised services of psychological support for the partner-CSO staff	One partner-CSO noted that mandatory psychological supervision (work with a "psychologist for psychologists") for team members, especially those dealing with trauma, should be considered, citing positive experiences with other donors. Several partner-CSOs suggested incorporating mental health support to staff working with vulnerable children, either through individual therapy sessions or group sessions.

3. Recommendations, lessons and suggestions for further programme design iterations

The evaluation team understands that not all recommendations, lessons or suggestions would be implementable immediately (or at all), given the peculiarities and limitations of subsequent programmes and donor requirements. At the same time, the following ideas are offered as points for discussion based on multiple discussions with CRF stakeholders and are rooted in deep knowledge of Ukraine's technical assistance, grant-making practices, and organisational development (OD) approaches that have been tried through the years. The recommendations do not aim to suggest that anything in the design or implementation of CRF was flawed or insufficient, but rather to speak to the TOR guiding goal – "to prove and improve" the programme.

Table 10: Recommendations, lessons and suggestions

№	Category (Start / Stop / Continue / Grow / Consider)	Essence of the recommendation, lesson or suggestion	Criticality (Suggestion / High / Medium / Low)
1	Grow	Based on the existing cooperation agreement between IA and CAU, consider deepening the already existing **institutionalised practices of oversight** between the two partners, and invest in enhanced **communications channels** and an even finer **delineation of authority and decision-making powers**, especially if, for future iterations of similar programming, IA continues relying on domestic, Ukrainian ground implementation capacities. Certain risks may be reduced and decisions expedited if IA can deploy their representative to Kyiv. If not, a more detailed, formalised mode of cooperation and supervision could help, even when all discussions are handled virtually. This would be especially helpful if the current team within IA and/or CAU changes, and new staff need to be onboarded and introduced to the standard operational procedures. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
2	Continue	Continue engaging **highly qualified and experienced Ukrainian experts** on the implementing team to build trust among partner-CSOs and other local stakeholders. While international good practices are welcome and informative, in programming such as CRF, **deep knowledge of operational principles and understanding of the context nuances in Ukraine** are paramount. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
3	Start	If deemed relevant and agreed with the donor(s) of subsequent similar initiatives or Phases, consider establishing an **Advisory Council or Expert Board within the Programme** to discuss ideas and programmatic thematic nuances of future similar interventions. Consider bringing **Ukrainian businesses** and CSOs on board that contribute to similar causes. Participation of the representatives of **Ukraine's relevant authorities** may also provide access to decision-makers and, potentially, facilitate implementation of national-level projects. This recommendation is contingent on the donor's agreement.	Low

		Back to Pillar 1 text	
4	Start	Based on the good practices of CRF Phase I, proactively design and maintain a **catalogue of thematic initiatives, programmes and projects supported by other humanitarian and development players**. Proactively seek opportunities to join coordination and information-sharing mechanisms maintained by other players (potentially, UNICEF and OCHA) and expose CRF partner-CSOs to ideas, connections, joint activities and networking opportunities **beyond the CRF cohort**. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
5	Consider	Decisions on **increasing or decreasing the number of partner-CSO grantees** in any subsequent iterations of CRF will be made by the implementing team together with potential donor(s), but will have to be couched in a broader discussion of what the strategy for any possible Phase III would look like. For example, would it be preferable to have fewer grantees, a more "boutique style" package of support and save funds on expanding the field team (as fewer grantees could, presumably, mean a smaller stream of requests)? Would it, on the other hand, make more sense to diversify the portfolio, leading to smaller "per-partner" grant allocation, a greater number of partners and the ability to cover more ground but at smaller depth? The evaluation team recommends **beginning with an internal – IA and CAU – debrief on the issue**, assessing the internal capacity of the team "as is" to handle the grantee load, and establishing a possible "bandwidth" of the number of partners that can be comfortably supported by the existing human resources, and then discussing the relevant parameters with donor(s) for the potential CRF Phase III. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
6	Consider	Depending on the timeframe for any future iterations / Phases of the CRF, the implementing team of IA and CAU can revisit the process for grant application submission, **striking a balance between a very trust-based and hands-off approach and a more engaged, guidance and co-design-based one**. To avoid overwhelming the small IA and CAU teams, a two-stage process could be envisaged in which the initial applications take shape as "concepts" and then a smaller pool is graduated to stage two, the co-design stage. **Practices when the CAU team in Phase II proactively engaged with the potential partner-CSOs** to bring their projects to a minimum acceptable standard through coaching, mentorship and hands-on assistance are **examples of such a co-design approach**. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
7	Consider	In addition to merely allowing coalition-based applications as in Phase II, consider setting aside limited separate funds as Lot #2 for coalition-based applications to **stimulate CSOs to team up**. Coalition-based projects could be stimulated by noting that potential partner-CSOs could apply **both for an individual grant, and – for a different topic – for the separate coalition-based Lot** to increase the appeal of the coalition-based thinking. Should no worthy coalition-based applications materialise, it would be easy to funnel the originally set-aside costs to support more or larger individual partner-CSO projects. Also, and more broadly, the implementing team should consider having an internal discussion about whether the next potential iterations or Phases of CRF should have a **dedicated, deep focus on nurturing networks and connections**,	Suggestion

		and on stimulating partner-CSOs to design coalition-based projects rather than **individual programmatic offerings**. The evaluation team would like to note that while the partner-CSOs have welcomed the idea of greater emphasis on networking and, especially, the idea that organisations from the same cohort should be given **more quality time** to get to know each other, exchange ideas, and explore joining forces in starting new interventions, **such networking opportunities should remain strictly optional and CSOs should not be "forced" to work with one another**. One of the ideas that can be explored is a coalition-building workshop to generate ideas for coalition-based applications to non-CRF calls for proposals – as part of the organisational development stream. The CRF partner-CSOs could, for example, be gathered for a **2-day hands-on social hackathon / solutions camp** facilitated by professional fundraisers and programme architects to develop ideas for coalition-based projects, pitch their ideas to a qualified jury and receive feedback on how these project outlines could be further turned into full applications for coalition-based grant competitions. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	
8	Grow	The evaluation team recommends **revising and streamlining the process for screening and selecting partner-CSO projects** for implementation in any subsequent Phases. Needless to say, this depends on the approaches favoured by the donor. A potential model includes the following business process: 1) an open one or two-stage competition (c.f. suggestion 6 above) is announced publicly and shared with all grantees in Phases I and II and the public, 2) the short-listed applications meeting basic compliance and casting away applicants who fail to meet them (e.g., connections to aggressor-states) are **scored by an independent Advisory Council or Expert Board** with relevant recommendations / ratings being presented to the implementing team and the donor representatives, 3) the implementing team and the donor representatives sit in a brief session to review the recommendations, discuss alignment of the rated applications with the objectives of Phase III, and make the ultimate determination with the donor representative having the tie-breaking / decisive vote. Such an approach – with possible variations – may mitigate image risks (e.g., identify organisations with ties to the aggressor state), share responsibility, and offer guardrails against possible issues later in implementation. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	High
9	Consider	As with the balance of greater freedom for the grantees and more standardised, deeper-processed grant applications, the implementing team and the donor(s) of future CRF iterations should consider having an internal discussion on either **greater standardisation and unification of thematic streams or – alternatively – opting for retaining the broader focus and therefore allowing for diverse and versatile projects to continue** receiving support. While standardisation could help with comparability and easier estimation of intermediate outcomes, the stakeholders could continue opting for a very flexible approach with minimum thematic restraints, as long as the proposed projects generally fall under the realm of assisting Ukraine's children amidst the ongoing war. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
10	Start	While there are various approaches to integrating human rights holistically into the operations of non-governmental entities, the **approach and lens offered by the Danish Institute for Human Rights** stand out as highly applicable and practical, with minimal theoretical considerations and maximum hands-on practice for civil society players. It is	High

		recommended that the implementing team consider these two resources as a potential starting point for **application of the broader Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) lens** to programming as opposed to a narrower GESI-focused approach: 1) "Applying a Rights-Based Approach. An Inspirational Guide for Civil Society"[14] practical manual and 2) a set of free online self-paced courses on the fundamentals of HRBA by the Danish Institute for Human Rights[15]. **Integration of HRBA practices as an explicit feature of the programme** could also help the team present results and potentially expand the donor base among actors who normally prioritise this approach, for example, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland or South Korea. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	
11	<mark>Consider</mark>	Based on additional discussions with future donor(s) for subsequent CRF Phases, consider offering an arrangement where a portion of the costs, for example up to 75%, would be released as project-based grants (potentially, with some of it reserved for coalition-based proposals, c.f. recommendation 7), while the remaining 25% could be used to allocate **institutional support to one or two well-reputed, institutionally strong and accountable partner-CSOs**. The application for institutional support could be part of one larger grant call (for example, Lot #1 for stand-alone projects, Lot #2 for coalition-based projects, and Lot #3 for institutional support applications). Successful implementation of the institutional development component would serve as a **powerful argument for strengthening the partner-CSOs' institutional capacities** and a welcome reprieve for them from concerns over the constant search for operational funding. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	<mark>Suggestion</mark>
12	<mark>Grow</mark>	Continue the **good practice of offering flexible funds** for partner-CSOs to invest in areas and interventions that they feel would strengthen their operations and that are often not covered by other donors / programmes. Unless already envisaged by the internal rules and regulations for the CRF, consider allowing partner-CSOs to utilise costs under the flexible fund arrangements for **investments that support the generation of additional funding** for the partner-CSOs, for example **payments for social media advertisements** or purchasing expert services related to the **design and submission of project proposals** to other donors, as an investment in the longer-term sustainability of partner-CSO operations. Conduct an internal discussion within the implementing team and with potential donor(s) for Phase III to reassess whether the flexible funds could have an expanded use, for example, for small-scale renovation or purchase of office equipment. Needless to say, CRF funds would not be used for major reconstruction or for improving the office conditions of the partner-CSOs per se (for example, carrying out a renovation in CSO premises). At the same time, line items such as **limited investment in improvements to the premises where children benefit from CSO services**, limited purchase of office equipment (under a certain ceiling), or other similar line items, with appropriate guardrails, limitations and verification mechanisms (for	<mark>Suggestion</mark>

[14] Boesen, J. K., & Martin, T. (2007). *Applying a rights-based approach: An inspirational guide for civil society*. Copenhagen, Denmark: The Danish Institute for Human Rights. Retrieved October 23, 2025, from https://www.humanrights.dk/files/media/migrated/applying-a-rights-based-approach-2007-an-inspirational-guide-for-civil-society.pdf

[15] Danish Institute for Human Rights. (n.d.). *Learning Hub*. Retrieved October 23, 2025, from https://training.humanrights.dk/

		example, laser engraving on laptops to prevent resale), should be considered. The evaluation team understands that these decisions are, in large part, dependent on the position of the future donors. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	
13	Consider	Despite the tranche payment system being standard for Ukraine's civil society support, consider revisiting the mechanisms available to the implementing team and donor(s) to ensure high-quality project completion. Results of such analysis **may show that there is no better alternative** than the procedure where the final tranche is withheld – i.e., needs to be frontloaded by the CSO and then reimbursed upon acceptance of the final report. Even in this case, the implementing team and donor(s) **may consider lowering the threshold for the final tranche** to 5% for large grants (i.e., over GBP 80,000) and to 10% for smaller grants (i.e., under GBP 50,000). Such a differentiated approach could help partner-CSOs, especially ones that run small-scale operations, **shoulder the burden of frontloading the last tranche**. Depending on the types of grants envisaged in any further programme iterations or Phases, the implementing team could also envisage that **small grants** (i.e. under GBP 30,000 if such are foreseen) are paid in **two tranches only** – the initial one upfront and the second one after the submission of a mid-term report. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
14	Start	Present a **comprehensive overview of the intended OD component very early on** (preferably as part of the orientation session for the grantees as they are walked through their grant agreements), explain the **expectations on attendance / signing up for learning**, the intended **schedule of OD interventions**, and other relevant elements. Early understanding of the OD component architecture, thematic elements and formats and the expected level of effort from staff to attend will allow for a smoother experience for partner-CSOs. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
15	Consider	One suggestion that the implementing team could discuss with the donor(s) and introduce as an innovation is a system whereby the upgraded OD component has **one truly mandatory training** (e.g., on safeguarding, as this is the essential thematic area for the CRF due to its focus on children), and a partner-CSO is **allowed to pick up to two more thematic learning streams for a total of three** in one Phase (1 obligatory + 2 electives). Clearly, the CSOs would **still be able to use the flexible funds for pursuing other thematic areas**, and the rigidity of disallowing more than three streams could be relative – for example, if a CSO team requests a waiver and justifies why their representative needs to be involved in the fourth thematic OD area. At the same time, the approach of **setting clear expectations** on the number of trainings to be attended and setting a cap on that number would make the partner-CSOs think twice before over-committing and would lead to better prioritisation of what they dedicate their resources to. Finally, a thorough introduction and guidance on the OD self-assessment instrument, as part of establishing the capacity baseline, could help partner-CSOs both make better use of it and **understand the implications of their answers** as they continue to be part of CRF. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion

16	Start	Consider combining the **pre-grant due diligence stage with a CRF-driven rapid OD scan of the CSOs** likely to receive grants. Calibrate this assessment based on the grant amount and its type (project-based or institutional). Consider using one of the **simpler models** that have stood the test of time[16] and enable a quick scan, which can then be used in conjunction with the OD self-assessment conducted by the CSO team at a later stage (i.e., after the onboarding session). **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
17	Start	When working with the partner-CSOs for the OD component, **request that each grantee designate one focal point or coordinator for learning** to supervise how the organisation is progressing with its selected courses, serve as a one-stop-shop resource for information on organisational progress, and **disseminate knowledge** within the CSO team. This role should not be a burden and can be as ambitious or as lightweight as the partner-CSO determines. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Low
18	Start	Throughout the initial rapid OD screening, pay specific attention to the **availability and the quality of an organisation's strategic plan**. Consider conditioning partner-CSO representatives' participation in a fundraising course on prior self-paced education on the **principles of nonprofit strategy-building in Ukraine**.[17] **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
19	Continue	Continue reminding the CSOs that they can **go beyond the OD offering within CRF and use the flexible funds** to seek out highly specialised OD-related expertise that is not covered by the basic package. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Low
20	Consider	The CRF implementing team should **retain the breakdown of the OD component into two or more "waves"** so that no more than 3 thematic streams are delivered consecutively. It has also been a universal request from stakeholders - both partner-CSOs and trainers alike - to **spread the delivery of the material in time** as much as possible. This does not mean that more material will be delivered, but rather that the existing material would be spread more evenly throughout the programme Phase, rather than **peaking in the months that are hardest for the partner-CSOs to handle** (i.e., late spring and summer). Consequently, the CRF implementing team should consider **beginning the tendering process for the trainers of the first "wave" immediately after the grant agreements are signed**, and the results of the external rapid OD scan and	High

---

[16] For example, the CRF implementing team could consider adapting the Sida Octagon OD assessment model to its needs: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency. (2002). *The Octagon: A tool for the assessment of strengths and weaknesses in NGOs*. Stockholm, Sweden: Sida. Retrieved from https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/sida2643en-the-octagon.pdf

[17] For example, resources such as the 2019 UNDP manual for CSOs could be used as a point of departure: Camacho Colón, D. (2019). *Strategy in your pocket*. Kyiv, Ukraine: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Ukraine. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/ukraine/publications/strategy-your-pocket

		the OD self-assessment upon signature of the grant agreement provide clarity as to what thematic areas should be a priority[18]. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	
21	Continue	Mandate that all the **individual trainers and training teams update the shared online OD component calendar**. Provide extensive guidance and upskilling, if necessary, on operating calendar entries, blocking times, sharing meeting links, etc. Consider regularly assessing the dynamics in trainer meetings to resolve potential issues, such as some training providers having to systematically schedule around others, which could lead to deteriorated interpersonal dynamics and inequalities in treatment. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
22	Consider	There are multiple suggestions from various stakeholders, presented to the implementing team for consideration, without recommending one option over another or a combination of these approaches. Firstly, the implementing team could consider aligning the self-assessment tool to ensure it includes selecting topics within a thematic curriculum and probing the level of understanding **the partner-CSO has**. Secondly, the implementing team could **compile a set of foundational, introductory courses and manuals**, offer a guide for the partner-CSOs who may not be as confident in the given areas, but would benefit from first reading a basics manual or going through a brief introductory course online, and only then join the live thematic learning. That could mean that thematic learning sessions could be delivered by the same trainer or trainer team in waves one and two – first and early wave in the programme for those CSOs who are ready to jump into a bit more advanced material, and in the second wave for those partner-CSOs who would need to bring their level up at first through self-paced learning. The implementing team could take off the pressure of having to design the self-paced distance-learning curriculum by **including this as one of the deliverables for the trainers and training teams**. Thirdly, the implementing team could itself **seek out and compile a list of Ukrainian resources on platforms such as Zrozumilo** (https://zrozumilo.in.ua/) that are already adapted for Ukraine's civil society and everyday realities of functioning under conditions of ongoing war. For example, a basic, introductory course on Financial Management and Strategic HR for CSOs[19] on the platform is aimed at 6 hours of learning time and could be a **pre-requisite course** for in-depth thematic learning on Human Resources. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	High

---

[18] Please also see Recommendation 21 for possible arrangement to minimise the perceived expectations of attendance of as many training streams as possible and approach to "managing scarcity", i.e., providing an arrangement whereby partner-CSOs can select only up to 2 thematic areas of OD (scarcity), thus boosting their discretion as to what to choose and where to invest the resources of time and effort.

[19] Please see: East Europe Foundation. (2025). *Фінансовий менеджмент та стратегічний HR для ГО* [Financial management and strategic HR for CSOs] (online course). Retrieved October 26, 2025, from https://courses.zrozumilo.in.ua/courses/course-v1:eef+EEF-062+August2025/about

23	Start	Consider allocating time and **making it part of the OD experts' terms of reference** to introduce themselves and their curricula, **go over the topics they plan to cover**, and highlight other topics – beyond those expressly noted in the curriculum – they could help with, including through individual consultations. Consider **introducing a referral system** in which a partner-CSO is proactively redirected to a different trainer when a specific consultation is needed. Consider envisaging a system of **"joint consultations"**, where an individual consultation would be provided by two thematic trainers in the same room, especially for the issues that are crosscutting in nature. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Medium
24	Consider	A **voucher system for OD** has many positive sides and could be built into the architecture of the CRF OD component. Using a voucher system does not mean that it cannot be combined with some mandatory training that is controlled and delivered by the CRF team. For example, the implementing team could mandate that all partner-CSOs participate in one mandatory training (e.g., safeguarding or another selected topic) and then allocate vouchers for the additional 2 or 3 trainings, consultations, or learning sessions. Knowing the approximate financial ceiling of what they can count on, the partner-CSOs would either use the Marketplace platform, which has pre-vetted and rated vendors, or seek other consultants who could provide the tailored learning and capacity development experience. The CRF implementing team would therefore have a **reduced load in terms of administering the consultants and teams**, as it did in Phase II, but would have a slightly **increased load of checking for compliance** – including verification that the training or consultations were indeed delivered (to prevent fraud) – and would then compensate the trainer or team for their work. The system proposed for consideration is just one of the possible architectural scenarios and is presented to demonstrate a possible alternative. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	High
25	Consider	If the CRF implementing team would like to concentrate on the immediate outcome level change and gather information on such cases of transformation, it could **use outcome harvesting from four to six months after CRF Phase II is completed**. The implementing team could also consider building the OD component differently in terms of time – to provide for a **four-month buffer between the end of the last training and the final report** by the partner-CSOs. Using a hypothetical scenario, if Phase III were to begin on 1 December 2025, selection of the grantees and signature of grant agreements were to be completed by 31 January 2026, and the OD component were to be administered between 1 March and 1 June 2026 (three months' worth of capacity development interventions), that would still leave four months (June – September) for outcome-level change to be manifested and reported in October 2026 as the final reports roll in. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
26	Consider	The CRF implementing team is **encouraged to build the OD component** (unless it transitions to a voucher-based system) **on three capacity development formats:** 1) lectures, presentations and training (either in-person or hybrid, self-paced or timed and guided) – to build the knowledge and awareness of standards, techniques, concepts and tools; 2) individual consultations – to help partner-CSOs address their concrete queries, review policies or receive additional guidance and 3)	Suggestion

27	Consider	coaching and mentoring provided for hands-on, learning-by-doing practical projects that can generate that outcome-level change that CRF would like to capture. Examples of the third intervention type could be a process whereby a thematic expert accompanies the partner-CSO in building up an application for a different project in terms of MEL or GESI; where an expert coaches the CSO in launching a donations campaign, and mentors the team on tweaking the parameters to gain better reach and conversion rates. While similar examples were quoted by some of the partner-CSOs, making this format intentional and outcome-oriented (as opposed to outputs such as an improved and documented policy) could help CRF collect relevant cases in the future. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	
27	Consider	Consider including the **search and elicitation of outcome-level cases** for each thematic area in the **terms of reference for the thematic experts**. For example, in any future Phase, as the programme is drawing closer to its end, each of the thematic experts or a group of experts would deliver a table that **catalogues at least one outcome-level case for each of the partner-CSOs that they coached or mentored**. Implementation of the learning-by-doing microprojects could ease such reporting, where a brief paragraph on the completion of a micro-project is a report on the practical change that has taken place due to application of the learning to practice (Kirkpatrick level 4). **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion
28	Continue	The CRF implementing team should **continue holding open calls and competitions to identify trainers and thematic experts for the OD component**. The team should also maintain vigilance to prevent any conflicts of interest and continue following the restrictions and limitations on simultaneous employment as outlined in operational regulations for IA and CAU. **Back to Pillar 1 text**	High
29	Consider	Consider **planning for opportunities for the trainers to meet each other earlier in the OD component process** and establish professional connections that could, in turn, benefit the partner-CSOs (also see recommendation 23). **Back to Pillar 1 text**	Suggestion

Annexes

Annexe 1. Core Requirements of the Terms of Reference

As set out in the Terms of Reference (TOR), the CRF Phase II evaluation was designed to both *"prove and improve"* CRF effectiveness. Specifically, it sought to assess how effectively the initiative had enhanced the capacity of 16 (15) partner-CSOs in Ukraine to support children affected by conflict, and whether these CSOs were delivering meaningful and sustainable change within their respective thematic domains. The evaluation also aimed to generate learning for the CRF team and its partners to *inform and strengthen future programme design and implementation*, and sought to pinpoint the legacy of the program, beyond the mission of financially supporting the CSOs.

What distinguished this evaluation was the complex operational environment and significant sensitivities. The evaluation team engaged with organisations and teams operating in the context of an ongoing war, where both grantees and beneficiaries (children and caregivers) faced considerable security risks. Evaluators were expected to work remotely as well as in hybrid formats. Physical engagement took place primarily in Kyiv and selected other locations (e.g., Lviv and Dnipro – please see the case study selection section), with flexibility for remote engagement given the volatile security conditions. A key milestone was an in-person gathering of all grantees in Uzhhorod in September 2025, where one member of the evaluation team participated in-person. This provided an opportunity to engage directly with partner CSOs, present preliminary findings, and validate emerging conclusions and recommendations.

Given the programme's focus on children, stringent safeguards were required in how data was collected, stored, and used. The TOR specified that the evaluation ought to adhere to Integrity Action's PICTURE principles for data collection, processing, storage, utilisation, and interpretation, ensuring that qualitative and quantitative information was *precise*, *inclusive*, *credible*, *triangulated*, *usable*, *result-focused*, and *ethically collected*. Throughout the evaluation process, the team was expected and did obtain informed consent from all participants and key informants and acted with caution to avoid exacerbating community tensions or placing participants at increased risk.

The evaluation was called to assess multiple levels of programmatic intervention, while acknowledging that a comprehensive review of all 16 (15) partner CSOs was not feasible at this stage. Instead, the evaluation team was expected to define a set of criteria to purposively select *three to four grantees* (ultimately four were selected) for more in-depth case study analysis. While the TOR highlighted readiness and accessibility as guiding considerations, the team proposed a nuanced, balanced and well-reasoned set of additional selection criteria that were approved by Integrity Action prior to initiating outreach.

The evaluation was not conceived as an academic study, nor was it a programme audit, but rather as a practical learning and accountability exercise. The evaluation concentrated, to the degree possible, on Levels 3 and 4 of Kirkpatrick's model[20], assessing the extent to which training and capacity-building had translated into real-life changes in grantees' behaviour (application) and delivered tangible improvements in outcomes for children, caregivers and other beneficiaries (impact). The team was therefore expected to identify evidence of changes in grantee practices and policies, and their contribution to increased resilience and social inclusion among child beneficiaries.

Findings from the evaluation can inform future phases of the CRF, subject to continued funding, and have been presented as suggestions that could be helpful for other programmes as implemented by Integrity Action and Crown Agents Ukraine. In particular, the evaluation clarified which elements of the CRF model had proven most effective and where gaps remained or changes were welcome. The resulting evidence could be used internally for strategic learning and externally to support fundraising and position CRF as a replicable model for child-focused resilience programming in conflict settings.

---

[20] See: https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/the-kirkpatrick-model/

Annexe 2. Selection of the Four CSOs for Case-Studies

The TOR specified that the evaluation question for Pillar 2 (Project effectiveness & efficiency) envisaged selecting *up to four* partner CSOs to highlight programme successes and lessons learned. The selection of these four CSOs was critical, as closer engagement and established rapport enabled the evaluators to triangulate or enrich evidence for Pillar 1 (CRF performance as a programme) and Pillar 3 (Value of the programme and distinctive features).

In practice, and in line with the principles of a local systems approach, approximately 80% of the evaluation effort under Pillar 2 focused on answering core questions related to the effective delivery of project goals, observed improvements, and (where relevant) engagement with marginalised groups. A further 10% of the inquiry explored how partner CSOs perceived the effectiveness of CRF implementation overall, beyond the narrower remit of their specific project. The remaining 10% gathered feedback on how well the CRF mechanism aligned with the needs and aspirations of partner CSOs, which elements of the CRF support were most and least valued, and suggestions for future programming.

To select the short-list and alternate candidates for field visits under Pillar 2, the evaluation team formulated the following null hypotheses, which were also used as CSO selection criteria:

1. Organisations selected for both Phase I and Phase II of CRF have already demonstrated their value and can offer valuable case studies to showcase longitudinal results (even if the evaluation explicitly covers only Phase II interventions).

2. Organisations that secured the maximum allowable funding in both Phase I and Phase II likely possess stronger capabilities in programmatic delivery, fundraising, and programme design (evidenced by effectively presenting their proposed work). Both factors suggest stronger organisational capacities.

3. Selecting a balanced mix of organisations based in and outside Kyiv would highlight the strengths of the CRF in supporting valuable work beyond the capital region, helping to challenge the perception of Kyiv-centric donor approaches.

4. Selecting organisations implementing projects at different levels of intervention (national, regional, sub-regional, or local) would demonstrate the flexibility and strengths of the CRF model in supporting both large-scale and hyper-local initiatives.

5. Including at least one organisation initially considered as a runner-up but later successful in obtaining funding could provide valuable insights into organisational growth and how such CSOs achieved the standards set by the CRF team.

6. Selecting a diverse range of organisations, including both immediately successful cases and those that experienced initial challenges but later improved significantly, would provide comprehensive insights. The latter cases could particularly inform discussions on organisational development support (Pillar 1) and help reveal what worked or could be improved in the CRF mechanism (Pillar 3).

7. Prioritising organisations that engage children facing multiple vulnerabilities—including internally displaced children, orphans, children with disabilities, or children experiencing discrimination due to ethnicity, gender, or migration status—would add value to the evaluation by examining how CRF supports organisations working with these highly vulnerable groups.

8. Ensuring thematic diversity among selected organisations—such as including organisations that address issues beyond resilience and mental health, for example, legal protection or protection from sexual abuse—would provide a richer and more multidimensional evaluation picture.

In line with these priorities, the evaluation team analysed the 15 organisations supported under Phase II and recommended the following composition of the list for in-depth examination under Pillar 2: four primary focus organisations, plus two alternates.

Case 1. Law and Democracy

The organisation "Law and Democracy" (L&D) met criterion 1: having been selected for both Phase I and Phase II of CRF. While this evaluation explicitly focused on Phase II, selecting an organisation involved across both phases allowed evaluators to apply a longitudinal perspective, tracking progress since the CRF initiative's inception. In addition to analysing performance under Pillar 2 (Project effectiveness and efficiency), L&D's participation throughout both phases offered a unique opportunity to examine its trajectory under Pillar 1 (CRF performance as a programme) and Pillar 3 (Value of the programme and distinctive features). L&D also met criterion 2: having secured funding close to the maximum allowable ceiling under both Phase I and Phase II. Specifically, Law and Democracy received GBP 70,701 during Phase I, and GBP 129,000 in Phase II. Notably, this grant amount is the largest among all Phase II grantees and one of the largest in Phase I. Therefore, selecting Law and Democracy as a case study allowed a deeper exploration of the CRF's value and level of investment provided to the organisation and its beneficiaries. Regarding criterion 3, reflecting a balanced mix of Kyiv-based and regional CSOs, Law and Democracy runs its operations from Lviv. Although Lviv is a city heavily targeted by international assistance projects, L&D has been actively operating in 11 other regions of Ukraine, including frontline and recently liberated territories. This extensive geographic footprint, coupled with positive beneficiary feedback and international media coverage, positioned L&D among the CRF's high-performing, high-impact "star" partners.

Case 2. Save Ukraine

"Save Ukraine" meets criterion 1, as it was selected as a grant recipient under both Phase I and Phase II of CRF. The organisation received significant funding amounts: GBP 70,696 during Phase I and GBP 103,563 in Phase II. These allocations placed it among the most substantially funded CSOs across both phases. According to its self-assessment, "Save Ukraine" demonstrated a high level of organisational maturity, particularly regarding strategic and programme design, programme management, and child protection. At the same time, the organisation identified human resource management and staff mental health as priority areas for further development, reflecting a capacity for growth and self-reflection. "Save Ukraine" is Kyiv-based, aligning with roughly half of the CRF Phase II partner CSOs. Despite the concentration of assistance in the capital, "Save Ukraine" has distinguished itself through the breadth of its impact and operational maturity. Taking into account internal reporting, self-assessment results, and positive recognition by peers and development-sector professionals, "Save Ukraine" was qualified within the evaluation as one of the CRF's high-performing, high-impact "star" partners.

Case 3. Regional Center for Human Rights

The Regional Center for Human Rights (RCHR) was selected as a grantee under Phase II of the CRF, receiving a substantial grant of GBP 122,375. According to its self-assessment, RCHR demonstrated an above-average level of organisational development (OD), with scores ranging between 7 and 10 across all OD dimensions. RCHR was one of eight Kyiv-based organisations supported in Phase II. While it shared a geographic location with many other CRF-supported CSOs, its thematic focus set it apart. Unlike the majority of CRF grantees that emphasise resilience-focused programming, RCHR concentrated on improving access to justice and ensuring effective legal remedies for children. This unique thematic orientation filled an important niche within the broader CRF portfolio. Its combination of organisational maturity, strategic clarity, and programmatic distinctiveness positioned RCHR as a strong candidate for inclusion in the evaluation's case study selection. Highlighting its enriches the overall understanding of CRF's impact—particularly in the areas of child rights and legal empowerment, which are currently underrepresented within the cohort.

Case 4. MOM plus ME

The MOM plus ME Foundation joined the CRF programme in Phase II as an alternate grantee, receiving a grant of GBP 93,841. Although not part of the original selection pool, the organisation demonstrated significant progress and growth over the course of implementation and reporting. At the outset, the organisational self-assessment revealed a wide range of organisational development levels—scoring as low as 2 in areas such as technology use and programme design, and as high as 10 in sustainable development. This spectrum reflected both notable challenges and clear strengths, positioning the organisation as a compelling example of potential-led growth. MOM plus ME focused on supporting children who have lost parents or caregivers—a group recognised as among the most vulnerable. This sensitive and high-priority mandate added clear value to the CRF portfolio, ensuring that the needs of the most at-risk children were

directly addressed. Throughout the programme period, MOM plus ME showed remarkable progress in strengthening its institutional capacity and delivering meaningful results. Its trajectory—from a difficult starting point to becoming one of the initiative's standout performers made it a strong candidate for inclusion in the case study selection. MOM plus ME has embodied the "rough start, ultimate champion" narrative and offered important insights into resilience, adaptability, and impact. Finally, while implementing a national-level intervention, the organisation ran its operations from Dnipro—supporting the geographic diversity criterion and expanding the representation of regional actors within the CRF cohort.

In addition to the four core case study CSOs, the evaluation team proposed two alternates:

Alternate case 1. SOS Civil Defence

SOS Civil Defence was selected as a grantee under both Phase I and Phase II of the CRF, receiving grants of GBP 73,444 and GBP 127,080, respectively. This sustained level of support reflected the programme's long-term investment in the organisation's growth and contribution. It is a non-Kyiv-based CSO, which helps satisfy the geographic diversity criterion. At the outset, SOS Civil Defence could be characterised as a relative newcomer, based on its lower baseline scores in the organisational development self-assessment. However, since joining the CRF, the organisation demonstrated a clear commitment to strengthening its internal systems and engaging in learning. Its development trajectory illustrated the transformative potential of CRF support, making SOS Civil Defence a strong candidate for inclusion in the case study selection as an alternate.

Alternate case 2. Chiricli

Chiricli has participated in both Phase I and Phase II of the CRF programme, receiving grants of GBP 62,000 and GBP 75,000, respectively. Its continued involvement reflects the CRF's ongoing investment in the organisation's impact and thematic relevance. Registered in Kyiv, Chiricli has been operating at the national level with a unique and dedicated programmatic focus on supporting Roma children and internally displaced persons (IDPs)—two groups frequently subject to intersecting forms of discrimination. Its beneficiaries often face compounded vulnerabilities arising from both ethnic minority status and displacement, making the organisation's work particularly important in advancing inclusion, equity, and protection for marginalised populations. The evaluation team has found it particularly intriguing that this was the only CSO that marked all capacity areas as a "10" – which could testify to both strong capacities of a well-established team or to a degree of self-assuredness that would be a fresh perspective to assess.

In summary, the selection of case study organisations ensured **strong geographic representation**, with two Kyiv-based CSOs and two regionally based organisations. Among the latter, one located in Lviv (western Ukraine), with the other one based in Dnipro—a relatively secure, government-controlled city in eastern Ukraine—offering a **balanced East–West perspective**.

In terms of **programmatic scale**, three organisations ran their operations at the **national level**, while one worked **regionally**, ensuring diversity in both reach and operational focus. The selection also reflected varied **engagement timelines**: two organisations received support under both Phase I and Phase II, while the remaining two joined during Phase II only. This combination allowed the evaluation to examine both sustained progress over time and shorter-term impact.

Thematically, three organisations focused primarily on resilience and MHPSS (the core emphasis of the CRF), while one specialised in legal protection for children, contributing valuable thematic depth to the case study sample. Notably, one of the selected CSOs initially joined as an **alternate grantee** but demonstrated growth and strong performance, illustrating the potential for dynamic capacity development within the CRF framework.

This balanced selection captured a range of experiences, contexts, and organisational trajectories, offering a solid foundation for reflection, comparison, and learning through the case study approach.

Table: Four partner-CSOs selected for case studies under Pillar 2 and alternates

#	CSO name	Phase I	Phase II	Total	Geography	Project focus

		(GBP)	(GBP)	(GBP)		
1	Law and Democracy	70,701	129,000	199,701	Lviv	National
2	Save Ukraine	70,696	103,563	174,259	Kyiv	National
3	Regional Center for Human Rights	0	122,375	122,375	Kyiv	Regional
4	MOM plus ME Foundation	0	93,841	93,841	Dnipro	National
A1	SOS Civil Defence	73,444	127,080	200,524	Kamyanets-Podilskyi	National
A2	Chiricli	62,000	75,000	137,000	Kyiv	National

Annexe 3. Team Roles as Approved and Delivered

Maksym Klyuchar has served as **Lead Evaluator**, focusing on Methodology and Quality Assurance. Maksym designed and validated the comprehensive evaluation methodology with the client, prepared and delivered the detailed inception report, and organised and managed virtual KIIs and focus groups. He conducted desk research and analysis of online questionnaires, led the drafting and editing of the final evaluation report, and ensured overall quality assurance. Maksym oversaw all evaluation elements related to organisational development due to his hands-on expertise in this area, as aligned with Pillar 1 of the evaluation. He also led data analysis and synthesis for Pillar 3. Maksym also led the production of the evaluation summary document as per the scope of work.

Khrystyna Rybachok, the **Senior Evaluator**, focused on data collection, analysis, and synthesis. Khrystyna contributed to the methodology and inception report, led in-person KIIs, focus groups, and stakeholder interactions in Kyiv and on-site across Ukraine, and contributed to desk-based analysis of questionnaire data. She undertook field visits to selected regional grantees, organised and participated in the September validation event (Uzhhorod, Zakarpattia region), and authored the Pillar 2 chapter of the final evaluation report. Khrystyna contributed to the production of the summary document.

Annexe 4. Work Plan as Implemented

Work Plan (Activity • / Milestone •)	Timeline					
	Jun 25	**Jul 25**	**Aug 25**	**Sep 25**	**Oct 25**	**Nov 25**
1. Express desk review, inception report writing	▇					
2. Inception report submitted		▇				
3. Comments to the inception report incorporated, inception report approved		▇ (red)				
4. Desk review of data contained in grantee reports	▇	▇				
5. Questionnaire / FG guide / KII structure finalisation		▇				
6. Scheduling and conducting the field visits to Kyiv-based and out-of-Kyiv grantees and hybrid data collection from Kyiv and Ottawa			▇	▇		
7. KIIs and FGs all three Pillars (online and offline, all target groups)			▇	▇	▇	
8. In-person session in Uzhhorod				▇ (orange)		
9. Compilation of the draft report					▇	
10. Draft evaluation report and draft summary document					▇ (red)	
11. Incorporation of feedback and final report and summary						▇ ▇ (red)

Annexe 5. Evaluation Instruments (English Versions)

Instruments for Evaluation Pillar 1 "CRF performance as a programme"

1. Key Informant Interview Guide: CRF Kyiv-based CRF Manager

Interview Duration: 75 minutes

Pillar Focus: Pillar 1 – CRF performance as a programme (Primary)

Format: Online, audio-recorded with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewers: Khrystyna Rybachok and Maksym Klyuchar

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. In this interview, we will focus on your reflections as a member of the CRF management team, particularly with regard to how the programme was implemented and how it has supported the partner-CSOs beyond merely providing funding for their projects and tracking that the funding was used well. Our aim is to understand not only what worked, but also what didn't, and what could be done differently in the future. If at any point you would prefer not to answer a question, or wish to pause or end the interview, you are welcome to do so. We can also pause the recording closer to the end of the interview and stop the transcription if there are especially sensitive things to share. Nothing you share will be attributed to you by name in any public report. We would like to audio-record the interview for transcription purposes using a secure AI-based tool (Fireflies.ai). The transcript will be stored in encrypted cloud storage and deleted permanently 12 months after the final evaluation report is submitted.

Do you consent to proceed with the interview and to have the conversation audio-recorded?

1. Programme Implementation and Strategic Support (20 min)
   - From your vantage point, how well has the CRF been implemented in terms of supporting CSOs *beyond* delivering high-quality projects?
   - Are there examples where the CRF team was able to provide especially timely or transformative support (e.g., mentorship, problem-solving, flexibility)?
   - Were there any moments where things didn't go according to plan? What were the underlying causes, and what adaptations were made?
   - Have there been any unexpected positive outcomes—things that the team didn't originally plan for but that emerged organically?

2. Strengthening the CSOs for future performance (20 min)
   - Do you believe that the support mechanisms (financial, mentorship, organisational development, peer learning) provided by CRF helped CSOs build value that extends *beyond* their specific CRF-funded project? Why or why not? What are the most sustainable contributions in your view and what are shorter-term gains?
   - Have any CSOs, in your view, demonstrated consistent changes or improvements in how they operate more broadly—for example, in how they plan, coordinate, or pursue partnerships? [if you have examples of that]
   - Have you seen any shifts in how these organisations talk about their long-term strategy or purpose, compared to when they joined Phase II? [if you have examples of that]

3. Enhanced Project Design and Responsiveness (15 min)
   - Based on your experience across the 16 grantees, do you think that the CRF contributed to improving their ability to design and deliver projects that respond to the needs of diverse groups of

children? How do you think it contributed (if yes) / why do you think that there was no significant contribution (if no)

- Do you feel that these improvements—if any—are likely to persist beyond the life of the CRF-funded project?
- Could you share a specific example of a CSO whose "story" stands out in this regard? [could be either positive or negative]

4. Reflection and Forward-Looking Priorities (15 min)

- If you were advising a future phase of the CRF, what are *three things* you think must be retained or enhanced based on what worked well in Phase II?
- Conversely, what are *three things* you think should not be repeated or should be done entirely differently?
- Was the CRF (the way that it was designed for Phase II, for example by including the organisational development / capacity development component) "the right intervention (i.e. needed by the ultimate beneficiaries, beneficial for CSOs) to do" – regardless of how well it was delivered in the end?

2. Key Informant Interview Guide: Organisational Development Consultants (GESI, MEL, Communications, Fundraising, Safeguarding, ICT and HR]

Interview Duration: 75 minutes

Pillar Focus: Pillar 1 – *CRF Performance as a Programme*

Format: Online, audio-recorded with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewers: Khrystyna Rybachok and Maksym Klyuchar

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer (to be read to the respondent before beginning)

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today as part of the independent evaluation of Phase II of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF). This interview focuses on your experience as a thematic expert working with the partner-CSOs on organisational development and capacity development efforts under the CRF. We are especially interested in hearing your reflections on what worked well, what was challenging, and what could be improved in future phases.

Participation in this interview is voluntary. If at any point you would prefer not to answer a question, or wish to pause or end the interview, please feel free to do so. If you wish to share any particularly sensitive thoughts, we can pause the audio recording at any time. The interview will be recorded (with your consent) solely for transcription purposes, using a secure AI-based tool (Fireflies.ai). Transcripts will be stored in encrypted cloud storage and permanently deleted 12 months after the final evaluation report is submitted.

Do you consent to proceed with the interview and to have the conversation audio-recorded?

Overall Reflections on the CRF Organisational Development / Capacity Development Design (25 minutes)
- Could you briefly describe the scope of your engagement with CRF Phase II and the type of support you provided to partner-CSOs?
- From your perspective, was the organisational development / capacity development component of the CRF programme designed and implemented well? Why or why not?
- How would you describe your collaboration with the CRF team (coordination, clarity of expectations, responsiveness)?
- How was your working relationship with the CSOs you supported? Were they engaged and open to support? Were there any common patterns of readiness or resistance?
- Looking back, are there elements of the organisational development / capacity development programme model (e.g., structure, delivery format, thematic focus) that you would revise or approach differently if a Phase III were to be considered?
- How can we measure whether the CSOs that you worked with have made sustainable progress? Do you use any metrics for the CSOs that you coach and mentor?

Reflections on Thematic Area of Expertise (25 minutes)
(Each interview has used only one of the following thematic blocks depending on the experts' profiles)
A. GESI
- How would you assess the CSOs' initial capacity level in GESI? Does your assessment align with how the organisations assessed themselves at the very start (the self-assessment tool)? Were there any who rated their knowledge as very limited but later surprised you?
- What key knowledge gaps regarding GESI did you observe? Which tools or approaches proved most in demand from the organisations?
- Did the organisations perceive this topic as important and relevant? Why or why not?
- Which of the tools or support formats provided were most effective (for example, lecture format, workshops, practical assignments—where organisations could produce something and then ask for your advice)?

- How would you assess the progress of the organisations you worked with? What worked and why? What did not work and why?
- Please describe an example (if any) where an organisation made a "quantum leap" not only in understanding GESI but also in its practical application. What changed in the organisation's work?
- We know that organisations were provided with a fund of up to £4,000 for flexible use for organisational development needs. Did any of your organisations mention it?
- What, in your view, would indicate that organisations are genuinely applying their GESI knowledge in practice? When can we measure this, and how?

B. MEL and Programme Design
- How would you assess CSOs' understanding of the importance of monitoring and evaluation at the outset? Does your assessment align with how the organisations assessed themselves at the very start (the self-assessment tool)? Were there any who rated their knowledge as very limited but later surprised you?
- What questions did organisations most frequently raise? What did they come to you for help with?
- Were organisations able to apply the knowledge they received? How can we find this out? In your view, to what extent did this knowledge change the organisations' day-to-day work? How long might this effect last (the durability of the knowledge and skills gained)?
- Please describe an example (if any) where an organisation made a "quantum leap" not only in understanding MEL or in project and programme design, but also in its practical application. What changed in the organisation's work? [New projects thanks to design advice? Positive feedback from another donor that the organisation has reached a new level in data processing?]
- We know that organisations were provided with a fund of up to £4,000 for flexible use for organisational development needs. Did any of your organisations mention it?
- What, for you, would indicate that organisations are genuinely applying their knowledge in MEL and in project and programme design in practice? When can we measure this, and how?

C. Communications
- Which type of communications did CSOs need the most help with (internal or external), and what were they trying to achieve in the short term—what goals did they set and hope to receive support with?
- In your view, how advanced were the participants who attended your trainings and one-to-one sessions? Does your assessment align with how the organisations rated themselves at the very start (the self-assessment tool)? Were there any who rated their knowledge as very limited but later surprised you?
- To what extent do the organisations have the human capacity (qualified staff) to carry out this work?
- Please describe an example (if any) where an organisation made a "quantum leap" not only in understanding but also in the practical application of communications. What changed in the organisation's work? [A new successful communications campaign, a new communications strategy and annual plan with a budget, etc.?]
- We know that organisations were provided with a fund of up to £4,000 for flexible use for organisational development needs. Did any of your organisations mention it?
- What, for you, would indicate that organisations are genuinely applying their communications knowledge in practice? When can we measure this, and how?

D. Safeguarding
- How would you assess partner CSOs' initial understanding of child safeguarding? Did this align with their self-assessment at the start? Were there instances where organisations under- or over-estimated their capacity in this area?

- What principal gaps in knowledge or practice did you observe in the field of child safeguarding? Which topics or tools generated the greatest interest or demand from CSOs?

- Did organisations regard this topic as important and relevant to them? If yes, what contributed to that attitude? If not, what were the barriers to uptake?

- Which support formats were, in your view, most effective for understanding and implementing child-safeguarding approaches? For example: webinars, practical assignments, case analyses, consultations?

- How would you characterise organisations' progress on this topic? What improved and why? Where were the difficulties or resistance?

- Are there examples of organisations that, in your view, made a significant breakthrough in their child-safeguarding approaches—not only in theory but also in concrete practices? What exactly changed in their work?

- To what extent, based on your observations, did CSOs use the flexible fund of up to £4,000 to strengthen child-safeguarding systems? If they did, what specifically did they allocate the funds to?

- What, for you, constitutes evidence that an organisation is genuinely embedding child-safeguarding principles in its day-to-day work? How can this be measured—and when would it become visible?

E. Fundraising

- Which aspect of fundraising did the CSOs need the most help with? What goals did they set and hope to receive support with?

- In your view, how advanced were the participants who attended your training sessions and one-to-one meetings? Does your assessment align with how the organisations rated themselves at the very start (the self-assessment tool)? Were there any who rated their knowledge as very limited but later surprised you?

- To what extent do the organisations have the human capacity (a fundraiser, or a person dedicating at least 50% of their time to this function) to carry out this work?

- Please describe an example (if any) where an organisation made a 'quantum leap' not only in its understanding but also in the practical application of fundraising. What changed in the organisation's work? [A newly and successfully written project proposal, a well-matched donor identified, a shift in the funding mix towards greater diversification—especially after USAID's exit, etc.]

- We know that organisations were provided with a fund of up to £4,000 for flexible use for organisational development needs. Did any of your organisations mention it?

- What, for you, would indicate that organisations are genuinely applying their fundraising knowledge in practice? When can we measure this, and how?

F. Human Resources

- Which aspect of human resources / human capital management did the CSOs need the most help with? What goals did they set and hope to receive support with?

- In your view, how advanced were the participants who attended your trainings and one-to-one sessions? Does your assessment align with how the organisations rated themselves at the very start (the self-assessment tool)? Were there any who rated their knowledge as very limited but later surprised you?

- To what extent have organisations "matured" to the point where they recognise the value of systems for managing and motivating staff?

- Please describe an example (if any) where an organisation made a "quantum leap" not only in understanding but also in the practical application of HR policies and practices and in building organisational culture. What changed in the organisation's work? [Not just updated policies, but practical application.]

- We know that organisations were provided with a fund of up to £4,000 for flexible use for organisational development needs. Did any of your organisations mention it?
- What, for you, would indicate that organisations are genuinely applying their knowledge in human resource management in practice? When can we measure this, and how?

G. ICT, Data Protection and Information Security
- Which aspect of cybersecurity, data management and information protection did the CSOs need the most help with? What goals did they set and hope to receive support with?
- In your view, how advanced were the participants who attended your trainings and one-to-one sessions? Does your assessment align with how the organisations rated themselves at the very start (the self-assessment tool)? Were there any who rated their knowledge as very limited but later surprised you?
- To what extent have organisations "matured" to the point where they recognise the value of tools for cybersecurity and information protection?
- Please describe an example (if any) where an organisation made a "quantum leap" not only in understanding but also in the practical application of policies and practices to protect its systems. What changed in the organisation's work? [Not just updated policies, but practical implementation.]
- We know that organisations were provided with a fund of up to £4,000 for flexible use for organisational development needs. Did any of your organisations mention it?
- What, for you, would indicate that organisations are genuinely applying their knowledge in cybersecurity and data protection in practice? When can we measure this, and how?

Reflections on CSOs and Recommendations for the Future (15 minutes)
- What were your general observations of the CSOs you worked with in terms of their openness to learning and capacity to evolve?
- Are there any success stories (either organisations that exceeded expectations or made dramatic improvements) that stood out to you? Do you think that progress has a chance to become sustainable? Why or why not?
- Were there any disappointing experiences or challenges that surprised you?
- If you were advising a future CRF phase, what are *three things* you believe should definitely be retained or enhanced in the organisational development / capacity development model?
- What are *three elements* that, in your opinion, should be changed, eliminated, or approached differently?

3. Key Informant Interview Guide: CRF Integrity Action Home Office Team

Interview Duration: 60 minutes

Pillar Focus: Pillar 1 – CRF performance as a programme and Pillar 3 – Value of the programme and distinctive features

Format: Online, audio-recorded with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewers: Khrystyna Rybachok and Maksym Klyuchar

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer (to be read to the respondent before beginning)

Thank you for making the time to speak with us as part of the independent evaluation of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF) Phase II. This conversation will focus on your reflections as part of the Integrity Action headquarters team involved in supporting or overseeing the CRF. We know that your engagement may not have involved direct interaction with every grantee or project, so we'll be asking about your impressions, observations, and strategic reflections based on your role and experience with the programme at the higher level. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you wish to pause, skip a question, or stop the recording at any time, please feel free to do so. We would like to record this interview for transcription purposes using an AI-based tool (Fireflies.ai). The transcript will be securely stored and permanently deleted 12 months after the final evaluation report is submitted. Are you OK with us starting the interview and do you give your consent to being audio-recorded?

Programme Implementation and Strategic Support (Pillar 1) (25 minutes)

- From the point of view of multiple programmes that you have seen implemented in your career, how well do you think the CRF has been implemented in terms of supporting CSOs beyond the delivery of high-quality projects, given the current circumstances of day-to-day implementation?
- What's your impression of the non-financial support (e.g., mentorship, organisational development, networking) that CRF offered to grantees?
- Based on your exchanges with the Kyiv team and feedback from CSOs (formal or informal), do you feel this support has helped organisations generate value that extends beyond the individual project, for example, organisational maturity or strategy development? What makes you think so?
- In your view, has CRF contributed to the longer-term ability of these organisations to serve conflict-affected children, even beyond the CRF funding period?
- Has CRF, in your opinion, had any lasting influence on how grantees approach project design, MEL, or partnerships, whether within CRF or in other funding contexts? How would we know?

Value of the Programme and Distinctive Features (Pillar 3) (25 minutes)

- From your perspective, was CRF the right type of intervention at this time, for both Ukrainian CSOs and the communities they serve? Why?
- How well do you feel CRF's structure and model align with the needs and aspirations of its grantee partners?
- What were some of the pain points or areas that did not work as smoothly? Do you have a sense of why that might have been?
- Are there any distinct features of CRF that you feel should be preserved or scaled in a potential Phase III if you were to design it? Why did you select these particular features?

Reflections and Forward-Looking Suggestions (10 minutes)

- Based on your helicopter view, what would be your top 2–3 recommendations for what CRF should retain or enhance if there were a future phase? What would be your top 2–3 suggestions for what CRF should do differently or reconsider entirely?

Participants: 8–10 representatives from CRF Phase II partner-CSOs involved in organisational development (e.g. heads of organisations, programme managers, MEL or GESI focal points, project coordinators)

Duration: 75 minutes (15 min introduction + 60 min discussion)

Pillar Focus: Pillar 1 – CRF performance as a programme

Moderators: Khrystyna Rybachok and Maksym Klyuchar (one lead, one supporting)

Recording: Audio only, with verbal group consent (Fireflies.ai transcription tool)

Methodological Lens: Kirkpatrick Levels 3 & 4 (application and results), applied through narrative, not terminology so as not to confuse the participants

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer (to be read to the respondent before beginning)

Thank you all for taking the time to join today's focus group. As you know, this session is part of the external evaluation of Phase II of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF). One of our key aims is to understand how well the capacity development and organisational development components of the programme supported your organisations not just in learning something new, but in applying those new skills and noting the results.

In this discussion, we are especially interested in your own experiences with the various learning and support components provided under CRF. What was useful? What actually made a difference in how your organisation works? And where were the gaps?

We've designed this focus group as a safe space. Please feel free to speak openly—even critically—about what worked and what didn't. Nothing you say will be attributed to you or your organisation in any public way. The insights you share will help us and Integrity Action understand what should be preserved, improved, or changed in any future programming.

With your permission, we would like to audio-record this discussion. The recording will be used only for transcription (via a secure AI tool, Fireflies.ai). The transcripts will be stored in encrypted cloud storage and permanently deleted one year after the final report is submitted. Do we have your permission to record this session?

Participant Introductions (10 minutes)

Let's begin with brief introductions. Please share:

- your name and role in the organisation;
- one or more areas of organisational development or capacity development in which you were directly involved under the CRF-supported project.

Reflections on Organisational Development Experience (20 minutes)

- Which elements of capacity development or organisational development support received through CRF were most useful or most memorable for you? Please indicate which thematic training / series of trainings you are referring to.
- Were there elements that did not meet expectations, or that you believe you will not use in future? Why? Please indicate which thematic training / series of trainings you are referring to.

Application of Knowledge and Tools (25 minutes)

- Have you or your colleagues been able to apply the new tools, skills, or practices gained through CRF? Please provide an example.
- What were the practical results of applying the new knowledge / tools / practices? *(Note: Some organisations reported using new MEL—monitoring, evaluation and learning—systems to win a new project; others applied an updated gender equality policy to quickly enter another grant competition.)*

- Have you noticed any changes in how your organisation operates or delivers programmes as a result of applying the knowledge acquired under CRF?
- Could you describe specific results or improvements in your practical work that you associate with the organisational capacity development component?

Other Organisational Development Programmes (10 minutes)
- Have you participated in other donor-supported programmes that included capacity development or organisational development (outside CRF)? How does the CRF approach compare? What was different?

Looking Ahead (10 minutes)
- Do you expect to continue using the skills, practices, or tools gained through CRF? How?
- If you could change just one thing about how the capacity development / organisational development component was designed or delivered by the CRF team or their thematic experts, what would you change?

5. Focus Group Discussion Guide: CSO Leadership Reflections on CRF Phase II

Participants: Senior CSO leadership (Executive Directors, Programme Directors, Senior Managers)

Group Size: 4 participants per focus group

Number of Sessions: 4 (covering all 16 CRF Phase II partner-CSOs)

Duration: 75 minutes (15 min intro + 40 min Pillar 1 discussion + 20 min Pillar 3 discussion)

Pillar Focus: Pillar 1 – CRF performance as a programme and Pillar 3 - Value of the programme and distinctive features

Moderators: Khrystyna Rybachok and Maksym Klyuchar

Recording: Audio only, verbal consent (Fireflies.ai transcription tool)

Methodological Lens: CMO framework + Kirkpatrick Levels 3 & 4 (knowledge application and outcome)

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer (to be read to the respondent before beginning)

Thank you all for joining this Focus Group session. As you know, this discussion is part of the external evaluation of Phase II of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF). In this session, we will explore your organisation's broader engagement with CRF, how CRF has supported your growth beyond project delivery, and what value the mechanism has provided in comparison to other forms of donor support.

Some of you may have already contributed to the online survey about the elements of the CRF that your organisations have found helpful or less so.

This focus group is designed to complement those inputs and build on them. Our goal here is to go deeper to surface illustrative examples of what worked, why it worked, and under what circumstances. Equally, we are interested in hearing about what did not work as intended, and what could be improved.

We will not attribute anything you say to your name or your organisation in the evaluation report. We would like to audio-record the discussion for transcription purposes only, using a secure AI tool (Fireflies.ai). The transcript will be stored securely and deleted 12 months after the report is submitted.

Do we have your permission to proceed with the recording?

Participant Introductions (5 minutes)

Please introduce yourself by sharing:

- Your name and the CSO you represent
- One concept, word, book, film, or image that you associate with your CRF experience – whatever comes to mind

Pillar 1 – CRF performance as a programme (40 minutes)

Value beyond project implementation

- In your view, did CRF provide support that created value beyond just providing the funding to implement your project? For example, did it help build internal systems, improve strategy, or shift internal practices? Could you share an example that illustrates this?

Contribution to future CSO work

- Has CRF helped your organisation in ways that are useful for your future work, with or without CRF? What exactly changed or strengthened in your team or systems?

Improved project design and responsiveness

- Did CRF help your organisation improve how you design or deliver projects (not just for CRF, but for other donors or stakeholders as well?) Could you share a concrete example of how this became visible in your work?

Long-term ability to support children

- Do you feel that CRF contributed to your organisation's long-term ability to support conflict-affected children beyond the funding period? What does that long-term ability look like, and how (if at all) did CRF support its development?

Pillar 3 – Value of the programme and distinctive features (20 minutes)

What worked and what didn't
- From your leadership perspective, what were the most valuable features of CRF as a support mechanism?
- Was there anything about CRF's structure, communication, reporting, or relationship model that didn't work well or, in your opinion, should be changed in the future?
- Why do you think those elements worked or didn't?

Other donor experience
- Has your organisation worked with other international donors in the past two years? If so, how does CRF compare in terms of flexibility, fit with your needs, and overall support?
- Are there practices from other donors that CRF should consider adopting in the future?

Instruments for Evaluation Pillar 2 "Project Effectiveness and Efficiency"

In line with its commitment to a conflict-sensitive local systems evaluation, the evaluation team is applying a "whole system in the room" spirit to the design and deployment of key informant interviews (KIIs). This approach enables not only the assessment of CRF-supported projects from within the implementing organisations but also the development of a 360-degree understanding of how these interventions were designed, delivered, experienced, and perceived across the broader ecosystem of stakeholders. The aim is to ensure that the evaluation captures outcome-level changes, implementation quality, and lessons learned as observed from multiple vantage points.

To this end, the evaluation team has structured each field visit to include five semi-structured interviews and one focus-group discussion with individuals who are best positioned to provide nuanced, experience-based insights into the performance and value of CRF-supported projects. Specifically, each visit is planned to include:

- One KII with CSO lead in the field location;
- One KII with the CSO line expert / specialist in the field location;
- One FG with 3-4 parents of the beneficiary children;
- Two KIIs with additional parents in the field location or neutral venue (also could be done as potential follow-ups over the phone);
- One KII with the other donors or sister-CSOs that know the project very well (if they exist – potentially online), with business-sponsors (if these exist for the organisation) or sister-CSO that knows the work of the given organisation very well
- One KII with the government counterpart

By engaging diverse informants who have interacted with the CSO in distinct ways, the evaluation team seeks to triangulate perspectives and uncover both common patterns and contrasting insights. This design supports a robust contribution analysis while remaining sensitive to contextual nuance, power dynamics, and the evolving needs of children and families affected by conflict in Ukraine.

Draft KII guides are presented below.

Interview duration: 90 minutes

Pillar focus: Pillar 2 – Project effectiveness & efficiency, with supplementary questions under Pillars 1 and 3

Format: In-person and audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcribing)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about your organisation's experience with the CRF Phase II. As you know, we are conducting several interviews as part of the independent evaluation. The purpose today is to talk about the project that you implemented as part of the second Phase and look at how these efforts have contributed to changes in children's wellbeing, resilience, and social inclusion. We are also trying to capture broader effects on other stakeholders.

Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable, you may decline to answer any question, ask to pause or end the interview at any time, request to reschedule or explicitly mark information as "please do not quote me on this". We will not attribute anything you say directly to you or your organisation unless you explicitly request this. The discussion will be audio-recorded solely for transcription purposes, with your permission. We will use an AI-based transcriber (Fireflies.ai) to convert the audio to text. If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take handwritten notes instead and will make every effort to quote you accurately.

The transcript (audio and text) will be securely stored in encrypted cloud storage and permanently deleted 12 months after the final evaluation report is accepted.

Do you consent to participate in this interview and to being audio-recorded?

Core Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. Project Context and Objectives (15 min)

- Could you briefly describe your CRF-supported project and the main problem it sought to address?
- Who are your primary target groups (e.g., children, caregivers, professionals)? Why did you prioritise them?

2. Results and Change Pathways (20 min)

- What key changes have you observed among children or families as a result of this project? How deep were these changes, do you think?
- Are there any observable improvements in well-being, resilience, or social inclusion? Why or why not?
- Can you share any specific stories or examples that help illustrate these changes, their "depth" (lasting effect) and what brought them about (mechanism of change)?

3. Target Group Engagement (15 min)

- How did you identify and reach the children and families that most needed support?
- Were there any particular strategies you used to engage underrepresented groups (including but not limited to, and in no particular order: People with Disabilities (PWD), members of the LGBTIQ+ community, Roma, elderly, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), Veteran families, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc.)?
- How successful do you think those strategies were?

4. Stakeholder Outcomes (10 min)

- Have other stakeholders (e.g., school staff, social workers, local authorities) changed their knowledge, attitudes, or practices due to your project? How would we know this?
- Can you give examples of any systemic or institutional changes? (for example, a new regulation was adopted, a new centre launched or an approach licensed due to the project)

5. Programme Delivery in Practice (15 min)
- What delivery approaches worked best in your project, and why?
- What were the main implementation challenges you encountered?
- How did you adapt to the challenges you identified?

6. Support from CRF (10 min)
- In your view, how did the CRF's support (financial, technical, strategic) contribute to your ability to deliver this initiative?
- Were there any gaps in the support provided?
- Would you work with a CRF grant again? Why or why not?

Supplementary Thematic Clusters

7. Stronger organisation beyond the project implementation (Pillar 1) (5 min)
- Which capacity-building or organisational development support activities (e.g., working groups, one-on-one mentoring, training sessions) did your organisation engage with under CRF Phase II?
- We understand that there have been capacity development initiatives in 7 areas – 1) communications and advocacy, 2) fundraising, 3) GESI, 4) Human Resources, 5) monitoring and evaluation, 6) safeguarding and 7) ICT and technology. Which of these have made a significant change for your organisation? Why?
- Which of the 7 thematic areas you found least helpful? Why?
- What is the lasting legacy, if it can be established, of the support that the CRF has provided to your organisation beyond funds to implement your proposed project?

8. CRF as a Funding Mechanism (Pillar 3) (5 min)
- Based on your experience, what aspects of working with CRF as a funder or grant mechanism worked well?
- What, if anything, was difficult or could be improved in future phases?
- How does CRF compare with other international donors you've worked with—was it easier, more flexible, or more complex in any way?

2. Target group: Field-level project implementer (e.g., psychologist, project officer, frontline MHPSS specialist)

Interview duration: 90 minutes

Pillar focus: Pillar 2 – Project effectiveness and efficiency (primary), with supplementary questions under Pillars 1 and 3

Format: In-person and audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcribing)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today about your organisation's experience with the CRF Phase II. As you know, we are conducting several interviews as part of the independent evaluation. The purpose today is to talk about the project that you implemented as part of the second Phase and look at how these efforts have contributed to changes in children's wellbeing, resilience, and social inclusion. We are also trying to capture broader effects on other stakeholders.

Your participation in the interview is entirely voluntary. If you feel uncomfortable, you may decline to answer any question, ask to pause or end the interview at any time, request to reschedule or explicitly mark information as "please do not quote me on this". We will not attribute anything you say directly to you or your organisation unless you explicitly request this. The discussion will be audio-recorded solely for transcription purposes, with your permission. We will use an AI-based transcriber (Fireflies.ai) to convert the audio to text. If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take handwritten notes instead and will make every effort to quote you accurately.

The transcript (audio and text) will be securely stored in encrypted cloud storage and permanently deleted 12 months after the final evaluation report is accepted.

Do you consent to participate in this interview and to being audio-recorded?

Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. Role and Responsibilities in the Project (10 min)

- Can you briefly describe your role in the CRF-supported project? What were your main day-to-day responsibilities?
- How long were you involved with the project? Did your role or level of involvement change over time?
- How often did you interact with the CRF team directly and on what issues?

2. Work with Children and Families (20 min)

- What kinds of services or support did you provide directly to children or families?
- In your view, what were the most important or meaningful changes you observed in the children or families you worked with? How "deep" (lasting) were these changes?
- Why do you think this change took place or – alternatively – did not work as intended or was shorter-lived than you thought it would be?
- If you were to describe the "essence", the "heart" of this project in one situation or case – what would it be?

3. Observed Changes and Impact (20 min)

- Did you notice any longer-term or unexpected outcomes during or after the intervention period?
- Were there changes in behaviour, emotional wellbeing, or social confidence in children? What about the adults they interacted with (caregivers, teachers, professionals)?
- Do you think these changes were related to the project, or to other factors? Why?

4. Inclusion and Accessibility (10 min)

- How did your team ensure that children from more vulnerable or marginalised groups were included and supported *(Note: underrepresented groups could include but are not limited to, and are listed in no particular order: People with Disabilities (PWD), members of the LGBTIQ+ community, Roma, elderly, Internally Displaced Persons (IDP), Veteran families, representatives of ethnic minorities, etc.)*?
- Did any particular approaches or adaptations help reach families who might otherwise be overlooked?
- Were there any groups that you felt were harder to engage, and why?

5. Operational Realities and Adaptation (15 min)

- What helped you most in doing your work effectively (e.g., tools, guidance, relationships, flexibility)?
- What were some of the main difficulties you faced in practice—logistics, caseloads, burnout, access to safe spaces?
- How did your team adapt when things didn't go according to plan?

6. CRF's Role in Making this Possible (10 min)

- From your perspective, what part of CRF's support (funding, guidance, collaboration, etc.) made the biggest difference in your work?
- Did you feel supported by the wider CRF team or your own organisation's leadership in implementing the activities?
- Is there anything you wished had been done differently to help people like you doing the work "on the ground"?

Supplementary Thematic Clusters

7. Stronger organisation beyond the project implementation (Pillar 1) (5 min). *Note: the 7 thematic areas that CRF concentrated on are: 1) communications and advocacy, 2) fundraising, 3) GESI, 4) Human Resources, 5) monitoring and evaluation, 6) safeguarding and 7) ICT and technology.*

- Were you personally involved in any capacity-building / organisational development activities under CRF Phase II—such as working groups, one-on-one mentoring, or training sessions?
- Which ones did you take part in? What were they about? How helpful were they in practice?
- Did anything from those experiences change how you do your job, for example, in terms of safeguarding, planning sessions, working with traumatised children, or using MEL tools?

8. CRF as a Mechanism (Pillar 3) (5 min)

- From your point of view as someone working directly with beneficiaries: what was it like to work on a project funded by CRF?
- Was the administrative side of the work (reporting, communication, coordination) manageable for you and your colleagues?
- How much freedom in designing and implementing what you know best (activities, approaches) were you given?
- Have you worked on projects funded by other international donors? How did CRF compare in terms of flexibility, responsiveness, or workload?

Interview duration: 60 minutes

Pillar focus: Pillar 2 – Project effectiveness and efficiency (primary), with supplementary questions under Pillars 1 and 3

Format: In-person or virtual (Zoom), audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok (Maksym Klyuchar as backup if the interview is virtual)

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you very much for agreeing to meet with us today. This interview is part of the independent evaluation of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF), which supported several civil society-led initiatives aimed at strengthening the well-being and resilience of children affected by conflict. Your organisation or department was identified as a public sector counterpart or observer of one such project implemented by CSO XXX in your locality or thematic area.

The goal of this interview is to understand how the CRF-supported project worked from your perspective. What results it delivered, how collaboration with the CSO unfolded, and what recommendations you might have for future phases of this initiative.

Participation is entirely voluntary. You are welcome to skip any question, pause or end the interview at any time, or ask that something not be quoted. We will not attribute anything you say directly to you or your institution unless you explicitly request it. With your permission, the interview will be recorded solely for transcription purposes using an AI-based service (Fireflies.ai). If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take written notes instead and will make every effort to quote you accurately.

The transcript will be securely stored in encrypted cloud storage and permanently deleted 12 months after the final evaluation report is accepted.

Do you consent to participate in this interview and to being audio-recorded?

Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. Relationship to the Project (10 min)

- How did your department or agency become involved with or aware of the CRF-funded project delivered by CSO XXX?
- What role did you or your department / unit play—were you a formal partner, an observer, or a point of contact?

2. Perception of Results and Value (15 min)

- In your view, what were the main achievements or outcomes of the project? Is there something that will outlast the project once it is completed? Why or why not?
- Are there any specific groups (e.g., children, families, service providers) that clearly benefited?
- Were there any moments or results that stood out to you as particularly meaningful or impactful?

3. Relevance and Added Value of the Project (10 min)

- Would you say the project helped address a real need or gap in your community or service area?
- Did it complement or duplicate existing government services?
- Do you see a role for this type of projects in the future: either through CRF Phase III or another mechanism?

4. CSO Performance and Partnership (10 min)

- How would you describe your experience working with CSO XXX that implemented this project?

- Was the collaboration smooth, results-oriented, and professional?
- Do you think this CSO has grown or improved in delivery of their services since the start of the project? If yes, in what ways? Why do you think that happened?

5. CRF's Role and Strategic Fit (5 min)
- Are you familiar with the CRF as a programme that funded the implementation of this project?
- If yes: In your opinion, does CRF provide helpful and necessary support to the field through its partner CSOs? What could be done differently?
- If not directly familiar: Do you believe that donor support like this is useful in strengthening civil society work in child wellbeing and protection?

Supplementary Thematic Clusters

6. Stronger organisation beyond the project implementation (Pillar 1) (5 min)
- Have you noticed any improvements in the CSO's professionalism, planning, reporting or any other aspect since the beginning of the project?
- Are you aware of whether the CSO received any capacity development support through CRF (e.g., training, mentoring)? If so, do you think it made a difference?

7. Donor Collaboration and Lessons for CRF (Pillar 3) (5 min)
- Has your agency / department / unit collaborated with other international donors on similar initiatives?
- Based on your experience, what are the positive aspects—or challenges—of working with mechanisms like CRF that fund civil society-led work?
- What advice would you offer to the CRF team if they plan a Phase III of this Programme?

4. Target group: Parent or caregiver of a child who participated in the CRF-supported project (focus group discussion)

Participants: Parents or primary caregivers of children who participated in CRF-supported projects

Group Size: 3-4 parents or caregivers per session

Duration: 60 minutes (10 min introduction + 50 min discussion)

Pillar Focus: Pillar 2 – *Project Effectiveness & Efficiency*

Moderator: Khrystyna Rybachok

Format: In-person; voice recording then transcribed via Fireflies.ai

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer (to be read aloud by moderator)

Thank you very much for joining us today. This conversation is part of an independent evaluation of a project your child was involved in, delivered by [insert CSO name] and supported by the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF). We are speaking with parents to better understand how the project was experienced by caregivers and how it benefitted the children, what worked well, and what could be improved in future efforts.

You are not required to answer any question you don't feel comfortable with. If you want to take a break or stop participating at any point, that is absolutely fine. Nothing you say will be linked to you personally or to your child. We are not using your name or your child's name in any report. With your permission, we will record this session for transcription purposes only, using a secure AI tool (Fireflies.ai). The transcript will be deleted 12 months after the evaluation ends. Do we have your consent to proceed and record this discussion?

Before we begin, please tell us:

- What name would you like us to use to address you today, as well as what is one image, word, feeling, or association that comes to mind when you think of the project your child took part in?

Discussion Questions (50 minutes)

Reflections on project delivery and engagement (20 minutes)

- From your point of view as a parent or caregiver, how well did the organisation XXX deliver the project?
- What worked really well, and what was especially helpful for your child?
- Was there anything that didn't go as expected or could have been done better?
- Was the way the project was organised convenient for you? (e.g. location, timing, duration)
- Did you feel welcomed, respected, and listened to by the team running the project?
- If your child needed additional support or had a problem, did you know whom to contact and how?
- Did anything about the project seem unusual, unclear, or confusing to you? Did you reach out to the CSO or the CRF team about it?

Perceived outcomes and impact (15 minutes)

- Since your child joined the project, have you noticed any changes in their wellbeing, confidence, mood, behaviour, or interactions with others?
- How significant do you feel this change is, and why? Do you have any thoughts/views on how this change came about (e.g. was it a particular activity, or interactions with peers, or anything else?)
- Did you notice any effect of the project beyond just your child, such as other families, your community? What was it?

Inclusiveness and reaching those left behind (10 minutes)

- Do you feel that this project made an effort to reach children or families who are often left out or cannot benefit from such services?

- How effective, do you think, was that effort?

Closing reflections (5 minutes)
- What advice would you most like to give to other parents or caregivers who are considering this project for their children?
- What advice would you give to the project team?

5. Target group: Parent or caregiver of a child who participated in the CRF-supported project (verification interview)

Interview duration: 60 minutes

Pillar focus: Pillar 2 – *Project Effectiveness & Efficiency*

Format: In-person or phone/Zoom-based, audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok (Maksym Klyuchar as backup if the interview is virtual)

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with us today. This interview is part of an independent evaluation of a project that your child took part in, implemented by CSO XXX*. The project was supported by the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF), and our aim is to understand how helpful the support has been for families like yours and what could be improved in the future.*

You are free to stop the interview at any time, skip any question, or tell us if there is something you do not want quoted. If you feel uncomfortable with anything, just let us know. We will not use your name in any report, and nothing you say will be linked back to you personally. With your permission, we would like to audio-record the conversation so that we can transcribe it accurately using a secure AI transcription tool (Fireflies.ai). If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take handwritten notes instead.

The transcript will be securely stored in encrypted cloud storage and permanently deleted 12 months after the evaluation ends.

[If the child is present during the interview] We can see that you brought your child to participate. It is wonderful! At the same time, please note that we are only interviewing you, and we are obtaining your consent, not your child's. If your child chooses to contribute something to our conversation or express their opinion, they are free to do so. We will not ask them any questions directly, and we will not record or process any personal data about them, not even their age, name, or gender. Their input will be treated informally and respectfully, but will not be recorded as formal interview data.

Do you agree to participate in this interview, and do you agree to audio recording?

Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. First contact and expectations (5 min)

- How did you first hear about this project?
- What made you decide to enrol your child (or children) in the programme?
- At the beginning, what were you hoping it would help with?

2. Experience of participation (10 min)

- What kinds of activities or support did your child receive as part of the project?
- Were you or your family involved in any way—for example, in parent meetings, family counselling, or events?

3. Perceived outcomes and usefulness (15 min)

- Since participating in the project, have you noticed any changes in your child? (emotional, social, behavioural, confidence-related?)
- How significant do you feel this change is, and why? Do you have any thoughts/views on how this change came about (e.g. was it a particular activity, or interactions with peers, or anything else?)
- Has anything in your family's life changed as a result of the project?
- In your view, was this project useful or valuable for your child and for your family? Why or why not?

4. Design and delivery (10 min)

- Was the way the project was organised convenient for you? (e.g. location, timing, duration)
- Did you feel welcomed, respected, and listened to by the team running the project?
- If your child needed additional support or had a problem, did you know whom to contact and how?

5. Trust and safety (7–8 min)
- Do you trust the organisation that implemented this project?
- Did you feel your child was safe during all the activities and interactions? Did your child report feeling any insecurity? Could you please specify?
- Would you feel comfortable participating in future projects with the same CSO team?

Supplementary Thematic Cluster

6. Observed organisational growth (Pillar 1) (4–5 min)
- You may have known CSO XXX for a while, or just during this project—but did you notice any changes in how they work over the past year?
- For example, did their communication improve? Were they more organised, more inclusive, or more focused on feedback and participant safety?

6. Target group: Representative of a donor organisation that has recently supported the same CSO in a non-CRF-funded project

Interview duration: 75 minutes

Pillar focus: Mixed – Pillar 2 – Project effectiveness and efficiency (primary), with supplementary questions under Pillars 1 and 3

Format: In-person or phone/Zoom-based, audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok (Maksym Klyuchar as backup if the interview is virtual)

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you very much for speaking with us today. As part of an independent evaluation of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF), we are gathering insights from funders / donor organisations that have worked with the same CSOs supported under CRF Phase II. We understand that your organisation has partnered with CSO XXX recently through a different project, and we are keen to learn from your experience.

This conversation will cover three areas: your views on the CRF-funded project (if you are familiar with it), your organisation's own collaboration with the CSO, and your reflections on working with different donor mechanisms and models, including CRF.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question, stop the interview at any time, or request that a comment not be quoted. We will not attribute any remarks to you or your organisation unless you explicitly agree. With your consent, the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes using a secure AI tool (Fireflies.ai). If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take detailed notes instead. All data will be securely stored and deleted within 12 months of final report approval.

Do you agree to participate in this interview and to the audio recording?

Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. CRF-supported Project (20 min)

- Are you familiar with the CRF-supported project implemented by CSO XXX?
- What do you know about the purpose, scope, or delivery of this CRF-funded project?
- Did it complement, overlap with, or differ from the project your organisation supported?
- From your perspective, how well was the CRF project implemented by CSO XXX?
- Have you observed any results—direct or indirect—that the CRF-funded work contributed to?

2. Donor-funded Project(s) and Experience with the CSO (25 min)

2.1 Funded Project(s) Overview (10 min)

- Could you briefly describe the project(s) your organisation funded with CSO XXX?
- What was the thematic focus, target population, and scale?
- What made your organisation decide to work with this CSO?

2.2 Quality of Design, Implementation, and Monitoring (15 min)

- How would you assess the design of the project that you supported (needs analysis, log frame, results indicators)?
- Was the project delivered on time and to a satisfactory standard? Were adaptations handled effectively?
- How would you rate CSO XXX ability to monitor outcomes and report on progress?

- Did the project generate evidence, learning, or policy/practice influence?

3. Perceived Organisational Growth (10 min)
- Over the last 6-12 months, have you noticed any changes in the CSO's way of working?
- Specifically, have you observed improvements in any / several of these 7 thematic areas: 1) communications and advocacy, 2) fundraising, 3) GESI, 4) Human Resources, 5) monitoring and evaluation, 6) safeguarding and 7) ICT and technology
- Do you have a sense of what may have contributed to these changes?

4. Reflections on CRF as a Mechanism (20 min)
- Are you familiar with the CRF's funding model or organisational support approach?
- Based on what you know, do you see CRF as a helpful complement to broader donor ecosystems?
- What are your reflections on donor mechanisms that combine grant-making with capacity-building, as CRF does?
- What have been the most positive aspects—and challenges—of working with CSOs like XXX through donor partnerships?
- What lessons from your own programming would you share with the CRF team if they were planning a future Phase III?

7. Target group: Sister-CSO that had joint projects with CSO ==XXX== in the past [if relevant / if no donor or business sponsor is identified]

Interview duration: 60 minutes

Pillar focus: Mixed – Pillar 2 – Project effectiveness and efficiency (primary), with supplementary questions under Pillars 1 and 3

Format: In-person or phone/Zoom-based, audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok (Maksym Klyuchar as backup if the interview is virtual)

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you very much for speaking with us today. As part of an independent evaluation of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF), we are gathering insights from partner organisations that know the CSOs that delivered a project under CRF Phase II. We understand that your organisation has partnered with ==CSO XXX==, and we are keen to hear about your experience.

We will talk about how well you know CSO XXX, about the way they implement their projects, their expertise, the value they bring, as well as any changes that you have observed with their team over the last 12 months.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question, stop the interview at any time, or request that a comment not be quoted. We will not attribute any remarks to you or your organisation unless you explicitly agree. With your consent, the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes using a secure AI tool (Fireflies.ai). If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take detailed notes instead. All data will be securely stored and deleted within 12 months of final report approval.

Do you agree to participate in this interview and to the audio recording?

Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. Knowing the partner-CSO ==XXX== (20 min)

- How long have you known CSO XXX? How well would you say you know them?
- What joint projects or engagements have you been part of?
- How would you characterise the CSO ==XXX=='s team, its leadership, its staff who deliver the day-to-day programming, and / or volunteers?
- What projects (not necessarily the project funded and otherwise supported by the CRF Phase II) are they known for?
- If you had a chance to co-implement a project with them in the future, would you do that? Why or why not?
- How reliable of a partner do you think this CSO is? What makes you think so?

2. The CRF-supported project (20 min)

- How well do you know the project ==YYY== implemented by CSO ==XXX== that was funded and otherwise supported by the CRF Phase II?
- Did you take part in that project? How well do you know what activities were delivered, how, what the target groups were and how successful – in your opinion – the delivery has been?
- Do you think that the project had a lasting effect? Why or why not? If yes – what was the mechanism that brought about such change; if not – what could have been done differently to make sure such lasting change possible?

3. Perceived Organisational Growth (5 min)

- Over the last 6-12 months, have you noticed any changes in the CSO <mark>XXX</mark>'s way of working?
- Specifically, have you observed changes in the way they handle any of these 7 thematic areas: 1) communications and advocacy, 2) fundraising, 3) GESI, 4) Human Resources, 5) monitoring and evaluation, 6) safeguarding and 7) ICT and technology

4. Reflections on CRF as a Mechanism (5 min)

- Are you familiar with the CRF's funding model or organisational support approach?
- What are your reflections on donor mechanisms that combine grant-making with capacity-building, as CRF does? Have you ever participated in a similar programme?

Interview duration: 45 minutes

Pillar focus: Mixed – Pillar 2 – Project effectiveness and efficiency (primary), with supplementary questions under Pillars 1 and 3

Format: In-person or phone/Zoom-based, audio-recorded only with verbal consent (Fireflies.ai used for transcription)

Interviewer: Khrystyna Rybachok (Maksym Klyuchar as backup if the interview is virtual)

Opening Script and Informed Consent Disclaimer *(to be read to the respondent before beginning)*

Thank you very much for speaking with us today. As part of an independent evaluation of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF), we are gathering insights from partners who know the CSOs that delivered a project under CRF Phase II. We understand that your business has sponsored the activities of CSO XXX before, and we are keen to hear about your experience.

We will talk about how well you know CSO XXX, about the way they implement their projects, their expertise, the value they bring, as well as any changes that you have observed with their team over the last 12 months.

Your participation is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question, stop the interview at any time, or request that a comment not be quoted. We will not attribute any remarks to you or your organisation unless you explicitly agree. With your consent, the interview will be recorded for transcription purposes using a secure AI tool (Fireflies.ai). If you prefer not to be recorded, we will take detailed notes instead. All data will be securely stored and deleted within 12 months of final report approval.

Do you agree to participate in this interview and to the audio recording?

Thematic Clusters and Questions

1. Knowing the partner-CSO XXX (10 min)
   - How long and how well have you known CSO XXX?
   - How would you characterise the CSO XXX's team, its leadership, its staff who deliver the day-to-day programming, and / or volunteers?
   - What projects (not necessarily the project funded and otherwise supported by the CRF Phase II) are they known for?
   - How reliable of a partner do you think this CSO is? What makes you think so?

2. The CRF-supported project (10 min)
   - How well are you aware of project YYY implemented by CSO XXX that was funded and otherwise supported by the CRF Phase II?
   - Do you think that the project had a lasting effect? Why or why not? If yes – what was the mechanism that brought about such change; if not – what could have been done differently to make sure such lasting change possible?

3. Sponsorship history (10 min)
   - We understand that your business has previously supported projects by CSO XXX. How well has this cooperation worked?
   - What were some of the highlights of the projects that you supported to be implemented by CSO XXX?

4. Organisational evolution and changes (5 min)

- Over the last 6-12 months, have you noticed any changes in the CSO ==XXX=='s way of working? Specifically, have you observed changes in the way they handle any of these 7 thematic areas: 1) communications and advocacy, 2) fundraising, 3) GESI, 4) Human Resources, 5) monitoring and evaluation, 6) safeguarding and 7) ICT and technology
- What is one area that you think CSO ==XXX== can grow in the future? Why?

Instruments for Evaluation Pillar 3 "Value of the Programme and Distinctive Features"

To examine how the CRF functions as a support mechanism for the partner-CSOs beyond providing funding for project delivery, the evaluation team will use three interlinked instruments under Pillar 3: an online questionnaire, a section of the Focus Group with the CSO leadership (please see Pillar 1), and the September session in Uzhhorod that will be called to look back at the CSO experience with the CRF and provide feedback on whether the CRF was the right program to initiate (i.e. needed by the ultimate beneficiaries, beneficial for CSOs) to do; whether the CRF was able to address the partner-CSO needs and aspirations; what has worked well (or not) and why; as well as what lessons learned from other donors / similar programmes that the partner-CSOs have worked with that CRF could replicate / consider.

These tools are designed to provide complementary data and respond to the needs of triangulation. As such, taken together, they surface how well the CRF aligns with the needs and aspirations of its grantees, which elements of the model were most (and least) valued, and what recommendations partner-CSOs have for future engagement.

The first instrument, a **20-minute online survey** administered via SurveyMonkey (or comparable platform), will invite respondents from all sixteen partner-CSOs to reflect on their experience with CRF Phase II and provide quantitative data. The survey covers four thematic areas—relevance and value of support, organisational capacity and sustainability, comparative donor experience, and general reflections. It does not request any personal data, and all responses will be aggregated to ensure anonymity.

The second instrument is a section of the **focus group discussion** that is conflated with Pillar 1 to minimise the time-demands on the respondents and to use as little (but meaningful) time from them as possible – just enough to obtain key data. The goal of the focus group section is to encourage participants to share concrete, experience-based examples that help explain the "why" and "how" behind the patterns revealed in the survey data.

Ideally, the same individual from each organisation will complete both the online questionnaire and participate in the focus group session. This ensures that the insights gathered are consistent and grounded in the lived experience of a single respondent. However, recognising the volatile operating environment, the evaluation team accepts that, where necessary (e.g., due to security developments or unexpected staff turnover), it may be a different representative of the same organisation who participates in the focus group discussion. In such cases, facilitators will ensure that responses are still treated as part of a single organisational viewpoint, while making note of this substitution in the analysis phase.

The third instrument is a **session at the September Uzhhorod event** that is called to use the power of collaboration and richness of the partner-CSOs "collective mind" to sieve through the CRF experiences and distil the building blocks of the CRF that the partner-CSOs have found a) valuable, b) not-so-valuable, c) missing (but those that could be great to consider in any future similar programming).

Drafts of both instruments are presented below.

Introduction

Thank you very much for taking part in this survey!

It is part of the independent evaluation of Phase II of the Children's Resilience Fund (CRF). The aim of this study is to better understand how CRF functions as a funding and support mechanism, how well it meets the needs of civil society organisations like yours, and how it could be improved in the future.

Completing the questionnaire will take no more than 30 minutes (17 questions).

We do not ask you to provide any personal data.

Please do not include any in your responses.

All answers will be used in aggregate form and will not be linked to you personally or to your organisation. We therefore encourage you to respond candidly.

Following this survey, we will invite you to take part in online focus groups to discuss the responses in more detail and to understand their context.

If you have any questions, concerns, or reservations about this survey or about the evaluation more broadly, please contact our team at: maksym.klyuchar@gmail.com (Maksym) and/or khrystyna.rybachok@gmail.com (Khrystyna).

Section 1: General Questions

1. Did your organisation participate in the first phase of the CRF? [The current grant your organisation is implementing = Phase II]

    o   Yes

    o   No

    o   Unsure

    o   Other (please specify)

2. What is your role in the project supported under CRF Phase II? *(Select all that apply)*

    o   Leader of the CSO or Board

    o   Fundraiser / proposal writer

    o   Project manager for the CRF-funded project

    o   Communications specialist

    o   MEL or reporting focal point

    o   Other – please specify: _____

3. How many donor-funded projects, including the one supported by CRF, have you implemented over the past 24 months? [Please indicate only your personal experience—not all of your organisation's projects, unless you were involved in all of them!]

    o   1 (only CRF Phase II)

    o   2–3 projects

    o   4–5 projects

    o   6 or more projects

Section 2: CRF Phase II – Experiences and Reflections

4. To what extent did CRF Phase II support (funding, flexibility, communications, etc.) align with your organisation's strategic priorities?

- o Not at all
- o Partially
- o Moderately
- o Mostly
- o Completely

5. How useful was CRF's support beyond funding—for example, mentoring, organisational development support, thematic meetings, peer exchange, informal advice, and so on?
   - o Not at all
   - o Partially
   - o Moderately
   - o Mostly
   - o Extremely

6. Which elements of CRF support were most useful to you or your team during project implementation? (select no more than two)
   - o Flexible budget reallocation
   - o Informal and responsive communication
   - o CRF mentoring or check-ins
   - o Streamlined reporting
   - o Opportunity to participate in peer learning / cohort activities
   - o Organisational development / capacity development support
   - o Other – please explain: _____

7.1 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "Communications and advocacy" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

7.2 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "Fundraising" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

7.3 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "GESI" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

7.4 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "Human resources" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

7.5 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "MEL and Programme Design" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

7.6 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "Safeguarding" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

7.7 If you selected "Organisational development support," please rate how useful the assistance in "ICT and Information Protection" was for you or your team (1 star = not useful at all; 10 stars = extremely useful?)

8. To what extent has the CRF contributed to building your organisation's long-term capacity (project design, monitoring and evaluation, engagement with stakeholders, donors, etc.)?
   o Has not contributed at all
   o Partially contributed
   o Moderately contributed
   o Significantly contributed
   o Extraordinarily contributed

9. Has your team's approach to planning and delivering programmes changed as a result of participating in the CRF?
   o Yes, we introduced major changes
   o Yes, we introduced some changes
   o Yes, we introduced minimal changes
   o No, we perform as before, for the most part
   o Hard to say / unsure
   o Other

10. Do you think your organisation will be able to sustain these achievements after CRF funding and support come to an end?
    o Will definitely not sustain these achievements
    o Will likely not sustain these achievements
    o Will be able to sustain some of these achievements
    o Will likely sustain these achievements
    o Will definitely sustain these achievements
    o Other

11. Do you feel that CRF fostered strong working relationships and networks with other grantee organisations for your team or organisation?
    o Yes, these connections and networks emerged due to CRF
    o Yes, these connections and networks emerged but only because we were proactive (CRF did not facilitate them)
    o Connections and networks with other grantee organisations were already in place
    o I do not feel these connections and networks emerging – either due to CRF or not
    o Other

12. Compared to other donors your organisation has worked with recently, how would you rate CRF in terms of overall ease of collaboration?
- CRF is much worse than other donors
- CRF is slightly worse than other donors
- CRF is about the same as other donors
- CRF is slightly better than other donors

- CRF is much better than other donors
- Hard to say / unsure
- N/A – haven't worked with other donors recently (last 3 years)
- Other

13. Compared to other donors, how would you rate CRF in terms of:

Dimension	Much worse	Slightly worse	About the same	Slightly better	Much better	N/A
Communication	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Responsiveness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Humane attitude	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Flexibility	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Level of demands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Integrity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Focus	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. Overall, how satisfied is your organisation with the experience of participating in CRF Phase II?
- Very dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neutral
- Somewhat satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Other

15. Would your organisation be interested in participating in a future phase of CRF if offered the opportunity?
- Yes
- No
- Unsure
- Other

16. What CRF should definitely keep or strengthen in future phases? (Short open-ended text response up to 100 words)

17. What CRF should consider changing or improving if it continues in the future? (Short open-ended text response up to 100 words)

Thank you very much for your time and insights! Please don't forget to click the "Submit" button at the bottom!

Instrument 2: Focus Group Discussion

Please see Pillar 1 as this is a combined instrument.

Session in Uzhhorod: Detailed Agenda

Final All-Grantee Meeting of Children's Resilience Fund (CRF)
Evaluators' Sessions

Dates: September 23–24, 2025

Stationery list: some flipchart paper, glue, scissors, flipchart markers (2 sets of 4 per table), sticker notes, and colour print magazines.

Session's Concept:
Drawing inspiration from **Future Search** methods, the sessions will:
- Provide space for honest reflection on the impact, challenges, and lessons of the CRF.
- Enable collective validation of the evaluation's emerging findings (selected ones as discussed with the Partner-CSOs rather than with the CRF team).
- Foster dialogue and imagination about sustainability beyond CRF, as well as the potential CRF Phase 3.

September 23 (13:45-15:15)
Session 1: *"What Have We Learned? A Shared Reflection on the CRF Journey" (90 min)*
Scene: participants are seated in a circle to facilitate equal sharing and exchange of ideas and reflections.

13:45-13:50 - Welcome and Opening (5 min)
Facilitator reiterates the purpose: reflecting on the past, present, and gathering insights to inform the future. Facilitator introduces the session and its program.

13:50-14:25 – Check-In: Exercise "River of Life" (30 min)

13:50 – 14:00 - Participants are encouraged to share and draw stories of their personal and/ or their organisation's participation in the program.
Use metaphors: "Your river might have rapids, calm stretches, or unexpected bends—just like your experience."
Map milestones, highs/lows.
Materials required: colour print magazines, scissors, glue-sticks, flipchart paper (1 flipchart notepad per table), flipchart markers, sticky notes will need to be provided for visual storytelling

14:00-14:10 – participants share and listen to each other's stories in small groups of 4.

14:10-14:25 – Groups report to the plenary (3 min per group) about their highs and lows. Facilitator invites feedback from individual participants who are willing to share.

14:25 – 14:35 - Presentation of evaluation's emerging findings (10 min)
Facilitator starts by reminding that the two sessions are not attended by the donor and that this session is a safe space to share their feedback in confidentiality. Facilitator explains how the feedback will be used (e.g. to refine findings, potential programming of Phase 3, if it does take place). Facilitator presents findings using Power Point and visual aids.

14:35 – 14:50 Participants work in 4 groups (4 participants per group) to reflect on the presented findings.
Questions for reflection:
- What findings resonated most with your experience?
- Are there any findings that surprised you or felt inconsistent with your reality?
- Do you feel the evaluation captured the essence of your organization's experience with CRF?

- What did we get wrong (or what points have "two sides")?
- Is anything missing?

14:50-15:05 – Groups report to the plenary.
15:05-15:10 - Facilitator invites feedback from individual participants who are willing to share.
15:10-15:15 – Closing of evaluators' session 1. Brief intro of Session 2. Facilitator invites participants to share their feedback of the day on the **Feedback Wall*.**

24 September 11:30-13:00
Evaluators' session 2: **"Let us create a perfect CRF Phase 3!"**

11:30 – 11:35 - Check-in: facilitator asks each participant to finish the sentence: "It's 2035. Children in Ukraine are thriving because…"

11:35-13:00 - Group session: "Create your dream 1 million GBP CRF-3 phase".

11:35-11:40 - Facilitator presents imaginary scenario (slides and reminder one-pager printouts so that the participants can peek use them as cheat-sheets) where Phase 3 was approved with funding of GBP 1,000,000. On top, there is a GBP 50,000 fund for all types of services, trainings, joint events, etc. available for use over 18 months. The CSOs don't need to think about the administrative costs of the Program – only about how they would structure and design such a program.
The goal is to foster creativity, strategic thinking, partnership-building, and program design and revisit the following questions:
- How well has the CRF addressed the partner-CSO needs and aspirations?
- What has worked well and why? What has not worked well and why?
- What are the lessons learned from other donors / similar programmes that the partner-CSOs have worked with that CRF could replicate / consider?
- Which aspects of the CRF have been most and least valued by grantees and other stakeholders?

11:40-12:20 - Participants work in 4 groups of 4 to create an Imaginary CRF-3.
Participants could use the following prompts to create the program or come up with their own template.
- Vision statement for CRF-3 (What change are you aiming to create?)
- Strategic goals (up to 3)
- Expected outcomes (What will success look like after 18 months?)
- Key Grant Streams that will be supported from December 2025 until April 2027 (focus areas for the grants)
- Selection process for the grantees (open call, limited call, co-design of projects, etc.)
- Include timelines if relevant.

Further questions to consider:
- Partnerships and collaborations: how can CSO partners work closer to create synergies and joint projects?
- How would you use a shared fund for capacity building?
- What's one bold idea you'd try if funding weren't a barrier?
- 5 foundation principles for the Phase 3 or Charter of Phase 3.

12:20-12:50 Teams present results of group work (5 min presentation per group +Q&A).

Feedback walk with sticky notes – other participants may choose the Phase designs they liked by voting with sticky notes.
The presentations are audio-recorded, and the flipcharts are photographed by the facilitator.

12:50-12:55 - Each participant is asked to choose one word that captures their takeaway from sessions.
12:55-13:00 – Facilitator closes the session by thanking the participants for their work and outlining next steps (if relevant).

*The Feedback Wall will be assembled to "park" more ideas from the participants. The facilitator will remind participants to use the wall to write up other ideas, such as the following:

- Prompts like "My aha moment", "We need more of…", "What stayed with me".
- Participants may anonymously share thoughts on sticky notes.