



Frustrations or moving forward? Ukrainian social work within the 'hybrid war' context

Розчарування чи рух уперед? Українська соціальна робота в умовах «гібридної війни»

Tetyana Semigina 

Department of Social Work and Applied Psychology, Academy of Labor, Social Relations and Tourism, Kyiv, Ukraine

ABSTRACT

Based on interviews and desk review this paper explores social work activities during the on-going armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine with regard to theoretical framework of a multidimensional 'hybrid war'. The study defines the key groups of war-affected population and looks at a variety of interventions during different stages of the warfare (2014–2016). The paper argues that during the armed conflict Ukrainian social services and social workers have been unprepared to act in emergency situations and political conflicts. A number of structural and ethical complexities have been identified, including value conflicts. The paper suggests possible ways of ensuring social work responses to the emergency situations during warfare within the context of the newly developed professional social work.

АНОТАЦІЯ

Ця стаття –на основі інтерв'ю та аналізу документів, а також з урахуванням теоретичних концепції багатовимірності 'гібридної війни'– вивчає те, як здійснюється соціальна робота в умовах збройного конфлікту, що триває на території України. У дослідженні визначені основні групи населення, що постраждали через війну, та різноманітні інтервенції, які застосовувались під час різних етапів війни (2014–2016). У статті стверджується, що під час збройного конфлікту українські соціальні служби і соціальні працівники були не готові до дій в умовах надзвичайних ситуацій і політичних конфліктів. Виявлено низку структурних та етичних труднощів, зокрема, конфлікти цінностей. У статті запропоновані можливі шляхи забезпечення соціальної роботи в надзвичайних ситуаціях під час війни з огляду на недостатній професійний розвиток соціальної роботи у постсоціалістичній країні.

KEYWORDS

Armed conflict; warfare; social work interventions; emergency

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

збройні конфлікти; війна; втручання соціальної роботи; надзвичайна ситуація

Introduction

Since 2014, a violent armed conflict has been taking place in the densely populated Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk (Donbas is a name for this geographical area). The impact of this conflict extended beyond Ukraine making it the most serious European crisis since the end of the Cold War (Haran, 2015; Kudos, 2015).

The UN has stated, 'armed conflict [in Ukraine] has caused great damage to the economy, the social infrastructure is ruined, and people are suffering' (UN, 2014). Because of the simultaneously occurring guerrilla and conventional fighting, economic, cyber, and informational war, the conflict falls under the category of the 'hybrid war' (Šešelgyte, 2014). The ambivalent nature of the conflict stimulates numerous public discussions and raises questions about social inclusion, tolerance and national reconciliation.

In the initial stage of the conflict, the social services of Ukraine could hardly be considered as active agents (Semigina, Gusak, & Trukhan, 2015). However, social work interventions for the war-affected population have been gradually implemented.

This paper is aimed at finding answers to the questions about what changes have occurred in social work practice because of the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, what could be done to further professional development of social work in the country, and what lessons could be learnt by other countries.

Theoretical and methodical framework

A broad range of literature has been reviewed on social work interventions that may be undertaken during and/or after armed conflict (war). A necessity to theorize social work interventions in times of armed conflict and post-conflict became more evident in the 2000s, especially after wars in the countries of former Yugoslavia, violence between Israel and Palestine, war between Russia and Georgia, military operations in Iraq and other combat activities (Decker, Brown, & Tapia, 2016; Leiner, 2009; Maglajlic & Selimovic, 2014; Monson, Taft, & Fredman, 2009; Ramon, Campbell, Lindsay, McCrystal, & Baidoun, 2006). These events reverberate into the social work practice worldwide (Seifert, 2015).

It is apparent from the reviewed literature that in a number of contexts the short-term (crisis, urgent) and long-term approaches at the different levels – from micro to macro – should be applied to the war-affected population. Ramon and Maglajlic (2012) discuss the post-traumatic therapeutic approaches aimed at elimination of the disaster (conflict) consequences for an individual and for society. Meanwhile IFSW (2012) develops the idea that social work with displaced persons should be aimed at autonomy and community empowerment and not only survival. Research findings lend support to the claim that assistance could be effective only if it is based on the community development approach (Lai & Toliashvili, 2010; Lavalette & Ioakimidis, 2016) and take into account the prolonged effects of war (Klarić et al., 2012; Link & Palinkas, 2013; Zdjelarevic et al., 2011).

To better understand the challenges of social work in Ukraine, the concepts of a 'new war' (Kaldor, 2000), a 'non-linear war' (Galeotti, 2014) or/and a 'hybrid war' (Polese, Kevlihan, & Beacháin, 2016) have been used. These concepts describe the situations when: the parties of the conflict stick to dramatically different means of fighting; non-state actors and irregular forces including criminal gangs are involved in combat, and guerrilla warfare is combined with economic, propaganda, and cyber war. So, no frontlines or clear distinction between 'peaceful' and 'non-peaceful' areas exist, while the main focus is a conflict of values and human rights violations.

The paper also draws on viewing armed conflicts as 'man-made disasters' (Harding, 2007; Mahdi, 2007) and manifestations of a complex emergency (Williamson & Mansoor, 2012) as they deprive people of their homes, families, schools, places of worship, etc., while humanitarian organizations increase their importance in crisis areas.

Thus, the paper looks at the multilevel and multidimensional social work interventions needed in the context of asymmetrical and disastrous 'hybrid' war. Methodologically it is based on a systemic approach to its non-linear paradigm where a critical event (an armed conflict) serves as a point of bifurcation with different prospects for development, and where the relationship between the sub-systems is non-hierarchical. At the same time, the paper takes into account the social construction of meanings, as well as the tendency of binary codes perceptions (see Luhmann, 1990), including perceptions of an armed conflict and the war-affected groups.

Methods

The study is based on direct communication with war-affected groups and service providers in Ukraine:

- (1) 10 face-to-face and Skype interviews with social workers providing social services to the internally displaced persons (IDPs); 2 out of 10 providers were displaced persons themselves; 8 out of 10 providers were women (conducted in 2014–2015);
- (2) two group discussions with leaders of IDPs: 20 persons were involved in the discussions, 3 out of them were men (conducted in February–March 2016);
- (3) 10 face-to-face and Skype interviews with experts, providers of psychosocial support to ex-combatants and relatives of ex-combatants (September 2016);
- (4) two focus groups with partners of ex-combatants; all 16 participants were women (October 2016).

The key questions were focused on personal experience of receiving or providing services to those affected by the military conflict, assessment of limitations of the current services and prospects for their development, and so on.

Given the observational nature of this data, the desk review (of reports, official web-sites, data on needs assessment, etc.) was also utilized.

Thematic analysis (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) has been applied to process data from communications and documentary. Specific considerations are given to: (1) social work strategies and interventions used to support people affected by the violent conflict on the territory of Ukraine; (2) challenges that social workers and communities faced when dealing with the new problem of displacement and armed conflict. These themes were selected with regard to the objectives of the study and reflections of the study participants. The results of the research are presented in descriptive way.

The research approaches and instruments were approved by the Ethical Committee of the Academy of Labor, Social Relations and Tourism. All participants were informed of the study objectives and signed the consent form.

Ethical dilemmas and considerations including security and confidentiality, and working with traumatized persons have been taken into account.

It is obvious that the study has a number of limitations. The major one is related to a political nature of the conflict. All interviewed individuals and the researcher herself support the pro-Ukrainian side of the conflict. No pro-Russian supporters participated in the interviews or discussions. Moreover, communication was arranged in the safe part of the country and not in the war-affected territory. Long-term social and psychological consequences of the on-going armed conflict are not evident, so the research is focused on the short-term effects and urgent issues. Such limitations are inevitable in the complicated political context of the social work research (D'Cruz & Jones, 2014), and the 'hybrid war' can be regarded as such context.

Background information on the armed conflict

In late 2013, then President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich abruptly resisted the signing of the Associate Agreement between the European Union and Ukraine that had been being prepared for a long time and was being widely promoted among the population. The mass protests started in the Maidan, the central square of Kyiv (thus, the movement got a name of *Euromaidan* or the *Revolution of Dignity*). Three months later, peaceful protests against Yanukovich's decision progressed to a point of mass violence in the Maidan and the central squares of other Ukrainian cities. In February 2014, when security forces started to shoot protesters, Yanukovich lost support even of his own Party of the Regions and fled to Russia.

As Kudelia (2014) pointed out Yanukovich's ousting became 'a pretext for Russian interference with Ukrainian sovereignty, as Moscow disputed the legitimacy of his removal, seized control of the Crimean Peninsula, and promoted a violent separatist drive in the south and east' [of Ukraine]. The provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk each declared themselves a 'people's republic', being formally independent, but fully controlled and supplied by Russia. Mitrokhin (2015) analyzes the evidence of the nature of the Russian military presence and the changing composition of the 'separatist' forces in the armed conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine, and identifies three distinct phases in the conflict, each characterized by the involvement of a different set of actors and forces operating on the pro-Russian side. He argues that the available evidence demonstrates conclusively that the new 'republics' in the Donbass received vital assistance from Russia in the form of military manpower and materials throughout this period, including regular soldiers sent to the region starting in August 2014.

Russian regular soldiers fought back against the Ukrainian army and forced a (very fragile) ceasefire, formalized in the Minsk Protocol of September 5. From a military perspective, this was a victory for Russia. From a political perspective, the outcome of the war remains completely open. (Mitrokhin, 2015, p. 222)

In September 2014 and in February 2015, after negotiations by 'Normandy four,' two Minsk Trilateral Agreements were signed by Ukraine, Russia and the OSCE, supported by the U.S. and the UN Security Council. The Agreements outlined the ceasefire, exchange of prisoners, withdrawal of foreign troops and illegal military formations from Ukraine, and Ukraine's control over the border with Russia (Iancu, Fortuna, Barna, & Teodor, 2016). By mid-2016, the contradictory agreements were still not implemented, and only the 'ceasefire' was in place (however, with sporadic shelling and several casualties among combatants daily), while Ukraine still did not control over 400 kilometers of its borders and 3% of its heavily populated and industrialized territory. Annexation of Crimea was not a subject of the negotiations at all.

The conflict in Ukraine is of a rather peculiar nature. It can be characterized by the following:

- *unclear legal status of the armed conflict*: it has not been declared a war officially (Russian–Ukrainian war). Instead, Ukraine announced an 'anti-terrorist operation' or 'ATO' (while using regular military forces extensively for over two years now); Russia constantly denies its participation in the conflict and consistently calls it 'the Ukrainian civil war', and some scientists (see Black & Johns, 2016) argue that 'Ukrainians are killing Ukrainians in the eastern parts of the country'. The separatist leaders refer to it as 'punitive operation by Ukrainian forces'. This uncertainty provokes adverse interpretations of the conflict within Ukraine and beyond
- *multifarious dimensions of the tensions between neighbouring countries*: 'Russia followed the same path as it did previously in Moldova and Georgia: war, separatism, economic destabilization, and attempts to create social unrest' (Haran, 2015, p. 134). Information and harsh propaganda became impressive tools in setting up people's minds. 'Trade wars' diminished traditionally strong economic ties between the neighbouring countries (Polese et al., 2016);
- *informality of many agents involved in the conflict*: initially, pro-Russian forces (local 'rebels', 'separatists', then organized in 'local army' and 'people's militia', backed by the Russian professional militants without insignia and volunteers from all over the Russian Federation, mainly former combatants of Russian war in Chechnya) opposed pro-Ukrainian paramilitary voluntary units and special police battalions, and then the regular Ukrainian Army supported by volunteers. Irregular forces, including criminal gangs and non-state parties were involved in this conflict, blurring the lines between 'enemies' and eroding 'combat identity' (as defined by Smith & True, 2014). Absence of distinctive frontlines, reliable statistics on casualties on both (or rather – many) 'sides', as well as non-expressive statements on the objectives, turns this armed conflict into an 'unconventional war' with what is called a specific 'battlefield ecology' (Camp, 2011, p. 16);
- *clear, yet multiple-valued, political nature of the conflict*: obvious regional divisions in Ukraine (Kudelia, 2014); latent long-term support of separatism and hidden preparation for military

activities by Russia seeking to restore the Soviet Union (Shevtsova, 2014) and other factors determine ambivalent attitudes to the 'separatism' all over in Ukraine. A national survey, conducted in April–May 2014, indicates that half of the Donbas population backed various forms of separatism, and many of those who stayed in the areas that were not controlled by the Ukrainian government and those who fled were in support of the pro-Russian position and/or the local autonomy (Vedernikova, Mostovaya, & Rakhmanin, 2014). This creates tensions and violent behaviour among different groups of the population, constituting a 'conflict of values and senses' (Semigina & Gusak, 2015). At the same time, it cemented Ukrainian political identity (Haran, 2015). However, at the moment of the writing of this paper, national reconciliation is not an issue.

There is overwhelming evidence in support of the notion that the warfare accompanied by political, economic and informational challenges caused serious damage to civilian life in all parts of Ukraine, not only in the Donbas, and worsened the humanitarian situation in the whole country.

Study findings

Key target groups of the war-affected population

By mid-2016 nearly 10,000 people were killed in the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine, including nearly 2500 Ukrainian soldiers (UNIAN, 2016), while the number of wounded and disabled combatants, as well as non-combatants, is also significant, yet officially unavailable.

Experts told in the interviews that according to the official register there were more than 170,000 Ukrainian combatants who participated in the military actions on the territory of Donbas. However, this number cannot be regarded as accurate: some combatants have been in the war zone two or three times, while military volunteers, especially those who fought at the beginning of the armed conflict, are not registered at all. Experts pointed out also that in some areas of Ukraine combatants experienced ambivalent attitudes from the local people, as some communities were critical of the pro-governmental military actions.

Any statistical data on the needs of war veterans and their relatives is collected at the national level. Interviews and focus groups prove that combatants and their families are in need of social and psychological support, as they experience problems with aggression, substance abuse, employment and sustaining family ties. Families of the combatants who were killed in military action, especially during the initial stage of the conflict when no official system of registration operated, face special challenges related to the unclear legal status of the armed conflict.

A closer look at the data indicates that the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine deprives many people of their homes, families, schools, places of worship, etc., and causes tremendous changes in their environment, as many of them had to flee from the zone of violence. In August 2014, there were 56,000 officially registered IDPs. In August 2015 this number rose to 1.4 million; in 2016 – to 1.8 million (MSPU, 2016). IDPs from the eastern Ukraine now account for 98% of the total displaced Ukrainians, while those from the Crimea account for 2% (UNHCR, 2015). In August 2014, 32% of the IDPs were children and 14% were elderly or people with disabilities, while in August 2016 around 60% of the IDPs were retirees, 4% were people with disabilities, and only 14% were children. Half of all IDPs moved to the areas close to their home, others moved to other regions of the country (MSPU, 2016). Statistic shows the tendency for the IDPs returning, especially to the Donetsk region, both to the governmentally controlled and uncontrolled areas (Demchenko, Komarova, Belonosova, & Museychuk, 2014).

During the interviews respondents pointed out that the movement between the two areas was possible with minimal challenges, thus enabling people to actively cross the boundaries between the areas to get registered as IDPs and receive pensions from the Ukrainian state, while actually still being residents of the separatist controlled territories. Contrarily, those who moved away to other parts of the country, but do not need social assistance from the state, may not apply for the

IDP registration. So, the data appear to suggest that the official IDP statistics do not reflect the real situation with displacement.

It is also worth mentioning that in 2014–2016 the migration was not organized by the state. It was a voluntary choice of the people who were forced to leave their homes either in an attempt to avoid shelling, or because of their pro-Ukrainian position.

Population of the cities that used to be under control of 'separatists' forces and then were re-occupied by the Ukrainian forces belongs to a minor target group in the initial stage of the conflict. Researchers point out that this population suffers from the psychological consequences of the hybrid warfare and expresses concerns regarding the possibility of a repeat military intervention (Linskiy et al., 2015). Our interviews prove that these needs are not being met at all.

Not much reliable information on the needs of people staying in the conflict zone is available. Mercy Corps (2016) claims that more than 90% of the children living in the front lines and 'grey zone' communities (where it is not clear which side controls the town) show symptoms of psychological distress. In non-government controlled territories, thousands of civilians are living in homes with shattered windows, destroyed roofs and inoperable heating systems.

It is necessary to stress that Donetsk and Luhansk regions have a high level of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, drug use, etc. So, people taking antiretroviral drugs, receiving tuberculosis treatment or methadone substitute therapy were left without real medical assistance. This pushed them to flee to the government-controlled territory. Clients of the methadone substitute therapy in Crimea found themselves in similar circumstances, when, after annexation by Russia, all harm reduction programmes became prohibited (Demchenko et al., 2014).

All in all, communication with IDPs, service providers, relatives of combatants, as well as review of the literature and documents (Gusak, 2015; MSPU, 2016; OHCHR, 2014; Semigina & Gusak, 2015; Sereda, 2015; UN, 2014) allow defining of the key target groups for social work interventions during the ongoing armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine: (1) internally displaced people; (2) combatants (especially those with disabilities) and veterans; (3) relatives of the combatants; (4) population in the conflict zone, especially vulnerable groups (not much reliable information on the needs of these groups is available).

Assistance to the war-affected population

Interviews and desk review allow summarizing of the information on the interventions for the war-affected population in 2014–2016 at different stages of the ongoing armed conflict, presented in Table 1.

The main target group for social work at the initial stage of the armed conflict was the population in pre-displacement, in the process of displacement and post-displacement situations. In the absence of a state assistance programme, the majority of IDPs sought assistance from grassroots civic or religious groups. The response from these groups was tremendous, supported by private donations, active use of social media and civic spirit (OHCHR, 2014).

The data yielded in this study provide strong evidence that a lot of social interventions for the war-affected population were undertaken in Ukraine not by social workers or even mainstream social services, but by volunteers, NGOs and municipal institutions:

The civil organisations, volunteers, self-organised groups of people were among those who had responded immediately to the war challenges. They did what they were able to do, focusing on evacuation, initial support and provision of food, clothes, medicines and so on. I hardly can imagine how we could survive without external help in the mess of spontaneous evacuation. (Interview with an IDP)

In 2015, following the welfarism approach, the state introduced a rigid, bureaucratic system of receiving minimum cash benefits with an official IDP status, and launched the state housing assistance programme, ignoring the psychological and numerous social needs of the people. The provision of cash and in-kind assistance for war veterans and their families was also declared by the state.

Table 1. Interventions during the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine (2014–2016).

Period and its brief description	Interventions for people in warfare zone	Interventions for IDPs	Interventions for combatants and their families
March 2014–August 2014 (Active military actions in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions; Ukrainian forces re-established control over some territories and then lost control over territories along the border with Russia)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spontaneous, chaotic evacuation (individual and arranged by volunteers) • Limited humanitarian aid, including supply of drugs (e.g. antiretroviral drugs for people living with HIV/AIDS) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteers' hotlines and other informational channels about services for IDPs • Support with temporary accommodation • Meeting basic needs (food, clothing, hygiene kits, medicine, etc). • First psychological help 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary, informal groups provided supplies and moral support for Ukrainian combatants
September 2014–January 2015 (The Minsk-1 Agreement was signed, but not implemented and active military actions in some areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuation arranged by volunteers and the State Emergency Service • Limited humanitarian aid • Restoration of the essential services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governmental and non-governmental hotlines and other informational channels about services for IDPs • Support with temporary accommodation • Meeting basic needs (food, clothing, hygiene kits, medicine, etc). • First psychological help • Social and psychological support to adapt to the new environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voluntary, informal groups provided supplies and moral support for Ukrainian combatants
February 2015– December 2015 (The Minsk-2 Agreement was signed and fragile ceasefire was established; Ukrainian state adopted legislation on support to IDPs and combatants; separatists' 'People's Republic' established their own services and governance system)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about possibilities of voluntary self-evacuation • Limited humanitarian aid • Restoration of the essential services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governmental and non-governmental hotlines and other informational channels about services for IDPs • Social and psychological support to adapt to the new environment • Information campaigns advocating rights of IDPs and promoting their activation • Support with temporary accommodation • In-kind and cash benefits from the state 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind and cash benefits from the state • Limited social and psychological services provided by volunteers and NGOs
January 2016 – October 2016 (<i>time of study</i>) (Despite The Minsk-2 Agreement Ukraine did not regain control over its state border and territories; political discussions on what to do with separatists' 'People's Republic' were unproductive; sporadic military actions, shelling and casualties happened daily)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about possibilities of voluntary self-evacuation • Limited humanitarian aid • Restoration of the essential services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governmental and non-governmental hotlines and other informational channels about services for IDPs • Official registration as IDPs • In-kind and cash benefits from the state • Limited social services from the municipal social institutions and NGOs • Information campaigns advocating rights of IDPs and promoting tolerance to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-kind and cash benefits from the state • Limited social and psychological services provided by self-support groups, NGOs and municipal social institutions

Source: Author's summary of the data generated during the study.

In 2015–2016, the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine had elaborated and developed a number of regulations aimed at providing psychosocial support and psychological rehabilitation for the combatants and war-affected population. Yet, they are hardly ever implemented under current conditions and within the unchanged system of social or medical services. In their interviews, respondents reported an absence of social workers and psychologists in military units or at healthcare settings.

Challenges for social work interventions

The research findings support the claim that the armed conflict and the hybrid war expose a number of structural problems and ethical complexities for social work.

There are too many uncoordinated ‘players’ with their own narrow interests involved in the provision of social and psychosocial support (WHO, 2016). The practice of a ‘single window’ was not introduced to the war-affected groups (and, in fact, to the whole population in need of social services).

Respondents evaluated social and psychosocial assistance to war-affected population as extremely weak. They pointed out the lack of skills of social workers and their unpreparedness to act quickly in an emergency situation, and brought up a lack of understanding of the micro–macro factors and dynamics that affect the process of support to war-affected population:

I cannot believe social workers or so called psychologists. The ideas they express or suggest are so far from reality, they just don't understand problems of former combatants or their relatives, relations within community. They may use their guidelines and be rather formal, and they don't care about our real needs. (Interview with the combatant widow)

Moreover, the crisis uncovers the fact that social work institutions and practitioners have no liability for the result and the quality of their work.

As is evident from the undertaken research, so far no military social work exists in the country. There are no positions of social workers or mental health officers in the military units. Research highlighted the fact of the absence of standardized protocols or methods for identifying health or/and social problems of the ex-combatants and military personnel.

The provision of the post-traumatic stress syndrome interventions faces significant obstacles both on the supply and demand sides, as people are not used to applying for such services, and mental health services (and some social services) are highly marginalized.

The research highlighted a split in the social work profession because of the ambivalent political nature of the hybrid war in Ukraine. Communications demonstrate contrast between personal and professional values of some social workers. Despite the necessity to maintain a neutral position, they were emotionally involved in the political (and armed) conflict. What social workers and social services perform on the territories uncontrolled by the Ukrainian government remains an open question. The ‘people’s republics’ claim that they have their own ‘ministries of labor and social policy’, preserve a network of social services, and develop ‘mobile social services’ (Ministerstvo Truda i Socialnoy Politycy DNR, 2016). Conducted interviews and web-site reviews provide grounds for an assertion that such social services are engaged politically.

The results provide confirmatory, yet frustrating evidence that social workers on both sides are not ready to work toward reconciliation of communities with politically, culturally and linguistically diverse populations, and of a nation as a whole.

Needed actions

According to the respondents, the regional and community centers for the psychosocial rehabilitation of persons affected by the hybrid war have to be opened, while regional authorities have to implement programmes aimed at social reintegration of IDPs and ex-combatants.

The study reveals that structural changes have to be introduced to sustain the social work response to disasters, including armed conflicts. Social worker positions must be introduced in the military units and military hospitals (as well as the positions of psychologists). Special programmes helping combatants to prepare for deployment and post-deployment have to be developed and introduced (the programme 'Battlemind' of the U.S. Army may serve as an example).

It would be invaluable if the State Service of Emergency of Ukraine established formal contacts with the local social services and extensively cooperated with them in case of a disaster, providing social workers with training in survival skills, personal safety and evacuation.

Discussions and interviews prove the idea that military social work could be introduced as an optional course or even an academic concentration for a Master's Programme in select universities. The same could be done with the Social Work in Disaster Situation.

Discussions

The hybrid war in Ukraine constitutes a threatening challenge to the country. It has unveiled systemic drawbacks in the provision of social services for people in need, and in the social workers' preparedness to offer quality support in an emergency situation. At the same time, the hybrid war questions the social policy approach within the country, as well as social work professional preparedness to deal with conflicts.

The government-approved, compensation-based approach follows Ukrainian welfarism traditions and the philosophy of social pathology further solidifying post-Soviet social work (Ramon, 2000). The role of social workers is limited mainly to provision of personal care and individual support, especially at the emergency stages. This Ukrainian social work response to the military conflict contradicts modern social work approaches and allows us to learn a few lessons.

Firstly, experience of the countries that survived modern wars demonstrates that special attention should be paid to learning how to work with trauma survivors (Decker et al., 2016) and how to take into account prolonged psychosocial effects of warfare (Lester et al., 2012; Link & Palinkas, 2013) and political conflicts (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Ramon & Maglajlic, 2012). The relevant academic courses, as well as additional trainings should be introduced for current and prospective social workers, even when the conflicts are not feasible. Ukraine had had no military or political conflicts since the World War II, and no one was ready for them, including social workers.

Secondly, the Ukrainian case demonstrates that the social construction of meanings plays a crucial role for social workers who tend to divide people into 'us' and 'them' within the context of the modern hybrid conflicts with their blurred frames and announced warfare. As Nadan and Ben-Ari (2015) stipulate, the modern armed conflicts provoke the problems with identifying the 'other', as well as inevitable tension between the personal and the political in social work. It proves Campbell's (2007) idea about the necessity for social workers to understand how political and social structures impact the practice of social services.

The binary codes perceptions (Luhmann, 1990) could have been addressed through the strengthening of an ethical component of professional training. It is worth mentioning that currently Ukraine has neither a national ethical code, nor a strong national association of social workers, as social work as a profession is quite new to the country. Thus ethically sensitive issues are not covered by any regulations, even professional standards, making social workers too open for personal judgments and external influences, including political influences. While ethical challenges are rather acute within the conflict and post-conflict situations, workers should be specially trained to deal with them (Campbell, Duffy, Traynor, Reilly, & Pinkerton, 2013; Spitzer & Twikiridze, 2014) and with 'shared traumatic reality' (Nadan & Ben-Ari, 2015).

Thirdly, weak social work responses to the hybrid war brought to the forefront the issue of the potential for further professional development. More attention should be paid to the implementation of the long-term community development approaches, and to the restoration of personal and community resilience, revision of roles of social workers from provision of individual care to: (1) playing a

role in the restoration of societal non-conflict relations and tolerance within the political conflicts and wars as their consequences (Bašić, 2015; Maglajlic & Selimovic, 2014); (2) introducing resilience programmes aimed at sustaining social well-being and livelihood (PACT, 2009). The ideas of sustainable development and modern visions of the role of social work within conflicts, promoted by the international communities of professional social workers (Ioakimidis, 2015; Lombard, 2016) should be explored and used for addressing challenges of the hybrid war by social workers.

All in all, the review of international experience in introducing military social work (Brand & Weiss, 2015; Smith-Othborn, 2015; Wooten, 2015) or social work within the political conflict situation (Campbell et al., 2013; Nadan & Ben-Ari, 2015) to overcome the disastrous consequences of the modern wars (Bašić, 2015; Zdjelarevic et al., 2011), as well as a review of the studies of the contextualized approaches (Spitzer & Twikiridze, 2014) lead to a statement that, in order to move forward, Ukraine has to be ready for 'a constructive use of war experiences' (Simić & Milojević, 2014) for the benefit of the war-affected population, national reconciliation and to further the professionalization of social work.

Concluding remarks

The situation in Ukraine unfolding in 2014–2016 provides evidence of the important role of the civil society's response and informal practices in tackling the consequences of the hybrid war. Social services were not active players at the initial stage of the armed conflict. Social workers encounter numerous problems in meeting the needs of the key war-affected groups of population. These problems were caused by structural obstacles, the obscure nature of the war and ethical dilemmas. Unpreparedness of social workers to operate in emergency situations also plays a role.

The challenges of this warfare push Ukrainian social work toward further professionalization, broadening the selection of the social work interventions, developing new professional domains and services, and rethinking the welfare policies and professional standards, and ethical regulations. The Ukrainian case demonstrates that social workers critically need to be thoroughly trained to operate within the political and military conflict situations even though a country has no feasible grounds for such emergencies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributor

Tetyana Semigina (MSW, PhD and Dr Habit.) is a Professor and a Vice-Chancellor of Research Activities at the Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism (Kyiv, Ukraine). She is also involved in various international projects. She has authored more than 300 publications on social work, social and health policy. Since 2011, Tetyana has been a member of the IASSW board of directors.

ORCID

Tetyana Semigina  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5677-1785>

References

- Bašić, S. (2015). Educating for peace in the aftermath of genocide: Lessons (not) learnt from Bosnia. *Social Dialogue*, 10, 22–25.
- Black, J. L., & Johns, M. (2016). *The return of the cold war: Ukraine, the west and Russia*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Brand, M. W., & Weiss, E. L. (2015). Military social work and implications for social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 51(1), 153–168.

- Camp, N. M. (2011). US army psychiatry legacies of the Vietnam War. In E. C. Ritchie (Ed.), *Combat and operational behavioral health* (pp. 8–42). Falls Church, VA: Office of The Surgeon General United States Army.
- Campbell, J. L. (2007). Why would corporations behave in socially responsible ways? An institutional theory of corporate social responsibility. *Academy of Management Review*, 32, 946–967.
- Campbell, J., Duffy, J., Traynor, C., Reilly, I., & Pinkerton, J. (2013). Social work education and political conflict: Preparing students to address the needs of victims and survivors of the troubles in Northern Ireland. *European Journal of Social Work*, 16(4), 506–520.
- D'Cruz, H., & Jones, M. (2014). *Social work research in practice: Ethical and political contexts* (2nd ed.). London: Sage.
- Decker, J. T., Brown, J. L. C., & Tapia, J. (2016). Learning to work with trauma survivors: Lessons from Tbilisi, Georgia. *Social Work in Public Health*. doi:10.1080/19371918.2016.1188744
- Demchenko, I., Komarova, N., Belonosova, N., & Museychuk, A. (2014). *Rezyume analytycheskoho otcheta po rezul'tatam operatsyonnoho yssledovannya "VYCh-servys dlya vynuzhdennvkh pereselentsev yz chysla uyazvymykh k VYChynfeksyy hrupp"* [Resume of the analytical report on results of operational research 'HIV-service for displaced persons out of vulnerable to HIV groups']. Kyiv: International HIV/AIDS Alliance in Ukraine.
- Šešelgyte, M. (2014). Can hybrid war become the main security challenge for Eastern Europe? *European Leadership Network*. Retrieved from http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org/can-hybrid-war-become-the-main-security-challenge-for-eastern-europe_2025.html
- Galeotti, M. (2014). The 'Gerasimov doctrine' and Russian non-linear war. *Moscow's Shadows Blog*. Retrieved from <https://inmoscowshadows.wordpress.com/2014/07/06/the-gerasimov-doctrine-and-russian-non-linear-war>
- Gusak, N. (2015). *Keys-menedzhment vnytrishnyo peremishchenych osib: metodychny rekomendatsii* [Case-management of internally displaced persons: guidelines]. Kyiv: UNDP.
- Haran, O. (2015). Ukrainian-Russian conflict and its implications for northeast Asia. *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, 24(3), 125–158.
- Harding, S. (2007). Man-made disaster and development: The case of Iraq. *International Social Work*, 50(3), 295–306. doi:10.1177/0020872807076041
- Iancu, N., Fortuna, A., Barna, C., & Teodor, M., (Eds.). (2016). *Countering hybrid threats: Lessons learned from Ukraine*. Amsterdam: IOS Press.
- IFSW. (2012). *Displaced persons*. Retrieved from <http://ifsw.org/policies/displaced-persons>.
- Ioakimidis, V. (2015). The two-faces of Janus: Rethinking social work in the context of conflict. *Social Dialogue*, 10, 6–11.
- Kaldor, M. (2000). *Neue und alte Kriege. Gewalt im Zeitalter der Globalisierung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Klarić, M., Frančišković, T., Obrdalj, E. C., Petrić, D., Britvić, D., & Zovko, N. (2012). Psychiatric and health impact of primary and secondary traumatization in wives of veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder. *Psychiatra Danubina*, 24(3), 280–286.
- Kudelia, S. (2014). The house that Yanukovich built. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(3), 19–34.
- Kudos, A. (2015). *Hybrid war – A new security challenge for Europe*. Paper presented at the background notes of the inter-parliamentary conference for the common foreign and security policy (CFSP) and the common security and Defence policy (CSDP). Retrieved from <http://www.parleu2015.lv/files/cfsp-csdp/wg3-hybrid-war-background-notes-en.pdf>
- Lai, K., & Toliashvili, B. (2010). Community-based programme for war-affected children: The case of Georgia. *Social Work and Social Policy in Transition*, 1(2), 92–118.
- Lavalette, M., & Ioakimidis, V. (2016). "Popular" social work in extremis: Two case studies on collective welfare responses to social crisis situations. *Pradžia*, 3. Retrieved from <http://www.zurnalai.vu.lt/socialine-teorija-empirija-politika-ir-praktika/article/view/10047>
- Leiner, B. (2009). The legacy of war: An intergenerational perspective. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 79(3–4), 375–391.
- Lester, P., Saltzman, W. R., Woodward, K., Glover, D., Leskin, G. A., Bursch, B., ... Beardslee, W. (2012). Evaluation of a family-centered prevention intervention for military children and families facing wartime. *American Journal of Public Health*, 102(Suppl. 1), S48–S54.
- Link, P. E., & Palinkas, L. A. (2013). Long-Term trajectories and service needs for military families. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 16, 376–393. doi:10.1007/s10567-013-0145-z
- Linskiy, V., Kuzminov, V., Pozdnyakova, N., Onyshchuk, S., Shestopalova, L., Grinevivh, E., ... Zhabenko, O. (2015). The psychological consequences of hybrid warfare on Ukrainian civil population in Slavyansk and Nikolayevka. *Journal of Traumatic Stress Disorders & Treatment*, 4(4), 1–6. doi:10.4172/2324-8947.1000148
- Lombard, A. (2016). Global agenda for social work and social development: A path toward sustainable social work. *Social Dialogue*, 14, 6–15.
- Luhmann N. (1990). *Essays on self-reference*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Maglajlic, R. A., & Selimovic, J. (2014). Social work on Bosnia and Herzegovina. *ERIS Web Journal*, 1, 17–30.
- Mahdi, S. (2007, February 24–27). *Where do IDPs Go? Evidence of social capital from Aceh conflict and Tsunami IDPs*. Paper presented for the first international conference of Aceh and Indian Ocean studies, Banda Aceh.
- Mercy Corps. (2016). *Quick facts about the Ukraine crisis*. Retrieved from <https://www.mercycorps.org/articles/ukraine/quick-facts-about-ukraine-crisis>
- Ministerstvo Truda i Socialnoy Politiki DNR. (2016). Retrieved from <http://mtspdnr.ru>

- Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine (MSPU). (2016). *Information for internally displaced people*. Retrieved from <http://www.mlsp.gov.ua>
- Mitrokhin, N. (2015). Infiltration, instruction, invasion: Russia's war in the Donbass. *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*, 1(1), 219–250.
- Monson, C. M., Taft, C. T., & Fredman, S. J. (2009). Military-related PTSD and intimate relationships: From description to theory-driven research and intervention development. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 29(8), 707–714.
- Nadan, Y., & Ben-Ari, A. (2015). Social work education in the context of armed political conflict: An Israeli perspective. *British Journal of Social Work*, 45(6), 1734–1749.
- OHCHR. (2014, September 19). *Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine*. Retrieved from <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G14/167/38/PDF/G1416738.pdf?OpenElement>
- PACT. (2009). *The PLHIV entrepreneur group project manual*. Yunnan.
- Polese, A., Kevlihan, R., & Beacháin, D. O. (2016). Introduction: Hybrid warfare in post-Soviet spaces, is there a logic behind? *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27(3), 361–366. doi:10.1080/09592318.2016.1151660
- Ramon, Sh., (Ed.). (2000). *Creating social work and social policy education in Kiev, Ukraine: An experiment in social innovation*. Cambridge: Anglia Polytechnic University.
- Ramon, S., Campbell, J., Lindsay, J., McCrystal, P., & Baidoun, N. (2006). The impact of political conflict on social work: Experiences from Northern Israel, Israel and Palestine. *British Journal of Social Work*, 36, 435–450.
- Ramon, S., & Maglajlic, A. (2012). *Social work, political conflict and displacement. The sage handbook of international social work*. London: Sage, 311–324.
- Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, H. R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15(1), 85–109.
- Seifert, R. (2015). Social work and armed conflict: How the everyday practice of social work is affected by international politics. *Social Dialogue*, 10, 44–47.
- Semigina, T., & Gusak, N. (2015). Armed conflict in Ukraine and social work response to it: What strategies should be used for internally displaced persons? *Social, Health, and Communication Studies Journal*, 1(2), 1–23.
- Semigina, T., Gusak, N., & Trukhan, S. (2015). Sotsialna pidderzhka vnytrishnyo peremishenykh osib [Social support for internally displaced persons]. *Ukrainskiy Sotsium*, 2, 65–72.
- Sereda, Y. (2015). Sotsialniy kapital vnytrishnyo peremishchenykh osib yak chynnyk lokalnoyi integratsii v Ukraini [Social capital of internally displaced persons as a factor of local integration in Ukraine]. *Ukrainskiy Sotsium*, 3, 29–41.
- Shevtsova, L. (2014). The Russia factor. *Journal of Democracy*, 25(3), 74–82.
- Simić, O., & Milojević, I. (2014). Dialogues between ex-combatants and youth in Serbia: A constructive use of war experience. *Peacebuilding*, 2(3), 322–335. doi:10.1080/21647259.2014.899134
- Smith-Othborn, A. (2015). An intensive continuing education initiative to train social workers for military social work practice. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 51(1), doi:10.1080/10437797.2015.1001290
- Smith, R. T., & True, G. (2014). Warring identities: Identity conflict and the mental distress of American veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Society and Mental Health*, 4(2), 147–161. doi:10.1177/2156869313512212
- Spitzer, H., & Twikiridze, J. M. (2014). Ethical challenges for social work in post-conflict situations: The case of Africa's great lakes region. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 8, 135–150. doi:10.1080/17496535.2014.895399
- UN. (2014). *UNDP-EU project will support recovery and help IDPs in Eastern Ukraine*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org.ua/en/information-centre/news/1919>
- UNHCR. (2015). *Internal displacement statistics in Ukraine*. Retrieved from <http://unhcr.org.ua/en/2011-08-26-06-58-56/news-archive/1231-internally-displaced-people>
- UNIAN. (2016). *UN: Eastern Ukraine casualties highest since August 2015*. Retrieved from Read more on <http://www.unian.info/war/1451001-un-eastern-ukraine-casualties-highest-since-august-2015.html>
- Vedernikova, I., Mostovaya, Y., & Rakhmanin, S. (2014, April 19). South-East: The branch of our tree. *Zerkalo Nedeli*, 6.
- Williamson, M., & Mansoor, P. R. (2012). *Hybrid warfare: Fighting complex opponents from the ancient world to the present*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wooten, N. R. (2015). Military social work: Opportunities and challenges for social work education. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 51(1), 6–25.
- World Health Organization (WHO). (2016). *Technical consultancy to support the development of the national disability, health and rehabilitation. Plan in Ukraine*. Kyiv-Hannover.
- Zdjelarevic, A., Komar, Z., Loncar, M., Plasc, I. D., Hrabac, P., & Groznica, I., & Marčinko, D. (2011). Quality of life in families of Croatian veterans 15 years after the war. *Collegium Antropologicum*, 35(Suppl 1), 281–286.

Copyright of European Journal of Social Work is the property of Routledge and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.