

# Role of International Organizations in Promoting Sustainable Development in Conflict-Affected Regions: Case of Luhansk Region in Ukraine

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## ABSTRACT

The article examines the role of international organizations in promoting sustainable development and achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) in conflict-affected regions by providing the case of Luhansk region, which since 2014 has lost a significant part of its territory, substantial industrial potential and has got numerous political, social and economic problems due to the military conflict in the East of Ukraine. The international research has already given successful experience of role of international organizations in promoting sustainable development of various problem territories. Investigation of case of Luhansk region is structured around the analysis of presence of international organization in Ukraine as a whole and in Luhansk region as a conflict-affected area, and their activities. Such analysis allowed to distinguish the main directions of international organizations' activities and identify the key sustainable development aspects and SDGs, the achievement of which is possible due to these activities. Even the cursory comparison of the budgets of the region and international organizations made it obvious that the local authorities are incapable of solving the emerged problems and achieving the SDGs in conflict-affected areas without assistance of international community.

*Keywords: conflict-affected region, sustainable development, international organizations, promoting, sustainable development goals*

## 1. Introduction

Sustainable development is a concept, accepted by almost all countries in the world. The transition to sustainable development path and achievement of sustainable development goals is the priority for the world community and individual countries and regions. Ukraine together with other countries acknowledged Agenda 21 more than 25 years ago, recognized the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, adopted respectively in 2000 and 2015. In 2015, Ukraine adopted the Strategy for Sustainable Development "Ukraine-2020", which defined the main guidelines for the country's further development and established the number of reforms to be undertaken to promote and support sustainable development and security of the country, and prepare the country for accession to the European Union (*President approved...*, 2015; *Stratehiya staloho...*, 2015). 68 reforms, envisaged by this strategy, deal with many spheres of the economy and social life of the country's population and concern the issues of

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enforcement of human rights and freedoms, as well as the development of entrepreneurship, environmental protection, social and other programs. The achievement of these reforms and the country's transition to sustainable development path is hampered, first of all, by the military conflict that started in 2014 and continues today. Some regions of Ukraine are occupied, among which is Luhansk region - which is located in the East of Ukraine and borders Russia. Sustainable development of Luhansk region is complicated by the fact that the region lost substantial industrial potential, turned from industrial to agrarian region, and accepted the significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from the occupied territories, which exacerbated certain social problems. The conflict and the changes, caused by the conflict, affected the capacity of the region to solve the problems of transition to sustainable development path due to lack of resources (financial, material, personnel etc.). To address these issues, the international community has attracted international organizations that have focused their attention and resources on sustainable development of Luhansk region as a conflict-affected territory.

## **2. Role of international organizations in promoting sustainable development of territories: international experience and research**

The issues of sustainable development of territories under supervision and support of international organizations have already been examined by other scientists (Suzuki, 2015; Nachmias, 1999). There are good examples of how such organizations and multilateral institutions promote commitment of individual businesses in developing countries for environmental management and social responsibility, especially that formal local institutions meet with certain obstacles while promoting sustainability policies and motivating businesses to follow them (Jamali et al., 2015; Newell, 2005). At the same time the global trends and international support make local businesses and authorities more sensitive and adaptive to sustainability principles.

As sustainable development became the global paradigm for development of socio-economic systems of different levels, there is a suggestion to see sustainability as vital "policy choice" for globalization processes, and international organizations as such institutions, that should provide the tools for balancing the "competing interests" of globalization and sustainability (French, 2002) and facilitate innovations which promote sustainable development (Voegtlin et al., 2017). There is an opinion that religion (being world spread and an important social institution in many countries) plays significant role in sustainable development of territories and can serve as an instrument for balancing needs and interests under globalization processes (Semenenko et al., 2014). However religious institutions may happen to be in conflict themselves or cause conflicts among different groups of population (Saroglou, 2016).

The best way to promote the sustainability principles among population is often considered through education, as education is considered to be a driver that is capable to make changes related to sustainable development in different countries and cultures (Stephens et al., 2008). To reach the goals, international community organizes various courses and schools promoting education for sustainable development, especially in developing countries (Calder, 2003).

Special attention of international community is paid not only to just "developing" countries, but also to conflict-affected regions. Such regions as Palestine and Cambodia are described by Newell (2005), who shows the efforts of international community as the basement for socio-economic development and political changes. The results of such efforts lead to small business development, establishment of partnership and co-ordination of different institutions inside a region and other positive results.

Sustainable development concept foresees secure environment without military conflicts, which ruin the environment, decrease economic performance, deprive people of their rights and freedoms. Thus, attention of external actors becomes very important in promoting sustainable development in conflict-affected areas. In this case achievement of sustainability goals in conflict and post-conflict regions requires active work of various actors including international organizations (Blinc et al., 2007), and sustainability becomes a performance indicator for international organizations (Lempert et al., 2008). In that case the research of performance of international organization in conflict-affected regions becomes important.

### **3. Activities of International Organizations for Achievement of Sustainable Development Goals in Luhansk Region as a Conflict-Affected Territory**

Luhansk region of Ukraine is one of the two Ukrainian regions (excluding Crimea), the significant part of which was occupied in 2014 and at present is not under control of the Ukrainian government. The results of the occupation tremendously influenced the economy and social life of the region, and the state of environmental protection. Being before the conflict among the leaders in gross regional product output in Ukraine, the performance of Luhansk region in 2014 decreased by 59 percent compared to 2015 (in prices of the previous year). In 2017 the absolute value of gross regional product was even less than in 2014. Considering the inflation in the country due to the conflict, the decrease in prices of 2014 was about 71 percent (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2019). The military conflict caused mass internal migration inside the country: more than 1.5 million people moved from the occupied territories to the territories under Ukrainian control and received the status of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Luhansk region became the second region by the number of hosted IDPs (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2017), and such mass migration caused significant social tension in the region and as the result – social and economic problems. Luhansk region became a depressive region, and a lot of people turned out to be in the zone of "unexpected poverty". At the same time, according to (Cobbinah et al., 2015) poverty is a real challenge to sustainable development in developing country, thus making the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 1 "No poverty" necessary for achieving sustainable development of any region. Thus, the issue of promoting sustainable development of the region became vital, as the local authorities turned out to be incapable to support resilience of the region by themselves. To deal with the identified issues, a large number of international organizations organized their work in Luhansk region and Ukraine as a whole.

One of the most active international organizations in Ukraine is the United Nations Organization (together with its Agencies), at the Assembly of which in 2015 the

Resolution on introducing the Sustainable Development Goals was adopted (*United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015*, n.d.). The UN Office in Ukraine focuses on support to peacebuilding and transformation in the country. It distinguishes the four main areas under which all programs and projects are implemented (United Nations in Ukraine, n.d.):

"sustainable economic growth, environment and employment; equal access to quality and inclusive services and social protection; democratic governance, rule of law and civil participation; security of population, social cohesion and reconciliation with a special focus on the East of Ukraine" (United Nations in Ukraine, n.d.). These areas were recently transformed from: humanitarian response; restoration, stabilization and rehabilitation of the regions of Ukraine; support of long-term national management reforms; counselling and assisting the Government of Ukraine in implementing the recommendations of the UN human rights mechanisms (United Nations in Ukraine, n.d.). Thus, even at the official level, the activity of the UN is focusing on the East of Ukraine – Luhansk and Donetsk regions. In addition, the UN Office is actively engaged in promoting sustainable development goals, and has set up a separate website that addresses the objectives of the programmes, the measures which are being implemented or are planned to be implemented, and the extent to which the goals and objectives have already been achieved. Besides, educational work is actively carried out and youth work and educational institutions are also supported by the UN in Ukraine and Luhansk region in particular (*Sustainable development goals in Ukraine*, n.d.).

UN system in Ukraine includes different UN Agencies, which have a defined range of issues and activities. Since the SDGs are quite broad and cover almost all the main problems of human development, it can be noted that each agency contributes to the achievement of the SDGs in Ukraine (table 1). The goals and aspects of sustainable development outlined in the table are not final. Almost every agency carries out other projects that are consistent with other SDGs.

**Table 1.** UN agencies dealing with sustainable development in Ukraine

UN Agency	Activity directions in Ukraine	SDGs	SD aspect
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	Support of the country on the path of sustainable human development	All 17	Ecological Economic Social
World Health Organization (WHO)	Healthcare	1, 3, 6, 13	Ecological Economic Social
World Food Program (WFP)	Provision of food assistance to the most vulnerable groups of population	1, 2, 3	Social
UNICEF	Life and development of children	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10	Social
UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)	Sustainable development, project financing, coordination and supervision, partnership building, youth activation, work with civil society, cooperation forum development etc.	All 17	Ecological Economic Social
International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Work with migrants	8, 9, 10, 17	Economic Social

UN Agency	Activity directions in Ukraine	SDGs	SD aspect
International Labour Organization (ILO)	Promotion of employment, effective social dialogue, improvement of social protection and working conditions	8, 16, 17	Economic Social
International Finance Corporation (IFC)	Development of entrepreneurship, promotion of economic development of country	7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15	Ecological Economic Social
International Monetary Fund (IMF)	International trade and sustainable economic growth	1, 8, 9	Economic
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	HIV prevention and treatment, fight against AIDS	3, 5, 10, 16, 17	Social
UNESCO	Co-ordination of cooperation of the world community in the field of science, education, culture and communication	4, 5, 10, 13, 14, 15, 17	Ecological Social
UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)	Provision of humanitarian aid	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 10	Social
UN Women	Achieving equality between men and women, empowering women	5, 8, 10, 16, 17	Economic Social
UN Volunteers	Promoting sustainable development goals	All 17	Ecological Economic Social
UN Environment Programme (UNEP)	Work with climate change issues, conflicts and disasters due to environmental disasters, ecosystem regulation, environmental review, resource efficiency	13, 14, 15	Ecological
Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)	Development of agriculture, forming favourable business climate for farmers	2, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15	Ecological Economic Social
World Bank	Assistance in ensuring sustainable economic growth	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 16, 17	Ecological Economic Social
UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)	Providing protection and assistance to refugees	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 10	Economic Social
UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)	Prevention of HIV and other diseases, advocacy of national drug control programs	3, 10, 16	Social
UN Population Fund (UNFPA)	Reproductive health and family planning	3, 5	Social

*Source: (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.; United Nations in Ukraine, n.d.; The WHO Country Office in Ukraine, n.d.; International Organization for Migration, n.d.; International Monetary Fund, n.d.; UNAIDS Strategy..., n.d.; UN Economic and Social Council, n.d.; UN Environment, n.d.; UNESCO, n.d.; UNICEF Ukraine, n.d.; UN Volunteers, 2019)*

The particular attention from this list should be given to UNDP, which is the UN agency focusing on development issues. The purpose of UNDP is to support the country "on the path to sustainable human development". The main directions of the projects in Ukraine are peacebuilding and restoration; democratic governance; ecology and energy. The 17 SDGs are the foundation for UNDP funding and policy formulation (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.). UNDP actively co-operates with state and local authorities, educational and scientific institutions, civil organizations and communities through joint projects or

by providing certain assistance. For example, within the EU/UNDP project "Community Based Approach to Local Development", the network of higher education institutions in Ukraine - partners of the project – was created. These education institutions include two Universities from Luhansk region, which were temporarily displaced from the occupied territory to the territory under Ukrainian government control. The task of this network is to promote the SDGs, including through work with the youth, strengthening of scientific activity in the field of sustainable development, including sustainability topics into curricula etc. (*Resource Centre ...*, 2016). Several memorandums on cooperation have been signed between UNDP and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine. They cover the issues of sustainable development, environment protection and energy, cooperation on climate change (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.). In Luhansk region UNDP implements a lot of projects, all of which are united into several aggregate programmes with specific components. Some programmes operate in the whole Ukraine, while others were set specifically for the East of Ukraine – the Luhansk and Donetsk regions as those, which suffered directly of the conflict, and the neighbouring regions. The main directions include (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.):

- The UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme – operates mostly in the East of Ukraine;
- Democratic Governance and Reform – operates at the level of the whole Ukraine;
- Sustainable Development and Environment – operates at the level of the whole Ukraine;
- Innovations – a new direction, which operates at the level of the whole Ukraine;
- Gender equality – a new direction, which operates at the level of the whole Ukraine.

The directions and programmes may change from time to time. Some of the mentioned above directions are the continuation of the previous programmes, while some of them are the new ones. For example, Gender equality and Innovations are the new directions, however these issues are often included into other UNDP programmes and projects.

Within one direction (or programme) the projects may change; however, it is possible to present the aggregate information about the directions and the SDGs and sustainable development aspects, which are covered by them (table 2). The suggested SDGs and SD aspects have been thoroughly analysed using all the programme documents, reports etc.

**Table 2.** Projects and activities of UNDP for Luhansk region sustainable development

Direction (Programme)	Areas of work and activities	SDGs	SD aspect
Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme (RPP)	Promoting reconciliation and restoration of governance in conflict-affected areas; reorganization of local government, restoration of basic services for the population; ensuring human rights, gender equality; improving social cohesion of population; promoting decentralization; investing in the restoration of key infrastructure objects, providing basic needs and proper living conditions for IDPs and local communities; improving security and safety in conflict-	1, 5, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17	Economic Social

Direction (Programme)	Areas of work and activities	SDGs	SD aspect
	affected areas, improving justice		
Democratic Governance and Reform	Work of the Ombudsman, human rights protection; quality legislation and monitoring of its implementation; promoting gender equality, democratization, youth civic activity; counteracting Tuberculosis and HIV / AIDS; transparency of public procurement in the health care system; preventing conflicts of interest, fighting corruption; promotion of reforms; small and medium business development	1, 3, 5, 8, 10, 16, 17	Social Economic Ecological
Sustainable Development and Environment (previously Ecology and Energetics)	Development of sustainable development strategies, expert support of SD strategies development and realization, raising awareness on SD issues and SDGs, increase of biomass energy usage, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; climate protection, sustainable use of resources; promoting energy efficiency and improving energy efficiency of public buildings, creating energy management information system, forming effective energy policy, development and realization of sustainable energy solutions	7, 12, 13, 14, 15	Economic Ecological Social
Innovations	Promoting SD initiatives, gender equality, youth activities, minorities' initiatives through innovations; creation of innovation laboratory to solve development issues	All SGDs	Economic Ecological Social
Gender equality	Promoting gender equality, empowerment of women, introducing gender-based approach into different spheres of life and activities; promoting women's leadership for good governance; developing gender-sensitive inclusive sustainable development, peacebuilding and recovery	All SGDs	Economic Ecological Social
Other projects	Youth activities support; developing small and medium business; environmental protection, partnership between communities and government, community mobilization, community development and micro-projects support, capacity building and rural economic development, energy efficiency, knowledge management; local development planning, citizen engagement in decision making process; providing equal access to services and social facilities for people with disabilities; providing humanitarian assistance, employment support, provision of legal and psychological assistance to IDPs and local communities, strengthening dialogue between them	All SGDs	Economic Ecological Social

*Source: (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.)*

The SDGs in tables 1 and 2 reflect the priorities of the programs most commonly implemented by these organization. Some organizations prioritize specific SDGs at their websites. The allocation of SD aspects is conditional because they are interrelated, and changes in one direction (for example, improvement of social conditions of people) lead to changes in another (improvement of human capacity, wages, economic development etc). Other projects in table 2 include the projects realized before the recently defined directions and in fact cover all SDGs and SD aspects in Luhansk region development.

It should be noted that not all UN agencies and organizations, which belong to its structure, are represented in Luhansk region. In particular, there are no offices of such organizations as the World Bank, UNODC, UNAIDS, IMF, IFC, ILO. Organizations such as the UNICEF, FAO, UN Volunteers have representative offices in the city of

Kramatorsk in Donetsk region, but their activities cover Luhansk region as well. Other UN organizations and agencies are represented in the city of Severodonetsk, Luhansk region.

There are international organizations and funds, which operate in Ukraine and Luhansk region in particular, that do not belong to the UN structure, but realize or allocate funds for many projects aimed at sustainable development of the country and its regions. Among them are the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the Global Environment Facility (GEF), The Nordic Environment Finance Corporation (NEFCO), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the Central European Initiative (CEI), the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB), The Global Climate Partnership Fund (GCPF), the Dutch International Guarantees for Housing foundation (DIGH), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P), The German Development Bank (KfW), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), The Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ), Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Ukraine Office, the Heinrich Boell Foundation's Office, The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office, Swiss Cooperation Office in Ukraine, the International Renaissance Foundation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine (SMM), the Austrian Red Cross, National Red Cross Society, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Mercy Corps, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Danish Demining Group (DDG), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Doctors of the World (MDM), Terre des hommes (TDH), Caritas and others (Luhansk Regional State Administration, 2016). Some organizations work only at the state level (e.g. EBRD, EIB etc.), while others are implementing specific projects in Luhansk region in order to solve certain problems and promote its sustainable development (NRC, SMM etc.).

For example, USAID's projects include support for agricultural and rural development, humanitarian assistance programs, assistance to displaced higher education institutions, development of dual education system, promotion of civic engagement, entrepreneurship development and job creation, economic growth, improvement of social cohesion in communities affected by conflict, promotion of decentralization, increase of transparency of local authorities, fight with human trafficking, increase of quality of medical services and others (*Ukraine | U.S. Agency...*, n.d.). USAID activities fall under many of the SDGs and in fact contribute to sustainable development of Luhansk region.

Decentralization processes in Ukraine and Luhansk region in particular are areas of focus of various international organizations. Promotion and assistance in development of decentralization processes in conflict-affected regions in Ukraine is extremely important, as this reform foresees complete transformation of authorities and resource allocation and introduces the core "bottom-up" principle into administration processes. As the transformation meets with a lot of obstacles at the local level (confrontation by the regional elites), the international organization teach the "bottom-up" approach to local population in order to strengthen the local institutions, reduce corruption, build the



capacity of local governance and thus reach the SDG 16. Such international organizations include the Swiss Cooperation Office in Ukraine, which implemented the project "Support for Decentralization in Ukraine" (DESPRO); The European Union which together with GIZ and SIDA is implementing "U-LEAD with Europe: local empowerment, accountability and development" programme in Ukraine (Palchuk, 2016). Achievement of SDG 16 in its turn entails the fulfilment of other SDGs by strengthening institutions and removing such obstacles as corruption and bureaucracy.

In addition to promotion of decentralization processes, SIDA also concentrates its attention on sustainable economic development (by promoting reforms, establishing favourable investment climate, increasing transparency, improving conditions and prospects for small and medium businesses), promotion of democratic principles and human rights (especially the rights of IDPs after the beginning of the conflict in 2014 and gender equality), energy efficiency improvements (by financing energy saving projects at the local level, supporting environmental organizations working on energy efficiency improvement), humanitarian aid (providing shelter, access to clean water and sanitation, psychosocial support etc. to internal migrants from the occupied territories in Luhansk region and the local population) (*Cooperation in Ukraine*, n.d.).

Another big charitable foundation, which contributes to sustainable development of Ukraine and Luhansk region in particular, is the International Renaissance Foundation, whose mission is to promote the development of open society in Ukraine through support of meaningful public initiatives based on democratic values. Since 2014, the fund has been active in such areas as fighting corruption, promoting respect for human rights, ensuring access for vulnerable and poor population groups to justice and strengthening their capacity, fighting with political populism and promoting a conscious choice and open society values, introducing democratic practices; developing social capital, supporting ecological initiatives etc. (International Renaissance Foundation, 2018). The International Renaissance Foundation promotes the implementation of a large number of public initiatives, micro and macro projects that contribute to the sustainable development of their communities and the country as a whole. The Foundation's activities contribute to achievement of such SDGs as 3, 4, 5, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

The German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) has supported Ukraine since 2003. The priority directions of GIZ cooperation with Ukraine are: democracy, civil society, public administration, regional development and decentralization; power engineering; sustainable economic development; overcoming the crisis results in the East of Ukraine, preventing spread of HIV / AIDS (*Ukraine. Deutsche Gesellschaft...*, n.d.). Consequently, the activity of GIZ in Ukraine is rather broad and covers a significant range of SDGs: 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 16.

The work of the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission (SMM) has started in Ukraine since 2014 (the year of the beginning of the conflict in the East of Ukraine) and aims at reducing tension and promoting peace, stability and security in Luhansk and Donetsk regions. The OSCE SMM monitors the situation in the East of Ukraine and provides its reports and facts on specific incidents (OSCE, 2019). Consequently, the main mission of SMM is to achieve the SDG 16 – Peace, justice and effective institutions.

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Danish Demining Group (DDG) work together in Luhansk region. The key areas of their work include providing protection to

IDPs and other groups affected by the conflict, including children, preventing violence, supporting initiatives in the field of human rights protection and legal assistance; providing financial support, asylum, food and non-food items, housing renewal; supporting small business and self-employment of the population through grants for restoration and opening new businesses; providing humanitarian assistance (DRC, DDG, 2019). The SDGs that are in line with the activities of DRC and DDG are 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 16.

Many international foundations and organizations have started to work actively in Ukraine, and in particular in Luhansk and Donetsk regions, since 2014, after the beginning of the military conflict in the East of Ukraine. Their activities are mainly related to the provision of temporary asylum, humanitarian assistance (including food, non-food products, essential goods), cash aid, legal advice to IDPs and other population groups affected by the conflict. The activities of such organizations focus, first of all, on the social dimension of sustainable development. But the working capacity of people, their safety and satisfaction of basic needs directly affect the economic component. Thus, the SDGs, which relate to such activities, include 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, 16. Among such foundations and organizations should be noted the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the Red Cross Society in Ukraine, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), Mercy Corps and others. For example, NRC provides support to those affected by the conflict. This assistance includes the provision of water, food, non-food items, sanitary facilities, housing maintenance, information, counselling, free legal assistance. The NRC activities are concentrated in Luhansk and Donetsk regions, especially close to the demarcation line between the Ukrainian and occupied territories (*NRC in Ukraine*, n.d.).

The Red Cross Society in Ukraine operates in Ukraine in many areas, including providing humanitarian assistance. In 2016, such assistance was received by 202 thousand people for the total amount of UAH 104 million (which is almost EUR 3.5 million). In addition to humanitarian assistance, the organization assisted in search of relatives and restoration of family ties, psychosocial support etc. The activities of the Red Cross Society in Ukraine extend not only to IDPs, but also to local residents, demobilized servicemen and their families (Ukrainian Red Cross Society, 2017). The activities of all organizations are aimed at satisfying different stakeholders and contributing to attainment of SDGs in conflict-affected regions and the country as a whole.

Due to the conflict in the East of Ukraine, many industrial facilities either stopped working or remained at the occupied territories, which caused such a big issue as increased unemployment. On the one hand, a significant quantity of displaced people has led to increase in labour supply at the labour market, and, on the other hand, some displaced persons were unskilled for certain existing positions of labour demand and some displaced persons being more qualified than local population and taking their places led to increase of unemployment among local population as well. Therefore, many organizations and foundations directed their funds and activities at retraining IDPs and local population so that they could acquire new qualities and competences for improving their own competitiveness at the labour market, and to support entrepreneurship and create jobs by providing microgrants. Very often international organizations first involve a person in the training and then stimulate him or her to open a new business or expand

an existing one, which also contributes to creation of additional jobs. Among the organizations that promote the development of small business and obtainment of new vocational education are UNDP, DRC, Czech NGO "People in Need", Charitable organization World Jewish Relief, supported by EU GURT Resource Center, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, the Bayer Fund (formerly Monsanto Fund), USAID and others (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.; DRC, DDG, 2019; Ukraine | U.S. Agency, n.d.; Monsanto, 2018). These directions are really important for the economic and social development of Luhansk region, and therefore, ensuring its further sustainability. The Bayer Fund supports also agricultural projects, education, training programs, social projects, including access to sanitation, food and public security etc (Monsanto, 2018). The SDGs that correspond to the Fund's activities are 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12.

Some organizations and funds do not carry out direct activities in Ukraine, but allocate funds to other organizations for the implementation of certain programs. Among them is the Global Environment Facility (GEF), which sponsors projects and programs implemented by other organizations and foundations in Ukraine. One of such projects was UNDP project aimed at increase of investments into energy efficiency projects which dealt with public buildings and were based on ESCO model. The project budget was USD 5.48 million and it foresaw not only reduction of energy costs in the regions, but also decrease in carbon dioxide emissions. Other projects involved a lot of government institutions and ministries in Ukraine, contributed to integration of "the Rio conventions into the national policy of Ukraine" with total budget USD 900.000 and "development and commercialization of bioenergy technologies in the municipal sector in Ukraine" with total budget USD 4.7 million) (UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.), and thus to increasing energy efficiency, solution of country's environmental problems and attainment of SDGs 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15. Other mentioned organization also contribute to sustainable development of Luhansk region as a conflict-affected region and assist the attainment of SDGs at this territory.

In terms of financial resources, invested in sustainable development of Luhansk region, it is possible to make the comparison of Luhansk region budget for 2019 (UAH 4,250.243 million which is approximately EUR 144 million) (*Order of the Head...*, 2018) and the budgets of the international organizations for certain projects.

Regional budget expenditures in 2019 (*Order of the Head...*, 2018) are the following for:

- Education - UAH 542.95 million (EUR 18.4 million) (the majority of which is salaries and utilities, and development expenditures reserve only 0.16% of the total amount);
- Healthcare - UAH 553.04 million (EUR 18.75 million) (with share of development expenditures – 0.009%);
- Social protection and security - UAH 130.25 million (EUR 4.41 million) (with no expenditures for development);
- Environmental protection - UAH 21.55 million (EUR 0.73 million) (with no expenditures for development).

The resources for development could be taken from the State Fund for Reconstruction and Development, however fundraising from this source depends on many factors.

The budget of some international organizations' projects for certain projects (NRC in Ukraine, n.d.; OSCE, 2019; *Ukraine | U.S. Agency...*, n.d.; UNDP in Ukraine, n.d.) are:

- UNDP "Support to Economic Recovery of Eastern Ukraine" (USD 1.12 million (EUR 1 million) in 2019 for Luhansk and Donetsk regions);

- The UN Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme (more than USD 50 million (EUR 44.79 million) for 4 years for 6 regions in Ukraine with special focus on Luhansk and Donetsk regions as conflict-affected areas);
- USAID Democratic Governance East Activity in Ukraine (USD 57 million (EUR 51.06 million) for 5 years for Luhansk and Donetsk regions with possible engagement of other crisis affected regions);
- OSCE SMM in Ukraine (EUR 3.6 million for 2018);
- NRC ((USD 6.3 million (EUR 5.64 million) for 2018).

## Conclusion

Luhansk region suffered in absolutely all spheres of life because of the military conflict in the East of Ukraine, which resulted in occupation of significant part of its territory, the loss of the industrial potential, mass internal migration and emergence of a lot of social and political problems. The conflict affected the sustainable development of Luhansk region throwing back all the achievements and the progress gained before 2014. As it turned out the local and the governmental authorities failed to solve all the emerged problems in the East of Ukraine due to the limited resources and inability to provide basic support to the conflict-affected regions. Today the economic performance of Luhansk region remains the same as it was just after the beginning of the conflict in 2014. The reforms, foreseen by the Strategy for Sustainable Development "Ukraine-2020", bring results only partially, as besides "traditional" directions of development the conflict-affected regions require peacebuilding measures which will facilitate the smooth flow of reforms.

The activities of international organizations make significant contribution to sustainable development of Ukraine as a whole and Luhansk region as a conflict-affected territory in particular. The directions of activities of international organization are very broad and include a lot of programmes and projects, which contribute to attainment of different SDGs in Luhansk region. These directions foresee:

- promotion of various reforms in conflict-affected regions as well as in other regions of Ukraine (including through providing relevant methodologies and knowledge to population and local authorities, and decreasing the level of population opposition to them);
- economic recovery of the region and promotion of small and medium business development (based on the fact that the big industries are left on the occupied territories, and restoration and rebuilding of the industries would require significant amount of financial resources, which are absent), thus contributing to increase of decent employment, reduction of poverty and inequality;
- solution of social issues in the regions (through activation of people as economically active population and as a civil society, advocating needs and rights of vulnerable groups, promotion of tolerance and peacebuilding among local and displaced population);
- attention to energy efficiency and environmental innovations, which will contribute to promotion of clean energy and solution of environmental issues in the region.

Identifying the SDGs and the key SD aspects that will be promoted by one or another organization is somewhat conventional, since achievement of one goal often entails the achievement of others. At the same time highlighting these goals and aspects allows to see the key issues of the conflict-affected regions that are relevant to the international

community, as well as to structure and classify the activities of international organizations and see the possible future development gaps. Absence of international organizations in conflict-affected regions could have brought to even greater decrease in performance of these regions, but this statement requires additional research and thorough examination of budgets and key performance indicators. The results of the activities of international organizations in Luhansk region correspond to the SDGs and their targets, and contribute to sustainable development of this conflict-affected region.

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