



SICAP Case Study 2023 - Lot: Wexford 14-1

“Doing What Matters in Times of Stress - A Peer-Led Community Education Programme for Ukrainian Refugees”

Thematic Focus:	Goal 2 project
Target Group:	Ukrainian refugees (New Communities)
Programme Priority:	New Communities
Thematic Area:	G2:1 - Promoting personal development and wellbeing
Outcome:	G2 - 1:1 SICAP clients have improved personal skills, wellbeing and capabilities.
Presentation:	Video case study with written supporting document

Rationale and Learning for SICAP

This video case study showcases **Self Help+**, a **peer-led group-based stress management programme for Ukrainian refugees** originally developed by the World Health Organisation and piloted by WLD under SICAP in late 2022. The programme, which combines audio recording, written materials and peer facilitation, was delivered in four locations to a total of 60 people across six groups between January and May 2023. This project has been selected as our case study for 2023 as it has generated key pieces of learning that will be of benefit to other providers and policy makers involved with SICAP, summarised here:

- There is great value in mental health and wellbeing-focused initiatives being **led by members of the community**, in this case a team of five facilitators working under SICAP with WLD. The fact that the **facilitators shared a language, a common cultural heritage and the experience of fleeing war** to start a new life in Ireland greatly enhanced how the programme was received by participants.

Organisations involved in making mental health supports available to Ukrainian refugees around the country have reported reluctance on the part of many refugees to take up these supports due to stigma about this issue in the community – as the Self Help+ delivery model focuses on learning skills rather than treating distress, it is **perceived as less intimidating than a therapeutically focused programme**. In addition, the fact that all Self Help+ **materials are translated into Ukrainian and freely available** for use by community organisations greatly increases the accessibility and attractiveness of the course.

- Group-based activities** such as this help to build bonds of **solidarity and understanding** between people experiencing adversity - as the focus was on learning new skills in a group context rather than addressing trauma directly, the programme represented a safe and accessible way of delivering supports. This is effective not only in preventing serious mental health distress but can also in building supportive relationships between people who find themselves uprooted due to war.

- Self Help+ emphasises the building of stress management skills to identify personal values and take positive action to live according to these values even in the midst of upheaval and distress. This **hopeful orientation**, which is **aligned** with the **principles of Community Development and asset-based approaches**, works from a place of identifying strengths in individuals and communities rather than starting with the concept of deficit. As such, the programme is highly compatible with the goals and approaches espoused by SICAP.
- Many Ukrainian refugees are women with children or older parents and find themselves under great pressure to support their dependents in adapting to a new culture. A programme like this **provides the individuals who participate with the skills to better manage the stress of their situation**. This in turn **supports the integration process** of their **families**, particularly children and young people.

The main **challenges** in this project were twofold:

- Three of the five facilitators had a professional background in mental health. It took time for these facilitators in particular to become accustomed to and fully accept the materials, particularly the audio recordings, as an integral part of the course. The WHO advise spending approximately 40 hours in the training phase which focuses on experiential learning. WLD would fully support the need to **spend this time becoming familiar with the programme** as both a participant and a facilitator in order to then deliver it successfully.
- All but one of the facilitators was in receipt of jobseeker's allowance. The short, fixed term employment contracts issued by WLD to each of the facilitators resulted in **immediate cuts to payments by DSP** and difficulty in having benefits reinstated for every one of these four despite our best efforts to provide all relevant information as to the duration and nature of the contract in advance. This issue also **affects the potential to employ other target groups on similar short term contracts** in the delivery of SICAP activities and is a serious impediment to making these types of opportunities available to those we work with under the programme.

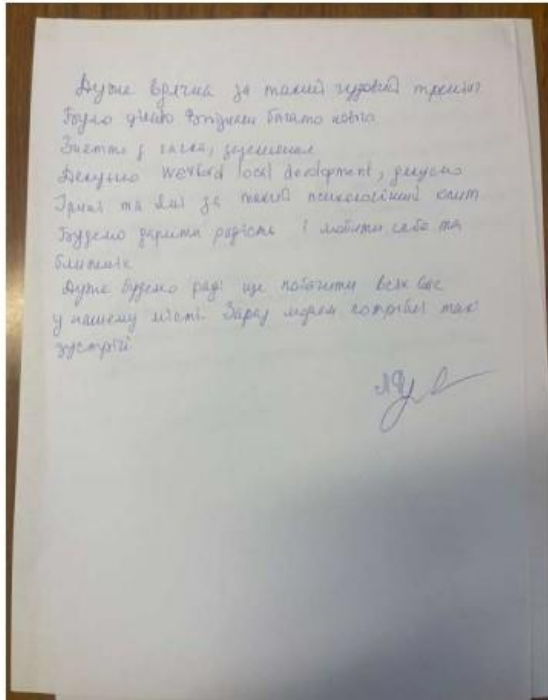
Methodology

The **case study** features **in depth interviews** with

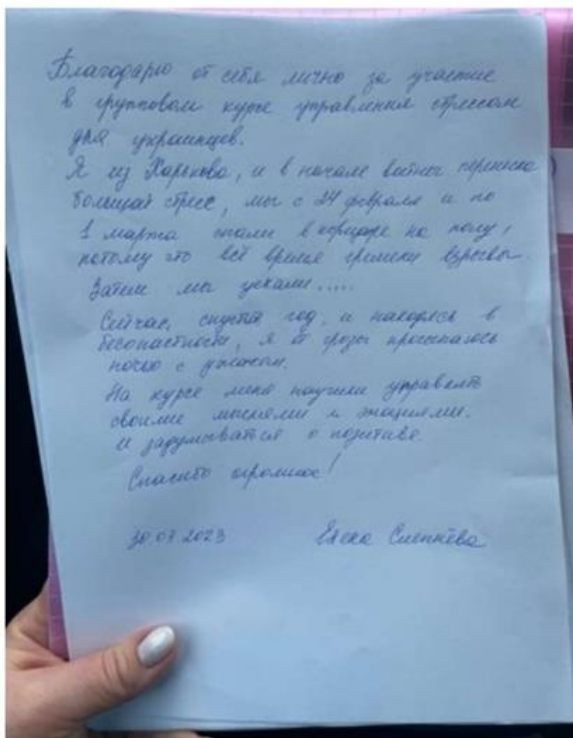
- three of the Ukrainian facilitators employed by WLD to deliver the programme,
- a Ukrainian woman who participated in the programme and
- two members of the SICAP team who were involved in developing and coordinating the delivery of this project - Olga Iamtsun, our Ukrainian Community Integration Officer and Siobhán O'Brien, our Policy, Evaluation and Monitoring Coordinator.

It is anticipated that the **primary audience** for the case study will be **funders** and **policy makers** at local and national level as well as **other local development companies and community organisations** who may be interested in running this programme for Ukrainian refugees living in their catchment area. This case study may also be of interest to **policy makers** in the area of mental health, highlighting, as it does, the role that SICAP can play in engaging target groups in the successful co-production of preventative initiatives in the area of **mental health and wellbeing**.

Feedback from participants attests to the success of this programme in building skills for well-being and reducing stress as can be seen below:

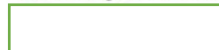


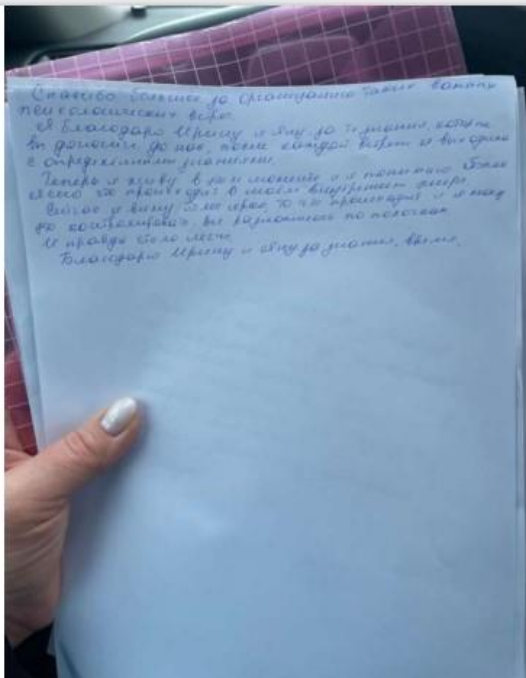
- I'm grateful for this sessions. It was really interesting to know a lot of new information about unhooking and grounding.
- Thanks to all WLD team and to our facilitators for this psychological experience. We will give joy and love to ourselves and other.
- We'll be happy to see all of you again in our town. I think now people really needs this meetings.



- I would like to say "Thank you" for this stress management course.
- I'm from Kharkiv and at the beginning of this war I was under stress a lot. Since 24th of February till 1st of March we slept on the floor in the corridor, cause of this sound of explosions. We couldn't live like this and decided to leave our home...
- And now a year after while all of my family in a safe place I can still wake up terrified during the night from the sound of thunderstorm.
- During this sessions facilitators trained me how to sort out with my thoughts and emotions and look forward in a positive way.

Thank you a lot,





- Thank you so much for creating such important for us psychological support group.
- I would like to say special “Thank you” to Iryna and Yana for that knowledge that they’ve delivered. After every session I felt myself more educated.
- I can tell that after our practices I live “here and now” and can understand more clearly what’s going on deep inside myself. Now I can look around and world became brighter and all ducks got in a row in my head. And after our sessions I felt relief.
- Thank you Iryna and Yana.

For further information on Self Help+ , please contact

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