**Fight For Right input to the call “Rebuilding Inclusive Societies in Post-Conflict Situations – the active involvement of Persons with Disabilities”**

Fight For Right is Ukrainian OPD (FFR) working for the observance of the rights and freedoms of people with disabilities. FFR works to ensure that every person with a disability knows their human rights and can freely use them. With the beginning of a full-scale invasion, FFR team is leading the evacuation of people with disabilities, providing targeted assistance, psychological support and legal advice.

**Since 24 February 2022, FFR**

* [launched](https://ffr.org.ua/en/projects/teplo-2/) a national hotline to support people with disabilities in critical situations during full-scale war;
* [evacuated](https://ffr.org.ua/en/need-help-eng/) people with disabilities to safer places in Ukraine and abroad;
* formed and support an international initiative to help Ukrainians with disabilities;
* [received](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-disabled-ukrainians) funds from donor organizations and people around the world to support people with disabilities in Ukraine;
* [informed Ukraine and the world](https://warpath.ffr.org.ua/welcome-en) about war crimes and the consequences of war for people with disabilities;
* [strengthened the community of people with disabilities](https://ffr.org.ua/kurs-vidnovlennya-ukrayiny-demokratychna-uchast-dlya-rozrobky-inklyuzyvnogo-planu/) in an effort to become a powerful human rights movement;
* [advocated](https://ffr.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/ADVOCACY-AGENDA-FIGHT-FOR-RIGHT-2022-2024.pdf) for the changes in legislation that are needed for people with disabilities to enjoy their rights on an equal basis with everyone else.

During 2022 FFR team collected and analysed information to outline the experience of people with disabilities during the war to ensure these experiences are visible and known, among the community and to those taking decisions.

1. Study [of the experience of evacuation](https://ffr.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Road-map_new.pdf) among the public sector, which showed gap in cooperation between the local authorities and CSOs in effort to make evacuation accessible and inclusive for people with disabilities.
2. Preliminary [study](https://ffr.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Main_Free_eng.pdf) on the rights of people with disabilities in institutions, issues of non-evacuation of institutions, their experience during the temporary occupation, documenting cases of war crimes against people with disabilities and track of those institutions who were forcibly replaced to the Russian Federation.
3. Analysis of [the regulatory framework](https://ffr.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/funds_new_ffr_en.pdf) for civil protection and evacuation in emergency situations and during war to see if the gaps in the interaction of local authorities, military administrations and central authorities are regulated and how this is implemented in practice.
4. [Review](https://ffr.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Review-of-the-work-of-international-humanitarian-organizations.pdf) of programming and work of international humanitarian organisation to analyse their disability mainstreaming and commitment in approaches to their work in Ukraine.

FFR is utilising these works and our regular analysis of the case management database where we store all the information collected through the direct work with our beneficiaries, to produce this brief input to the call “Rebuilding Inclusive Societies in Post-Conflict Situations – the active involvement of Persons with Disabilities”.

Of course Ukraine is experiencing ongoing war right now and our peacebuilding activities are very scarce, but at the same time there is an open and active dialogue about the rebuilding in our country and there are also knowledge about gaps and lacunas in inclusive civilian protection[[1]](#footnote-0) that should be taking into account in the rebuilding of inclusive societies in conflict and post-conflict situations.

In terms of policy and practice involvement of people with disabilities and organisations representing them in the process of conflict prevention, resolution, reconciliation, reconstruction and peacebuilding, FFR has to acknowledge that Ukraine is making very little progress.

Ukrainian rebuilding plan presented to the international community during Lugano Conference in 2022[[2]](#footnote-1) did not contain any specific reference not only to people with disabilities or other groups participation in the process of rebuilding, but also was not mentioning human rights, inclusion or equality as principals of future rebuilding. There also were limited involvement of the civil society into this initial planning work.

This plan was further developed, but still publicly available official documents does not specify how OPDs will be involved, what particular tasks are set in terms of inclusive rebuilding, etc. Ukraine rebuilding plans is still under the development and FFR recommendation is to include CSOs and OPDs to work on this plan.

Meanwhile, Ukraine made amendments to the National Barrier-free Strategy[[3]](#footnote-2), and this process involved consultations and feedback from CSOs and OPDs. Critical comments about the lack of civilian protection, inaccessible shelters and inaccessible information were taken onto account and tasks for the implementing authorities for 2023 were changed accordingly. It is still too early to evaluate if these tasks were duly implemented.

At the same time, civil society in Ukraine united and drafted its own vision of rebuilding Ukraine. This visionary document includes many chapters dividing rebuilding process according to different spheres and concentrates on reforms that Ukraine should introduce as a rebuilding country to ensure human rights are core of the rebuilding process, and it will not re-establish any of currently existing inequalities. This civil society document includes a chapter on protection and support services, and explore at length what kind of reforms are need to ensure the rights of people with disabilities.

This joint CSOs work is also a first time close cooperation between OPD and veterans groups, which is very much needed in conflict society and should be part of the rebuilding process. FFR supports the notion that for inclusive society, there is a need for networking between OPDs and other civil society organisations and representatives of other generally marginalised groups.

Other important outcome of this CSOs visionary document is a list of areas that needs reforms to ensure the inclusive society rebuilding and beginning of the discussion on how Ukrainian society should ensure economic, social and cultural rights. FFR wants to explore this chance to shift discussion from social benefits model still prevailing in Ukraine to the model of support services available to those who need them with introduction of the improved needs assessment and results evaluation mechanisms.

When preparing its reports on the current situation and exploring the decision-making process and its inclusivity for PWDs, FFR noticed that current services for the internally displaced people at the local level are not inclusive and leave IDPs with disabilities behind. Ensuring that support provided to the IDPs is inclusive and covers IDPs with different identities is a crucial part of the peacebuilding activities at the community level and also nationally. FFR presented its recommendations to the draft National Strategy on IDPs.

National-wide discussion about the return of Ukrainians, both those who fled the war and resettled to EU countries and those forcibly displaced by russians to the territories not controlled by the government of Ukraine, do not include transparent plans on what the government is planning to do to return all refugees with disabilities, nor any commitment to document, trace and return those who suffered from forcible displacement. In terms of providing just redress and equal access to justice for war crimes and other war related loss, people with disabilities and OPDs should have a voice and mechanisms to be included.

In terms of responsibilities of the government to document, trace and return all Ukrainians with disabilities, those who lived in institutions and ended up on temporary occupied territories are entitled to legal, social and phycological support. It is sole responsibility of the government to collect all possible information about forcibly displaces people with disabilities from institutions and ensure they are returned to Ukraine. Meanwhile, in the process of rebuilding Ukraine has to ensure the reform of deinstitualisation, key reform to guaranty the rights of people with disabilities and also to overcome past mistakes when veterans become forced inhabitants of such institutions. Any peacebuilding and rebuilding after the conflict process should be linked to key in-country reforms that overrule the mistakes of the past and aim at building a just society for all. Deinsitualisation reform is one of such key areas to concentrate on.

Working with PWDs nationally and locally, FFR is observing that Ukrainian peacebuilding process is still not barrier free for OPDs to participate, starting from lack of transparency of the whole process when OPDs do not have access to the information, to other types of barriers – architectural inaccessibility, lack of knowledge and lack of feedback from the state. To ensure that peacebuilding is inclusive, PWDs should be an integral part of this process, including different OPDs, especially those who present newly emerged groups such as internally displaced people with disabilities and veterans with disabilities.

International humanitarian assistance channelled to Ukraine since the full-scale invasion showed that it is not enough to include diversity and inclusion as key works to the programming, but there is a lack of mechanism to include real gender and disability mainstreaming. FFR experience of communication and receiving support from big international humanitarian donors and service providers show lack of match between announced programs and their infield implementation. Programming run in Ukraine show not enough attention to people diversity and lack of inclusion of community based CSOs, including OPDs to shaping the programmes and identification of needs. This approach should be amended, to induce beneficiaries into placing to ensure there is real inclusion.

International technical and rebuilding assistance provided to the government also should be issued based on human rights criteria and accessibility. It is crucial that international community and country member who support peacebuilding process include human rights and equality based criteria into their evaluation process and make them key indicators of successful reforms.

1. Please see more in the reports mentioned above, FFR analysed gaps in inclusive civilian protection before [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/366-2021-%D1%80#Text> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)