

УДК 352/354:364:378.147](477.51)
DOI: 10.60022/3(6)-6S

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BORDER COMMUNITY CHALLENGES IN WARTIME UKRAINE: ADVANCING SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL WELFARE THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING

Abstract. *The article examines the key challenges facing border territorial communities of Chernihiv oblast under conditions of full-scale war. The findings of the analysis provide the empirical and conceptual foundation for the development and implementation of a Service Learning model as a tool for advancing social change and strengthening social welfare at the community level.*

The empirical base of the study comprises the results of focus group interviews and semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with 120 representatives of four key stakeholder groups: local self-government bodies, the civil society sector, the private sector, and educational institutions across five communities of the region: Chernihiv, Horodnia, Nizhyn, Pryluky, and Koriukivka. The sample was formed on the basis of an intersectoral approach, ensuring representation of actors involved in the formation, implementation, and expert support of socio-economic and governance processes at the local level.

The study identifies six systemic challenges that define the development trajectory of the investigated communities. First, security instability and critical infrastructure constraints (particularly acute in border communities) structurally limit investment attraction, long-term planning, and institutional functioning. Second, demographic decline and loss of human capital, manifested through youth outmigration, declining birth rates, labour emigration, and accelerating population ageing, undermine the reproductive capacity of local labour markets and educational systems. Third, structural labour shortages and transformation of local labour markets reflect a deep mismatch between the educational system and the actual demands of the local economy, compounded by mobilisation-driven workforce reduction. Fourth, economic instability and financial dependence of communities on external grants and international support significantly narrow the space for independent development strategies. Fifth, psychosocial vulnerability of the population, expressed through the accumulation of chronic emotional exhaustion, burnout among civil society activists, and growing demand for psychological support, is gradually becoming an independent factor of social fragility. Sixth, institutional fragmentation and weak intersectoral interaction remain pervasive across all studied communities, with partnership between key actors remaining largely situational rather than institutionalised. It is defined that the intensity and configuration of these challenges vary significantly depending on the territorial location and institutional capacity of each community. Border communities demonstrate the highest levels of security vulnerability and economic dependence, while larger city communities face institutional fragmentation and workforce deficits.

The study suggests that a comprehensive understanding of the identified challenges provides the foundation for the purposeful application of Service Learning methodology as an educational instrument capable of strengthening intersectoral linkages, developing practical competencies among youth, engaging universities as platforms for community partnership, and fostering sustainable community recovery.

Keywords: *community development challenges, human capital, social capital, Service Learning, intersectoral interaction, social change, social welfare, wartime Ukraine.*



ВИКЛИКИ ПРИКОРДОННИХ ГРОМАД У ВОЄННИЙ ЧАС В УКРАЇНІ: СПРИЯННЯ СОЦІАЛЬНИМ ЗМІНАМ ТА СОЦІАЛЬНОМУ ДОБРОБУТУ ЧЕРЕЗ SERVICE LEARNING

Анотація. *Стаття присвячена аналізу ключових викликів розвитку прикордонних територіальних громад Чернігівської області в умовах повномасштабної війни. Результати аналізу становлять емпіричне та концептуальне підґрунтя для розробки й впровадження моделі Service Learning як інструменту соціальних змін і зміцнення соціального добробуту. Емпіричну базу дослідження становлять результати фокус-групових інтерв'ю та напівструктурованих глибинних інтерв'ю з 120 представниками чотирьох груп стейкхолдерів: органів місцевого самоврядування, громадського сектору, приватного сектору та закладів освіти у п'яти громадах регіону: Чернігівській, Городнянській, Ніжинській, Прилуцькій та Корюківській. За результатами дослідження ідентифіковано шість системних викликів: безпекова нестабільність та критичні інфраструктурні обмеження; демографічне скорочення та втрата людського капіталу; структурний кадровий дефіцит та трансформація локальних ринків праці; економічна нестабільність та фінансова залежність громад; психосоціальна вразливість населення; інституційна фрагментація та слабкість міжсекторальної взаємодії. Встановлено, що інтенсивність і конфігурація викликів диференціюються залежно від територіального розташування та інституційної спроможності громади. Обґрунтовано, що комплексне осмислення зазначених викликів формує підґрунтя для цілеспрямованого застосування методології Service Learning як освітнього інструменту, здатного зміцнювати міжсекторальні зв'язки, розвивати практичні компетентності молоді та сприяти сталому відновленню громад.*

Ключові слова: *виклики розвитку громад, людський капітал, соціальний капітал, Service Learning, міжсекторальна взаємодія, соціальні зміни та соціальний добробут.*

Formulation of the problem. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered a profound transformation of the socio-economic environment of territorial communities, intensifying systemic challenges in the areas of security, demography, employment, institutional governance, and the psychosocial wellbeing of the population. Border communities have found themselves at the epicentre of these processes, experiencing the simultaneous pressure of military threats, human capital outflow, and a narrowing resource base for development [3]. Chernihiv oblast, as a border region, represents one of the most telling examples of community vulnerability under wartime conditions: the region suffered significant human and material losses from the very outset of the full-scale aggression, and its communities continue to operate under conditions of security instability and limited recovery capacity.

The wartime challenges facing local communities and higher education systems alike necessitate the integration of their efforts in developing effective recovery strategies. As noted in the UNESCO report on the futures of education, higher education institutions must actively engage with their communities in order to contribute to a new social contract for education [15]. The most appropriate methodology for this purpose is Service Learning, an experiential educational approach in which higher education students participate in community-based activities, critically reflect on their experience, and learn from it personally, socially, and academically [7].

In the context of a protracted crisis, society is searching for instruments capable not only of stabilising the situation but also of creating the foundation for sustained social change. Social entrepreneurship is increasingly establishing itself as one such instrument, able to combine veteran reintegration, the activation of civic participation, and the strengthening of local economies [1]. At the same time, the preparation of agents of social change requires appropriate educational formats, among which the Service Learning methodology stands out for its capacity to integrate learning with the real needs of communities [12]. Universities located in affected regions possess unique potential to become platforms for community engagement, accumulating intellectual resources, partnership networks, and educational practices oriented toward recovery needs.

The effective application of the Service Learning approach in higher education is impossible without a thorough understanding of the specific challenges faced by particular communities. Accordingly, the analysis of the socio-economic, demographic, and institutional challenges confronting border and adjacent communities of Chernihiv oblast acquires particular significance as a necessary precondition for developing strategies of social change and strengthening the social welfare of the population.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The scholarly discourse on wartime challenges facing territorial communities of Ukraine encompasses several interrelated research directions. The transformation

of human and social capital under conditions of full-scale invasion has been examined by Halushka Z. [2] and Revko A. M. [5], who emphasise demographic losses, the degradation of labour potential, and the role of social capital as a determinant of community resilience. The state of the innovation environment in Chernihiv Oblast under martial law has been analysed by Kholiavko N. and Hnedina K. [3], findings directly relevant to the territorial context of the present study. The institutional resilience of local self-government and community response mechanisms to internal displacement have been investigated by Melnykovska I. and Wilson Sokhey S. [14] and Keudel O. and Huss O. [13], demonstrating that the achievements of decentralisation reform have served as a resource for community adaptation to wartime conditions.

The role of volunteering and civic activism in advancing social change under wartime conditions has been studied by Boichak O. and McKernan B. [8]. In the domain of educational practice, Kenworthy A. and Opatska S. [12] have substantiated the potential of Service Learning as a methodology for sustaining student engagement and developing competencies in times of crisis.

Notwithstanding the growing body of research, the question of a comprehensive analysis of border community challenges as a precondition for the implementation of educational instruments of social change remains insufficiently explored, which determines the purpose and relevance of the present study.

The purpose of the article is to identify and systematically analyse the key challenges facing communities of Chernihiv oblast under conditions of full-scale war, as a precondition for developing strategies of social change and strengthening social welfare through the application of Service Learning methodology.

The study was conducted within the framework of the research project «Service Learning Model for Ensuring the Resilience and Post-War Recovery of Border Communities of Ukraine» (state registration number 0126U001542), aimed at developing and piloting a Service Learning model in universities as an instrument for sustainable post-war community recovery.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 120 representatives of four stakeholder groups across five territorial communities of Chernihiv Oblast: Chernihiv, Horodnia, Nizhyn, Pryluky, and Koriukivka. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, with a minimum of two years of relevant professional experience required across all groups. Both managerial and specialist positions were included to capture perspectives across different levels of institutional practice. Participants were required to hold active roles in community councils, working groups, or social project teams; community development initiatives or local advisory structures. Given that higher education institutions exist only in Chernihiv and Nizhyn, university staff were recruited exclusively from these cities, while educational representation in the remaining communities comprised secondary school teachers and administrators. This differentiated approach enabled comparison of educational challenges across institutional levels, capturing disparities in human capital development between communities with and without higher education infrastructure. The socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Each interview was structured around six thematic blocks: community context and key challenges, capacity needs and deficits, intersectoral interaction, the role of universities, the potential of Service Learning, and success criteria for university-community collaboration. Interview guides were adapted for each stakeholder group to reflect distinct institutional roles and competencies. Representative questions included: «What problems may have long-term consequences for community resilience, particularly in terms of human capital, youth migration, and fiscal capacity?»; «What specialists or expert competencies does the community lack for the implementation of recovery plans?»; and «Is the community ready to formulate specific requests or cases for student project teams?».

Qualitative content analysis was applied to process the collected data. Transcripts were coded thematically using a combined approach: coding categories were derived from the predefined thematic blocks of the interview guide and supplemented by categories emerging from the data. Semantic units were classified into six thematic clusters: security conditions and infrastructure; demographic and human capital dynamics; labour market and personnel capacity; economic environment and financial sustainability; psychosocial wellbeing and social support needs; and intersectoral interaction and institutional cooperation.

The sample structure is presented in Table 1. The composition of the sample reflects the engagement of key actors in local development: representatives of educational institutions account for 37.5% of respondents, local self-government bodies for 26.7%, the civil society sector for 22.5%, and the private sector for 13.3%. The gender structure of the sample is characterised by a substantial predominance of women, comprising approximately 80% against 20% men. The age structure of respondents encompasses predominantly individuals of working and professionally active age: the local self-government segment is dominated by the 33–45 age range, the civil society sector by the 30–37 range, while representatives of the business and educational sectors are characterised by a broader age interval of 30 to 55 years, reflecting a combination of different career stages and levels of managerial experience.

The professional experience of respondents is differentiated according to sectoral affiliation. The highest seniority indicators are characteristic of representatives of the educational environment and business, attributable to the duration of their professional trajectories and the accumulation of expert and managerial experience. The civil society sector is predominantly represented by participants with experience in project and coordination activities, while representatives of local self-government bodies combine managerial and executive functions, forming a mixed profile of professional practice.

Table 1

Socio-demographic and professional characteristics of the research sample

Stakeholder Group	Number of Respondents	Share, %	Age Range	Gender Distribution (M:F, %)	Work Experience	Position Levels
Local Self-Government Bodies (LSG)	32	26.7	33–45 years	33 : 67	5–12 years	community leadership; heads of departments and divisions; heads of structural units; specialists
Civil Society Organizations (CSO)	27	22.5	30–37 years	15 : 85	2–10 years	heads of civil society organizations; organization managers; project managers; initiative coordinators
Business	16	13.3	32–55 years	34 : 66	2–25 years	business owners; individual entrepreneurs; enterprise managers; managers; employees
Educational Institutions	45	37.5	30–55 years	12 : 88	10–30 years	university leadership; lecturers; teachers

Source: compiled by the author based on the research findings

The main material presentation . The involvement of representatives from four key sectors provided a multidimensional perspective on the development challenges of the studied communities. The survey findings enabled the identification of six interrelated groups of challenges that systematically affect the resilience and development of Chernihiv Oblast communities under martial law.

Analysis of interview and focus group materials demonstrates that *security instability and critical infrastructure constraints* are factors that determine the trajectories of socio-economic development of Chernihiv Oblast communities, the functioning of local institutions, and the reproduction of human capital. The nature and intensity of security risks vary depending on the spatial location of the community and its institutional capacity. In border communities (Horodnia and Koriukivka) security threats assume a systemic character. Respondents report persistent shelling, immediate proximity to the state border, a critical decline in investment attractiveness, and a structural inability to engage in long-term planning. Representatives of local self-government bodies note that border status acts as a deterrent to attracting entrepreneurial capital, complicates the implementation of infrastructure projects, and deepens community dependence on external resources and humanitarian transfers. In Horodnia community, the security situation directly determines the functioning of the educational system, the social sphere, and the entrepreneurial environment. Respondents note that systematic shelling prevents the implementation of planned initiatives, heightens uncertainty in the activities of civil society organisations, and constrains the development of small businesses. In Koriukivka community, security challenges are compounded by the economic vulnerability of the border periphery. Representatives of business and local self-government bodies point to a significant depression of investment activity and the predominant concentration of donor support on meeting humanitarian needs, leaving no resources for the implementation of long-term development strategies.

In Pryluky and Nizhyn communities, security challenges are transformed primarily into infrastructure and energy risks. In Pryluky, respondents emphasise the technical deterioration of housing and communal infrastructure facilities, the risks of systemic energy crises, and a deficit of resources for the modernisation of life-support systems. In Nizhyn, representatives of local self-government bodies point to a critical dependence on centralised energy supply, prolonged power outages, and a shortage of qualified technical specialists required to maintain the infrastructure resilience of the community.

In Chernihiv, security instability acquires an additional institutional dimension. Representatives of local self-government bodies identify the competition of powers between the military administration and local self-government bodies as one of the key governance challenges, accompanied by duplication of functions, dysfunction of strategic management, and the fragmentation of inter-institutional coordination.

The demographic crisis and the progressive loss of human capital are identified by respondents as one of the most structurally significant challenges across all studied communities. Youth outmigration, declining birth rates, labour emigration, and the acceleration of demographic ageing generate persistent long-term risks for

the reproduction of local labour markets, the functioning of the educational system, and the overall economic resilience of communities.

In Horodnia community, a systemic outflow of youth for educational purposes without subsequent return to their place of origin is characteristic. The educational sector records a reduction in the rural population, a deepening age disproportion, and the forced evacuation of residents as a result of persistent shelling. The absence of higher education institutions in the community further entrenches the educational and demographic peripherality of the territory.

In Pryluky community, the demographic crisis is compounded by declining birth rates, labour emigration of youth, and a reduction in the student population. Representatives of educational institutions record a growing psychological vulnerability among the younger generation and increasing difficulties in socialisation processes under conditions of prolonged wartime instability.

In Nizhyn, the problem of human capital loss assumes a distinctly structural character: a significant proportion of graduates continue their studies or choose employment outside the region or abroad without subsequent return. In parallel, a gradual reduction of the vocational and technical education system is underway, deepening the shortage of technically qualified personnel and weakening the labour potential of the community.

In Koriukivka community, demographic challenges manifest through a reduction in the school-age population as a result of migration and declining birth rates. The outflow of teaching staff and pupils abroad places additional strain on the local educational system and complicates the maintenance of stability in the educational process.

In Chernihiv, demographic processes find expression through a large-scale personnel deficit, youth outmigration, the depletion of academic staff in higher education institutions, and a deepening imbalance between the professional expectations of young specialists and the actual opportunities offered by the local labour market. Representatives of the educational sector note that a share of graduates enter the labour market without a sufficient level of practical competencies and with inflated salary expectations.

Structural labour shortages and the transformation of local labour markets constitute a pervasive challenge across all studied communities, regardless of stakeholder type. Respondents note that the full-scale war has substantially transformed local labour markets, exacerbating the deficit of blue-collar, technical, managerial, and digital competencies. In Horodnia community, business representatives point to systemic difficulties in recruiting personnel and a gradual depression of labour motivation among the population. A share of respondents associate these tendencies with the entrenchment of a dependency on humanitarian aid among part of the population, the general instability of the economic environment, and a deficit of local employment opportunities.

In Pryluky community, the labour shortage manifests through a lack of blue-collar specialists, a reduction in the workforce as a result of mobilisation, and a general decline in the level of economic activity among the population. Representatives of the entrepreneurial sector emphasise the intensification of competition for qualified workers and the absence of constructive dialogue with public authorities regarding entrepreneurship support.

In Nizhyn, the labour shortage assumes a complex character. Representatives of local self-government bodies record a deficit of electricians, technicians, IT specialists, drivers, and other technically qualified personnel. The business sector additionally points to an insufficient level of digital competencies, analytical thinking, and communication skills among young specialists. The educational sector, in turn, acknowledges the existence of a significant structural gap between the content of educational programmes and the actual demands of the local labour market.

In Koriukivka community, the labour shortage is characterised by business representatives as one of the principal barriers to entrepreneurial development. Even the recruitment of entry-level personnel in the service sector presents a practical challenge, while attracting narrowly specialised professionals is critically complicated given the community's border status and the instability of the labour market.

In Chernihiv, the personnel deficit simultaneously encompasses the public, entrepreneurial, and educational sectors. Representatives of local self-government bodies note that certain structural units are staffed at less than half their capacity, and that wage levels do not ensure competitiveness relative to the private sector. Business representatives record a significant gap between the salary expectations of young people and actual market opportunities. The educational sector emphasises the need to develop new specialisations, including crisis psychology, renewable energy, and project management, made relevant by wartime conditions and recovery needs.

Economic instability and financial dependence of communities constitute a shared structural context across all studied communities, yet differentiate in terms of the intensity of manifestations and the specificity of mechanisms depending on the local economic profile. In Horodnia community, business representatives

point to excessive tax burdens, rising energy costs, and the structural complication of entrepreneurial activity under conditions of persistent shelling. A share of economic entities operate in a mode of operational survival or cease activity as a result of economic uncertainty and the contraction of consumer demand.

In Pryluky community, economic instability correlates with a decline in investment activity, the crisis-mode operation of enterprises, and growing energy risks. Representatives of the civil society sector point to a critical dependence of organisations on grant funding and the absence of a sustainable financing model for social initiatives.

In Nizhyn, respondents emphasise excessive tax burdens, the limited availability of financial support instruments for business, and the necessity of continuous adaptation to an unstable economic environment. A share of business projects implemented through grant funding fail to demonstrate long-term self-sufficiency, indicating the structural vulnerability of the local entrepreneurial environment.

In Koriukivka community, economic vulnerability is compounded by limited access to credit and financial resources in the border zone, as well as disruptions to electricity supply and a deficit of personnel reserves.

In Chernihiv, both the civil society sector and local self-government bodies are characterised by a high degree of dependence on external subventions and international support. Representatives of civil society organisations record an intensification of competition for donor resources, while local self-government bodies point to a contraction of their own revenue base as a result of the suspension or relocation of enterprises.

The psychosocial vulnerability of the population and the growing need for social support are most prominently articulated by representatives of the civil society sector and the educational environment. Respondents record an accumulation of psychoemotional exhaustion, a growing demand for psychological support, and an intensification of social vulnerability among particular categories of the population. In Horodnia community, respondents point to the absence of adequate conditions for veteran reintegration, a deficit of rehabilitation services, and the objective impossibility of organising systemic psychosocial support under conditions of permanent danger.

In Pryluky community, civil society organisations draw attention to insufficient systemic attention to psychological support, difficulties in the integration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and the absence of institutionalised approaches to population support. At the same time, respondents note that small local initiatives frequently demonstrate higher effectiveness compared to large-scale formalised projects.

In Nizhyn, respondents record the widespread prevalence of professional burnout syndrome among civil society activists, growing social passivity, and a deterioration of communicative competencies among youth as a consequence of prolonged distance learning and forced social isolation.

In Koriukivka community, the civil society sector points to growing needs for humanitarian assistance, social care for elderly persons, and the provision of basic medical and transportation services in rural areas.

In Chernihiv, a progressive exhaustion of initiative groups and a gradual erosion of social cohesion compared to the initial stage of the full-scale invasion are characteristic. Representatives of the civil society sector emphasise that the needs of activists themselves are systematically overlooked by donors and public authorities, despite their pivotal role in sustaining the social resilience of communities.

The survey findings indicate *institutional fragmentation and weak intersectoral interaction*, as well as an asymmetry in assessments of its effectiveness among different stakeholder groups. In Horodnia community, a significant divergence is recorded between the assessments of business representatives and local self-government bodies: the former emphasise the absence of constructive partnership with local authorities, while the latter characterise the level of cooperation considerably more positively.

In Pryluky community, representatives of business and civil society organisations offer a critical assessment of weak intersectoral coordination, the absence of effective strategic documents, and the low practical effectiveness of partnership formats of interaction with public authorities.

In Nizhyn, respondents point to the formal character of certain participation mechanisms, the opacity of partnership processes, and the insufficient capacity of the community council. At the same time, Nizhyn stands out as the community with the most developed examples of inter-university cooperation, international partnerships, and interaction between educational institutions and local stakeholders.

In Chernihiv, the problem of intersectoral interaction assumes a systemic character. Representatives of local self-government bodies, civil society organisations, and business record a low level of intersectoral trust, the formality of consultative mechanisms, and the absence of institutionalised coordination platforms. The educational sector is meanwhile positioned by respondents as a potential centre of analytical support, personnel retraining, and intersectoral partnership.

A generalised comparative characterisation of the intensity of the identified challenges across the studied communities is presented in Table 2. The findings indicate that despite the shared nature of the majority of challenges across all studied communities, their intensity and configuration vary significantly depending on

the territorial location, level of urbanisation, and institutional capacity of the community, which should be taken into account when developing differentiated strategies of support and recovery.

Table 2

Comparative matrix of key challenges identified by stakeholder groups across communities (based on the frequency of mentions and the degree of emphasis by respondents)

Key Challenges	Horodnia community	Pryluky community	Nizhyn community	Koriukivka community	Chernihiv community
Security instability and critical infrastructure constraints	+++	++	++	+++	+++
Demographic decline and loss of human capital	+++	+++	+++	++	++
Structural labour shortages and transformation of local labour markets	++	+++	+++	++	+++
Economic instability and financial dependence of communities	+++	++	++	++	+++
Psychosocial vulnerability of the population and growing needs for social support	++	+++	++	+++	+++
Institutional fragmentation and weak intersectoral interaction	+	++	++	+	+++

Legend: +++ – high level of challenge intensity; ++ – medium level; + – low level (based on the frequency of mentions and the degree of emphasis by respondents during interviews and focus groups).

Source: compiled by the author based on the research findings

The intensity rating assigned to each challenge reflects a combination of two criteria applied during the coding procedure: the degree of cross-stakeholder consensus, assessed by the number of stakeholder groups that independently raised the challenge across interviews and focus group discussions, and the depth of articulation, reflecting the extent to which respondents elaborated, emphasised, or returned to the challenge in the course of discussion. A high intensity rating (++++) was assigned when a challenge was consistently identified by three or four stakeholder groups and received sustained elaboration across multiple interviews or focus group sessions. A medium rating (++) was applied when a challenge was raised by two stakeholder groups or identified by a broader range of groups without sustained development. A low rating (+) reflects challenges raised by a single stakeholder group or mentioned incidentally without substantive elaboration. Ratings were determined independently for each community on the basis of coded data from semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions.

The identified challenges define the specific directions in which the Service Learning methodology can serve as an effective instrument of social change. Service Learning integrates academic knowledge with practical action aimed at addressing or mitigating real community problems, providing students with a heightened sense of purpose and relevance while strengthening their connections with local communities [6]. It is a comprehensive approach in which traditional academic learning is combined with civic engagement, research activity, citizenship education, and the development of practical competencies [4]. Service Learning can be implemented both through direct assistance to vulnerable population groups and through advocacy or community-level research [9; 10].

In the context of the identified structural deficits, namely personnel, institutional, and psychosocial, the strategic application of Service Learning enables universities to act as drivers of post-war recovery through workforce retraining, support for social entrepreneurship, strengthening of intersectoral interaction, and the engagement of student teams in addressing specific local problems. However, the effective realisation of this potential requires that Service Learning projects be grounded in the actual needs of communities rather than generic academic objectives [11]. It is for this reason that the empirical identification of challenges carried out in the present study constitutes not only a scholarly contribution but also a practical precondition for the development of a territorially differentiated Service Learning model for the communities of Chernihiv Oblast.

Conclusions. The conducted study demonstrates that the communities of Chernihiv Oblast operate under conditions of a complex set of interrelated challenges that are not situational but structural in nature and require systemic responses. Security instability, demographic decline, labour shortages, economic vulnerability, psychosocial exhaustion of the population, and institutional fragmentation form a mutually reinforcing system of risks that substantially limits the capacity of communities for independent recovery and development.

Particular attention is warranted by the state of intersectoral interaction, which remains insufficient

across all studied communities. Partnership between local self-government bodies, business, the civil society sector, and educational institutions is predominantly situational in character, lacking institutionalised coordination mechanisms and stable platforms for cooperation. Overcoming these challenges requires a purposeful strengthening of intersectoral partnership through the development of institutionalised interaction mechanisms and the formation of shared strategic platforms involving all key community stakeholders, including through the application of participatory models that have demonstrated their effectiveness in the context of reintegration and recovery [1; 16]. Universities may play the role of neutral platforms for intersectoral dialogue and analytical support.

The identified challenges provide a clear understanding of which competencies, partnerships, and practices are critically necessary for the sustainable recovery of communities. It is precisely in this context that the Service Learning methodology acquires particular relevance, as it is capable of simultaneously addressing the deficit of practical competencies among youth, strengthening intersectoral linkages, engaging universities in solving real community problems, and cultivating a new generation of agents of social change. Thus, the identification of current community challenges constitutes the practical foundation for the development and implementation of a Service Learning model as an instrument of social change and the strengthening of social welfare under wartime conditions and in the perspective of Ukraine's post-war recovery.

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Отримано: 20.04.2026

Прийнято до публікації: 31.05.2026

Опубліковано: 01.06.2026