

Addendum Policy Note to the Local Government Reform Report: the relevance of place-sensitive strategies in emergency and reconstruction contexts.

Towards achieving 'strategies of gain' in post-war Ukraine

by

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1. Introduction

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a devastating attack on neighbouring Ukraine, a European democracy of 44 million people. Already engulfed in an eight-year war in its Eastern provinces (Luhansk and Donetsk), Ukraine is now battling its way out of what has been dabbed as the largest conflict on European soil since the Second World War. The fast-evolving situation makes any attempts to provide robust estimates of the total economic, social, and human loss difficult. That said, it is now clear that the conflict will have enormous consequences. It will entail great physical and non-physical damage, meaning that the Ukraine emerging postconflict will have a different set of priorities resulting from the exacerbation of preconflict challenges and the emergence of new ones. According to UNHCR, the conflict has already ignited the greatest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War.¹ The Ukraine that will emerge from the conflict faces the challenges of coping with the massive destruction of physical infrastructure and assets —particularly in certain areas of the country, dealing with the psychological damage of a war, and ensuring that the loss of human capital and talent remains temporary and does not become permanent. These challenges will be determining factors in any post-conflict scenario that will emerge once the conflict is over.

Arguably, there is little development intervention that can be carried out in times of war. Economic and human resources have swiftly been directed towards the conflict and the hardest hit territories. Democratic institutions have been complemented by military councils to aid in the defence and safety of cities and local communities. In the meantime, local authorities are facing great constraints in ensuring the provision of even the most basic public goods and services, while coordinating defensive efforts. Whereas the current situation leaves little room for development policy and action, once the war is over an inclusive, sustainable, and speedy recovery process will be crucial for Ukraine to return to hard-won, pre-conflict living standards and to possibly achieve greater socio-economic gains.

Recovery and reconstruction strategies are often testing. Post-conflict areas are frequently beleaguered with sets of very specific challenges. These include (i) the need for coordination between the multiplicity of local, national, and international actors; (ii) increased urgency, which demands rapid responses by stakeholders; (iii) sparse resources, which need to be efficiently utilised; and (iv) capacity constraints, following the outflow of talent due to the conflict. Addressing these challenges is often easier said than done given the complexity and fast-evolving scenarios of post-conflict areas (UNDP, 2016).

Against this backdrop, recovery strategies advocating for sustainable, inclusive, and resilient rebuilding and whose aim is to 'build back better' —instead of simply

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¹ https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine



championing a return to the status quo— are more likely to deliver a long-lasting impact. This will be achieved not only by tackling the need for physical reconstruction, but also by actively designing and engaging in a process of social restoration and resurgence. At the same time, 'strategies of gain' in conflict-torn territories require a number of elements to be in place, such as a clear road map, an efficient process for needs recognition and resource allocation, a well-organised, accountable institutional system, and the basic institutional capacities to implement the road map. Strategies of gain also need to take into account the specificity of each territory —both before and during the conflict— and allow for some degree of flexibility in order to adapt to the local context. Indeed, Ukrainian cities and regions will bear a different impact from the invasion, according to their location in the geography of the war. Their ex-ante level of development will also count for the reconstruction and redevelopment efforts. Many of the eastern Ukrainian regions, already plagued by significant development constraints and bottlenecks even before the conflict, are so far bearing the brunt of the destruction, loss of human lives, and displacement of people. Strategic cities, such as the capital Kyiv, once hosting some of the most dynamic industrial and economic ecosystems, are also experiencing huge physical and non-physical damage. Other territories, such as those in the West, may hopefully avoid large scale material destruction, but may still face a considerable deterioration of human and social capital. The non-negligible differences between territories call for coordinated, yet locally tailored, place-sensitive recovery strategies in the immediate aftermath of the invasion (Rodríguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2017).

Shortly before the beginning of the conflict, in collaboration with U-LEAD we published a report on Local Government Reform in Ukraine, advocating for a bottom-up, place-sensitive development strategy to realise the full socio-economic potential of all Ukrainian regions and municipalities. The report presented a set of ten lessons learned and policy recommendations for the successful design and implementation of place-sensitive strategies (Table 1). Building upon our previous work and acknowledging the changing reality, this addendum shed lights on the all-important characteristics of postwar successful recovery strategies and argues that place-sensitive development policies will deliver the greatest returns in a highly-differentiated post-conflict context across Ukrainian territories. It also argues that the ten lessons learned will assume heighted importance for a recovery process in stages, which builds on solid foundations and evidence, and involves the largest possible group of stakeholders.



Table 1: Lessons learnt for a successful implementation of place-sensitive policies across Ukrainian subnational governments.

LESSONS LEARNT					
	Devote enough attention to the assessment of local conditions and comparative advantage				
LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL	2. Ensure buy-in from local and regional stakeholders				
	Limit the influence of local vested interests and ensure accountability				
	Build multi-axes development strategies, carefully weighting their complexity and breadth				
	Develop effective, locally-tailored, and inclusive monitoring systems				
	Invest adequate time and resources in capacity building				
	Prevent zero-sum competition between local municipalities				
NATIONAL LEVEL	Set up coordination and knowledge-sharing mechanisms between local and national governments				
	4. Provide guidelines based on regional development clubs				
	Retain a clear strategic focus and ensure policy coherence across subnational governments				



2. The importance of the 10 lessons learned in emergency and recovery contexts

The Russian invasion will leave a devastating impact on Ukraine, as a whole, and on a large majority of local communities and territories. However, as mentioned, the impact exerted by the war will be territorially differentiated, with some territories being affected more than others —and/or in different ways. Strong leadership, effective coordination and planning will be crucial to ensure that the recovery does not leave anyone behind. Moreover, setting up accountable and efficient institutional arrangements will be key to tackle institutional barriers head on. This section builds on the extensive literature on place-sensitive development strategies —and more broadly on regional development issues— and combines it with the recovery and relief literature. The cross-fertilisation and balance resulting from the adaptation of the lessons learned presented in Table 1 can provide a powerful pathway for recovery policies which are solidly rooted in best local development practices and which display 'winning' characteristics such as inclusivity, long-term sustainability, and territorial resilience in a post-war and post-conflict situation.

2.1 Assessing local conditions

The assessment of local conditions assumes great importance for developing both successful local development strategies and recovery policies. For those strategies aiming to incorporate the territorial dimension into the design and implementation of development interventions, it is vital to devote enough time and resources to a thorough detection of sources of local comparative advantage (Swinburn et al., 2006). Similarly, in a post-crisis context the assessment of local recovery and reconstruction needs normally represents the first step towards an effective strategic planning (European Commission, 2017). Past wide-ranging needs assessment exercises, such as those carried out by the European Commission following the 2019 Albanian earthquake, can provide robust foundations for similar types of analyses in the Ukrainian post-war recovery context (European Commission, 2019).

The diagnosis of local conditions in a post-conflict context is likely to involve both elements of regional benchmarking, entrepreneurial discovery and assessment of local comparative advantage, and the analysis of political situation, stakeholder capacity, displacement, damage and risk (Huggins, 2010; European Commission, 2017). In order to avoid one-size-fits-all and off-the-shelf types of interventions, a careful assessment of local conditions should (UNDP, 2016; European Commission, 2017):

- Understand the political environment and existing institutional arrangements
- Map the in-country partners and their capacity
- Assess the outflows of talent and the needs of internally displaced people (IDP)
- Estimate the scope of physical damage to infrastructure and productive sectors
- Analyse contextual risks, including security, economic and social risks.



This exercise is key to ensure an effective prioritization and implementation of strategies which respond to place-specific needs and constraints.

2.2 Ensuring buy-in from local and regional stakeholders

Our previous report stressed the importance of a strong political and civil support for the success of place-sensitive development policies. Local buy-in is often considered a *conditio sine qua non* for the successful implementation of policies solidly rooted in local contexts. Arguably, the relevance of buy in from local and regional stakeholders assumes an even greater role during recovery and reconstruction processes in a postwar situation. Best practice stemming from post-disaster recoveries around the world points to the importance of identifying needs and priorities of affected communities by creating participatory processes that involve communities themselves in decision-making, service delivery and recovery (UNDP, 2016).

The risk of lacking inclusive, participatory mechanisms, both in the planning and implementation phase, can be substantial. First, there can be non-negligible mismatches between local communities' needs and priorities defined in the recovery and development strategy. Second, imposing top-down recovery solutions risks neglecting vulnerability to non-recovery based on factors such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, language, poverty and political affiliation, among others. In this regard, local citizens' assemblies and participatory mechanisms need to guarantee inclusivity. This will involve making sure that even the more vulnerable segments of the population and all social, economic and political stakeholders can express their voice and concerns during the planning and implementation of strategies (UNDP, 2016; European Commission, 2017).

2.3 Containing vested interests

Vested interests and corruption already are one of the main barriers to socio-economic development in non-emergency situations. In post-war and post-crisis contexts, the combination of the inflow of a greater amount of funds and institutions that are often left beleaguered in their capacities can create a fertile ground for increased corruption (Transparency International, 2012). High levels of perceived corruption can, in turn, erode citizens' trust in public institutions as well as in the broader political system. This assumes particular relevance in emergency and recovery settings as it might undermine the authority and legitimacy of local governments to carry out development and reconstruction policies in a context of general discontent and disfranchisement by local communities (OECD, 2009; UNDP, 2016).

Against this backdrop, containing and limiting vested interests, lock in, clientelism and corruption will be essential, if subnational governments are to implement successful recoveries after the end of the war. There are a variety of areas of interventions for local government to act on. First, it will be key to render corruption practices high-risk, low-reward activities through measures aimed at increasing the risks of effective



detection, investigation, and prosecution. Especially, in those territories where enforcement is a feasible and realistic option, criminalization of corruption and vested interests capture will need to form a key milestone in recovery and development strategies (Boucher et al., 2007). Second, it is essential to mobilize non-government actors in order to build a broad front for anti-corruption reforms as it has been found that civil society generally plays the most effective supportive role for corruption monitoring and advocacy in post-conflict settings (Paffenholz, 2015). Ultimately, preventing vested interests from capturing resources earmarked for the reconstruction of cities and communities will make or break attempts to implement - and, more importantly, achieve - a long term sustainable and inclusive recovery.

2.4 Assessing complexity and breadth of strategies

Developing effective territorial development strategies requires a careful weighting of their complexity —that is, a function of the number and diversity of the individual elements or interventions by which a broader strategic approach is composed— and their *breadth of strategic scope* —understood as the narrowness of the development outcomes or objectives by which a strategy is guided (Rodriguez-Pose & Wilkie, 2019). Arguably, this applies in recovery contexts too. However, whereas in non-conflict settings striking a good balance between complexity and breadth of strategies often boils down to the assessment of local capacities and territorial development, in emergency and post-conflict regions additional criteria to consider are the magnitude of physical and non-physical destruction that each region and/or city has undergone.

For instance, some regions and municipalities in Eastern Ukraine, until now, have been experiencing the highest degree of physical destruction and a significant loss in development capabilities, due to the loss of human lives and the displacement of people. In these regions, broad strategies, which display low complexity, are more likely to deliver greater returns. Here, the physical reconstruction effort should be the main priority. Recovery strategies will also need to address the most basic needs, such as adequate healthcare, transport infrastructure, and the rebuilding of education facilities. In contrast, territories less affected by the conflict-driven destruction may benefit more from narrow focused strategies, tackling more complex aspects of post-conflict reconstruction, including, for instance, the return of talent and the reconstruction of the industrial ecosystem. Part of a process in stages, the application of the complexity-breadth matrix needs to be informed by the careful assessment of local conditions and complemented by anti-corruption measures, in order to keep vested interests at bay.

2.5 Establishing monitoring systems

The importance of inclusive, locally-tailored and effective monitoring systems has been regularly stressed by the development literature (Marinelli et al., 2019). Even during non-emergency contexts, robust monitoring systems can help supporting policy



learning for both local public administrations and stakeholders, enhancing policy communication and facilitating the accountability and transparency of policy actions. In a post-war context of decreased institutional capacity, it becomes paramount to strengthen monitoring systems and increase transparency so that affected populations can hold governments and local authorities accountable for recovery outcomes (UNDP, 2016).

Against this backdrop, it is crucial to develop and approve an early strategy and results framework which can contribute to strong monitoring, even in post-conflict environments. In such circumstances, output indicators —as opposed to outcome indicators— are often deemed more effective and legitimate monitoring measures during early efforts at stabilization (USAID, 2006). Systematic tracking of public opinions and concerns also adds an important dimension to the monitoring structure, together with the establishment of effective multi-sector and multi-agency databases for the tracking of funds. All this must be complemented and supported by strong political will and high-level leadership (USAID, 2006).

2.6 Investing in capacity building

Already in non-conflict settings, the adoption of place-sensitive development strategies does not mean that the central government has no role to play. This implies that, rather than adopting a hands-off approach to development interventions, the Ukrainian central government can be most effective by playing a more supervisory and coordinating role. A key area which will need to be addressed is filling the gaps in institutional quality, which inevitably will emerge after a short but intense conflict. Here, the Ukrainian government, together with international aid agencies, can be crucial in filling this initial void.

Often in post-conflict contexts there is tension between pressures for immediate impact and reconstruction and the need for longer-term capacity building and structural reform (USAID, 2006). In emergency and post-conflict settings, national governments are often left to deal with severe brain drain and loss of talent in their jurisprudences and offices. Local authorities —especially those at the epicentre of the conflict— are arguably even more affected with large swaths of their population either internally or externally displaced. In the case of Ukraine, this will build on an already weak institutional capacity, which, in some areas and municipalities, constituted a significant to the improvement of socio-economic standards and living conditions.

In particular, post-war local governance capacity development in Ukraine will need to entail a number of dimensions, including (i) peacebuilding capacity; (ii) state building capacity; (iii) and development capacity (UNDP, 2010). The mediating role of institutions when it comes to the returns of any development and recovery intervention means that outcomes of policy will be heavily affected by the ability of strategies to incorporate institution-building actions. In this sense, the set up by the national government of specific, mission-oriented offices whose aim is to provide technical



<u>institutional assistance</u> —perhaps, in collaboration with external agencies involved in the reconstruction of Ukraine— to local government units will assume an all-important role to enable a sustainable and resilient recovery plan.

2.7 Preventing zero-sum competition at the local level

In the context of development interventions, subnational governments have often been found to engage in a race to the bottom and facing a prisoner's dilemma: although they would benefit by cooperating at the regional level, they act in their own self-interest, trying to offer the best incentives while tilting the playing field towards lower environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards in the hope of outdoing regional competitors (Rodríguez-Pose & Arbix, 2001). These harmful dynamics can be exacerbated in post-conflict settings. The significant inflow of funds and the multiplicity of donors and actors which usually follows emergency situations can give rise to the increased risk of zero-sum competition among Ukrainian municipalities in pursuing efforts to secure additional funds from the national government and international donors.

Against this backdrop, the national government needs to act as a guarantor of a level playing field. Such a level playing field will give all Ukrainian municipalities a fair chance to access the necessary development and recovery funds. In addition, it will be essential to ensure a certain degree of cross-country harmonization and regulation for the provision of fiscal incentives in the post-conflict reconstruction. Whereas fiscal incentives could contribute to increased foreign investment and the pickup of economic activity and industrial production, further tax breaks and preferential treatments which will build on the significant tax reductions already introduced in Ukraine in 2021— may erode the fiscal basis of the most isolated and disadvantaged municipalities (Rodríguez-Pose & Storper, 2006). Hence, some level of national harmonization on areas such as import duty exemptions, land tax, and VAT breaks will be crucial to avoid rent-seeking behaviours by foreign companies and ensure a fair share of fiscal revenues for even the more disadvantaged territories. In this respect, the coordination, regulation, and active monitoring that the central government can provide will be essential in to make sure that opportunistic practices are kept at bay and that the post-war recovery and development intervention delivers the greatest returns possible.

2.8 Designing coordination mechanisms

Recovery encompasses a plethora of different activities. Successful recovery interventions require excellent multi-sector coordination across different tiers of governance. In emergency and post-conflict settings, the national government retains the role of facilitating coordination of recovery efforts at local government level and empowering local leadership in their interactions with national and line ministries and with international partners (UNDP, 2016).



For this purpose, the <u>setting up of an ad-hoc, dedicated agency can help in facilitating vertical and horizontal coordination dynamics</u>. In other post-crisis contexts, this has proven to be a successful strategy. This was the case of, for example, Indonesia, where following the 2004 Asian Tsunami the government took the leadership in the recovery effort and established a special, mission-oriented Agency for the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction under a four year sunset clause. The Agency oversaw a coordinated, community-driven reconstruction programme, where duplication was minimised and coordination among stakeholders was maximised (UNDP, 2016). In Ukraine, similar coordination and mission-oriented agencies — adapted to the specificities of territories following the conflict— should be considered as a way to build adequate platforms for facilitating a coordinated recovery.

2.9 Redefining regional development clubs

In our previous report, we stressed the importance of the formulation of policy guidelines based on the division of Ukrainian regions and/or municipalities in development clubs (Storper, 2018). In contexts of limited institutional capacity of subnational governments, the identification of development clubs, or territories or regions within a country (or across countries in the case of the EU) with similar characteristics and development constraints and/or potential is crucial for the implementation of place-sensitive strategies. These development clubs can then propose generally applicable policy guidelines informed by economic theory (lammarino et al, 2017).

In the post-war Ukraine, the formulation of policy guidelines for regional development clubs can remain useful in a variety of ways. First, it will enable a relatively rapid and efficient process of recovery policymaking, by avoiding the formulation of strategies 'from scratch' by local governments. This is critical to prevent inefficiencies and an overly lengthy process in the early stages of recovery. Second, the definition of regional development clubs can aid in the identification of those regions and/or municipalities which display both similar levels of pre-war socio-economic and institutional development and comparable degrees of war-related destruction. This process, informed by the assessment of local conditions, will be key to facilitate the maximization and prioritization of resource allocation. Third, the division of territories in development clubs may allow for a relatively straightforward incorporation of the complexity-breadth matrix in a dynamic and comparative way: as municipalities and/or regions move towards higher levels of development vis-à-vis their past performance and peer territories, and they remedy to conflict-associated destruction, development and recovery policies will allow for greater complexity and more targeted interventions.

2.10 Retaining a strategic focus

Ultimately, while local governments need to contribute to detailed project planning based on the requirements of local communities, national governments retain the task



of leading and coordinating overall recovery. In particular, among the many tasks which fall under the national government clout there exists the one to prevent policy choices by subnational authorities that are highly disjointed from local capabilities. A Ukrainian municipality, hardly hit by the conflict and already displaying low levels of institutional capacity, is unlikely to maximise its full socio-economic potential if it embarks on a process of unrelated economic diversification policies. This would not only lead to an ineffective recovery, but persistent incoherence and redundancies in choices made will carry significant transaction and opportunity costs.

The risk of policy incoherence and mismatch between local conditions and recovery priorities needs to be addressed at the central level. To do so, greater use by senior national leaders of filters and criteria, such as relevance to conflict factors, feasibility, and peer support would alleviate such distortions to a considerable extent. Evidence from other post-crisis settings shows that the focus on policy coherence across the whole national territory is often more theoretical than real (NYU, 2011). Finally, the national government is also better positioned to retain a clear picture as of how local comparative advantages complement each other and, consequently, how local bottlenecks may be tackled creating broad-based synergies across municipalities and regions. A cooperative and collaborative effort in this sense is likely to make or break attempts to an effective prioritisation and harmonisation of interventions across postwar Ukraine.



3. Concluding remarks

This short policy note —an addendum to our previous report on local government reform in Ukraine— has highlighted the heightened relevance of place-sensitive policies in emergency and recovery contexts. Even in post-war, post-conflict recovery settings, geography matters. Whereas the current situation is fast-evolving and it is still early for an overall assessment of the physical and non-physical damage produced by the war, it is clear that the conflict will have differentiated territorial impacts across Ukraine. Some cities and municipalities will have little left standing once the conflict is over, while other territories will hopefully be for less affected by physical and infrastructure damage. These latter territories will, nevertheless, still face the consequences of the psychological shock and scars of the invasion, the loss of talent linked to the massive displacement of people, and a serious disruption of basic services and industrial production.

Against this backdrop, the 10 lessons learned presented as milestones of placesensitive policies offer essential guiding principles to inform future recovery planning and implementation. Table 2 presents an adaptation of the original Table 1 focussing on the relevance and application of each lesson in the Ukrainian post-conflict recovery.

	LESSONS LEARNT	APPLICATION FOR RECOVERY
ÆL	Devote enough attention to the assessment of local conditions and comparative advantage	Identification of the differentiated impact of the conflict across the Ukrainian geography (and, especially, its municipalities)
OCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL	Ensure buy-in from local and regional stakeholders	Integration of participatory mechanisms to empower local communities in the planning and implementation of post-war recovery
OCAL AND	Limit the influence of local vested interests and ensure accountability	Enhancement of anti-corruption enforcement and reforms to keep special interest at bay
רכ	Build multi-axes development strategies, carefully weighting their complexity and breadth	Development of multi- dimensional, locally-tailored recoveries according to place- specific characteristics



	Develop effective, locally-tailored and inclusive monitoring systems	-l
	Invest adequate time and resources in capacity building	Provision of technical institutional assistance to local government units via dedicated offices
	Prevent zero-sum competition between local municipalities	Harmonisation and regulation of territorial competition to create a level playing field among municipalities
NATIONAL LEVEL	Set up coordination and knowledge-sharing mechanisms between local and national governments	Creation of special-purpose, mission-oriented coordination agencies to ensure horizontal and vertical coordination
NATI	Provide guidelines based on regional development clubs	Classification of municipalities / regions in development clubs to ensure an efficient and sustainable recovery
	Retain a clear strategic focus and ensure policy coherence across subnational governments	Exploiting synergies to address conflict-associated bottlenecks while retaining a whole-of-country picture

Finally, Ukraine is not new to emergency and conflict situations. Since 2014, the country has faced prolonged and constant instability in on its Eastern and Southern borders. The invasion Crimea by Russian forces and the intermittent war in the Donbas region had already prepared Ukraine for a post-conflict reconstruction and redevelopment. Although the current Russian invasion is causing destruction at a much larger scale, Ukraine has already demonstrated resilience and some degree of success in delivering development outcomes under instability and emergency conditions. A concerted, across-the-board effort by national, regional, and local policymakers together with the strong sense of national unity that Ukrainians have so far demonstrated may be fundamental to leverage the difficult road that lies ahead and to use post-war reconstruction as a springboard to greater economic dynamism, setting the foundations for a sustainable, inclusive, and multi-dimensional recovery and reconstruction.



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