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TRANSFORMATION COMMUNICATIONS ACTIVITY IN UKRAINE

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Place of Performance: Ukraine

Prime Implementer: Chemonics International Inc.

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The USAID Transformation Communications Activity (TCA) partners with the Government of Ukraine (GoU), the private sector, and civil society to increase the resilience of Ukraine's democracy through innovative communications initiatives that engage Ukrainians in a conversation about the country's democratic transformation and European integration. Through the following three objectives, TCA is building partnerships and capacities that will result in audience-focused, socially relevant content that amplifies legitimate, fact-based, Ukrainian narratives:

Objective 1: Equip USAID and its partners to conduct data-driven communications
Objective 2: Increase the quality and quantity of strategic communications on reform dividends
Objective 3: Broaden the use of social impact content by Ukraine's civic leaders and creative sector

HIGHLIGHTED RESULTS TO-DATE:

- TCA supported at least **128 GoU, civil society, and private sector stakeholders** with research and analytics for data-driven communications through more than **65 research activities**, generating over **1,350 reports**.
- TCA has generated **3,584 strategic communication products** on critical issues such as reform dividends, Ukraine's resilience, unity, and war crimes reporting. TCA's total **audience reach exceeds ONE BILLION**.
- TCA's narratives have been featured in prominent international publications including CNN, BBC, the New York Times, and the Guardian.
- TCA supported the development of **143 social impact content works**, including films and television series that achieved remarkable success in Ukraine and internationally by breaking box-office records, sharing Ukrainian culture globally and conveying impactful themes that spark societal dialogue.

Objective 1: Equip USAID and Its Partners to Conduct Data-Driven Communications

TCA's Objective 1 (O1) is comprised of a research team that serves as an internal think tank that accumulates information, interacts with research experts, conducts research, and analyses research data to support the Government of Ukraine (GoU) and public and private sector actors to utilize data for disseminating targeted, strategic communications to the public. The objective works to create an ecosystem of data-driven actors in the communications sphere to ensure transparency and efficacy in communications.

Through cross-cutting technical expertise, O1 primarily works on the following initiatives:

- Developing communications frameworks on wartime and post-war communications for international and Ukrainian audiences.
- Supporting audience research and analysis, including opinion polling and focus groups to measure public opinion during wartime and transition periods, as well as message testing to ensure data-driven daily and strategic communications.
- Media monitoring, including analysis of traditional and social media coverage, and analysis of strategic narratives to identify disinformation and communication gaps.

O1 utilizes the following research tools: qualitative research through in-depth interviews and focus groups for general audiences, niche audiences, and experts; cultural studies; mixed-method research; narrative analysis; discourse and content analysis; and social network and online media monitoring. The research team actively utilizes AI tools for big data processing and social media analysis. For in-house analysis, O1 uses elements of machine learning, statistical approaches, network analysis, and a set of tools from cultural studies.

HIGHLIGHTED ACTIVITIES

TCA conducts daily social media analysis that focuses on tracking the emotional state of Ukrainians, strategic narratives, societal mobilization levels, early indications of negative trends, emerging societal division, and narratives propagated by the Russian population. Among other stakeholders, the GoU uses the data in their daily communications, enabling them to shape the media narrative surrounding the war, mitigate potential societal divisions, counter Russian propaganda and disinformation, and foster a transparent, inclusive, and coherent "one voice" approach to government wartime communications.

Since 2020, TCA has developed more than 1,300 social media monitoring reports on 15 topics including COVID-19, anticorruption, and misinformation in the context of failed state and Russian aggression, reaching more than 128 GoU, civil society, and private sector recipients who used this information for data-driven decision making. TCA also conducted more than 65 research activities on topics including unity, land reform, anti-corruption, COVID-19, and war crimes that supported the GoU's strategic communications.

O1 Priorities for 2023-2024:

- Message and narrative testing to support various partner communication campaigns.
- Support GoU in delivering data-based communications on Russia's war crimes and gender-based sexual violence during the Russian-Ukrainian war.
- Support GoU and First Lady initiative to deliver data-based communications on inclusivity and mental health of Ukrainians affected by war.
- Social media monitoring. Conduct ad-hoc social media research (e.g. Twitter or Telegram content analysis) and develop a regular reporting mechanism for media narratives monitoring.
- Analysis of Ukraine's strategic narrative during the war to support GoU and Ukrainian society in combating disinformation, Russian propaganda, and help influence campaigns to rely on data for communications.
- Monitoring polarization of Ukrainian society within the narrative space to prevent further polarization and build firm foundations for democratic unity in diversity within Ukrainian society.

Research and Analytics Needs? Contact Us: O1@transformua.com; Research and Analytics Director Vitalii Rudenky

Objective 2: Increase the Quality and Quantity of Strategic Communications on Reform Dividends

TCA Objective 2 (O2) is driven by its strategic communications team, utilizing a pool of embedded communications experts in government institutions, as well as a community of Ukraine's top creative agencies and NGOs. O2 activities are derived from O1 research and aim to give Ukrainians a voice in conversation about the country's democratic transformation and European integration.

O2 supports the GoU and civil society with developing and implementing domestic and international data-driven strategic communication campaigns and activities that consist of tools aimed to reach target audiences in the most impactful way. Common tools include a mix of TV, outdoor signage (billboards, city lights, posters, etc.), radio, digital promotion, social media marketing, non-standard public relations solutions (exhibitions, social media tests, outdoor events, music clips etc.), media pitching, and/or content creation such as infographics, visuals, and videos (vlogs, explainers, promotional videos). To-date, TCA has created 3,584 strategic communications products that have reached an audience of at least 997,202,227 million.

TCA has successfully collaborated with civil society organizations and the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy, the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security of Ukraine, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Institute, the Ministry of Agrarian Policy and Food, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine, Prosecutor General Office of Ukraine, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Digital Transformation, and many others.

HIGHLIGHTED ACTIVITIES

TCA partnered with the GoU in 2022 to implement a multi-component unity campaign Side-by-Side, which shared stories of Ukrainians working together for victory. Top Ukrainian media and influencers shared the campaign's materials, leading to an audience reach of 30 million—reinforcing unity, mutual support, and pride for Ukraine.

TCA partnered with the Ukrainian Institute in 2022 to implement the #PostcardsFromUkraine campaign, which highlighted the massive destruction Russian troops inflicted on Ukrainian culture and historical heritage. TCA created 75 images of postcards showcasing before and after photos to tell the stories of ruined cultural heritage sites and engaged international and Ukrainian celebrities to tell video stories, reaching 11.6 million people in Ukraine and abroad.

TCA partnered with the Center for Strategic Communications and Information Security of Ukraine to develop 24 SPRAVDI vlogs dedicated to debunking key narratives of Russian propaganda and highlighting how its disinformation methods and networks work, reaching over 8 million people.

O2 Thematic Priorities for 2023-2024:

- *Resilience.* Support strategic communication initiatives that target all Ukrainians with special focus on civilians in liberated and frontline territories. Activities focus on providing information on governmental initiatives and services relevant to liberated and front-line territories, countering disinformation, and contributing to moral and emotional resilience in the fight for Ukrainian victory.
- *Transformation and Restoration.* Promote narratives that engage Ukrainians in a conversation about the country's reconstruction and democratic transformation, amplify Ukraine's successes in this space, and contribute to countering Russian propaganda. Initiatives target Ukrainians and relate to at least one of the following areas: reforms, progress on reconstruction efforts, war crimes, restoration of justice, anti-corruption, and transparency of reforms and reconstruction. Contribute to Ukrainians' return to Ukraine.
- *Unity in Diversity.* Combat division/fault lines, promote social cohesion, and acknowledge Ukrainian identity (celebrating domestically, amplifying internationally).
- *Cross-cutting themes.* Support gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), Euro-integration and Ukrainian values in alignment with European values, and countering dis/misinformation (domestically and if strategic internationally).

Strategic Communication Needs? Contact Us: O2@transformua.com; Strategic Comms Director Yuliia Kotova

Objective 3: Broaden the Use of Social Impact Content by Ukraine's Civic Leaders and Creative Sector

TCA's Objective 3 (O3) team is comprised of production and film industry experts from the creative sector. O3's goal is to support Ukraine's audiovisual industry in creating social impact content that contributes to positive changes in the country, promotes European values, opposes Kremlin propaganda, and improves international recognition of Ukraine as a modern European country with a dynamic history, rich cultural heritage, and empowered civil society.

O3 frequently co-partners with the Government of Ukraine (GoU) and uses O1 research on Ukrainians' perceptions of socially important issues and the implementation of reforms to determine its thematic areas for content support. When needed, O3 partners with video bloggers for rapid responses to urgent societal problems and dissemination of narratives on their solutions. O3 uses the following approaches to implement its activities:

Grants. PITCHUA+ is TCA's dynamic grant competition where Ukrainian content producers pitch creative ideas for audio-visual content that will showcase compelling narratives centered on socially important topics. Winners receive international technical support and funding to complete their innovative projects—since 2020, more than 20 grants have been implemented, ranging from television series, to feature films, to YouTube content. Competitions will continue in 2023-2024.

Educational Platform. TCA organizes educational events for audiovisual content creators, which include workshops, lectures, discussions integrated in film festivals, and other major industry events (Molodist, DOCUDAYS, Kyiv Media Week, Lviv Media Forum, etc.). The educational events highlight the importance of promoting positive and impactful change and solutions to societal problems in Ukraine through content narratives, while equipping stakeholders with the skills to improve their content and access markets.

CELEBRATED WORK

The animated film _Mavka. The Forest Song_ became the highest-grossing Ukrainian film in the history of independent Ukraine. Within the first month (March 2023), it was viewed by approximately one million people. It has been acquired in 80 countries, where it continues to screen in record numbers, sharing Ukrainian culture around the world.

The Best Weekend became the number one box-office hit on its premier weekend in February 2022, pushing Hollywood blockbusters out of top rating positions. Given the themes of the film – unity, diversity, and resilience – the GoU showed it free-of-charge for the thousands of people sheltering in Kyiv's metro stations during the initial weeks of the full-scale war. The film was acquired by Netflix, which marks further international recognition of Ukraine's creative sector and the flourishing social impact content it is producing with USAID support.

Examples of O3 Supported Content:

- Landlord - TV series telling the story of a modern landowner's empire built on exploitation and corruption, who faces a reckoning with changing legal regulations and the determined uprising of villagers asserting their land rights. The series highlights the role of land reform in an entertaining way.
- Ukrainian Palaces: Golden Age - documentary series about Ukrainian palaces. The team of history researcher Akim Galimov recreates destroyed Ukrainian palaces in 3D. This project is a chance to look at what these unique buildings once were, learn their history, and dig into Ukrainian culture.
- On the FrontLine - online show about Ukrainians who volunteer in times of war to bring Ukrainian victory closer, focusing on strengthening solidarity and spirit of Ukrainians.
- UniverCheck – an educational and entertaining travel show about regional opportunities for education and the life of young people in Ukraine.
- I am a Doctor – documentary series highlighting the successful results of medical reform and the heroes of our time - Ukrainian doctors.

Social Impact Needs? Contact Us: O3@transformua.com; Creative Content Director Oleksandr Kleymenov