



“Fleeing the War across Oceans”

Photovoice Project with Ukrainian Displaced People in Western Australia



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Executive Summary

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, over 8 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes and seek refuge abroad (Reuters, 2022; UNHCR, 2023). While most found shelter in the neighbouring countries, some crossed the ocean to seek safety in faraway countries, such as the USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia (UNHCR, 2023; Australia Federation of Ukrainian Organisations [AFUO] 2022). As of 24 March 2024, more than 11,400 Ukrainians displaced by the war had entered Australia through the humanitarian program and other visa pathways (Department of Home Affairs, 2024).

Relevant and effective support in emergency forced displacement requires insights into the lived experiences of those who fled their homes and are settling in a new place (Bryan, Leac, & Hyánek, 2023). Further, despite the war in Ukraine now entering its third year, it is almost non-present in the news and public spaces anymore; hence the need to raise awareness of the ongoing experiences of displaced people and their families in Australia among the wider society remains.

Ukrainian

Резюме звіту

В результаті повномасштабного вторгнення Росії в Україну в лютому 2022 року понад 8 мільйонів українців були змушені покинути свої домівки та шукати притулку за кордоном (Reuters, 2022; UNHCR, 2023). Тоді як більшість знайшли прихисток у сусідніх країнах, деякі перетнули океан у пошуках безпеки в більш віддалених куточках світу, таких як США, Канада, Нова Зеландія, та Австралія (UNHCR, 2023; Федерація українських організацій Австралії [AFUO], 2022). Станом на 24 березня 2024 року понад 11400 українців, переміщених через війну, потрапили до Австралії за гуманітарною програмою та іншими візовими шляхами (Department of Home Affairs, 2024).

Доречна та ефективна підтримка в екстреному вимушеному переміщенні потребує розуміння життєвого досвіду тих, хто залишив свої домівки та осідає на новому місці (Bryan, Lea, & Hyánek, 2023). Крім того, незважаючи на те, що війна в Україні триває вже третій рік, вона майже не присутня в новинах і публічних просторах Австралії; тому потреба в підвищенні обізнаності серед широкого суспільства про поточний досвід переміщених осіб та їхніх сімей в Австралії залишається актуальною.

The Ukrainian Photovoice project was undertaken by community partners and Curtin University working together. The Photovoice project aimed to develop a greater understanding of the experiences of Ukrainian displaced persons (DPs) since fleeing the war and transitioning to life in Western Australia. The project focused on the impact of displacement on the wellbeing of Ukrainian DPs and their settlement experiences. This was achieved by inviting Ukrainian DPs as well as relevant organisations to share their experiences through photovoice, including interviews and photography.

The project resulted in the creation of a photo exhibition being displayed online and in communities across metropolitan Western Australia. There were 22 participants who were Ukrainian DPs, and their families were often also involved in the development of ideas and photographs. The participants attended regular in-person workshops with the research team and photographer as well as online sessions, and together they co-developed the Photovoice exhibition.

The findings of this study highlighted several themes: the sudden and complex life changes due to the war, challenging journeys to safety across borders and oceans, challenges of

Проект Photovoice було проведено спільно партнерами з місцевої громади та Університетом Кьортін. Цей проєкт мав на меті розвинути глибше розуміння досвіду українських переміщених осіб (ПО), які через війну приїхали до Західної Австралії. Проєкт досліджував вплив переміщення на добробут українських ПО та їхній досвід переселення. Ми запросили українських ПО та відповідні організації поділитися своїм досвідом через Photovoice, а саме інтерв'ю та фотографії.

Результатом цієї роботи стало створення фотовиставки, яка демонструється онлайн на вебсайті проєкту та в місцевих громадах Західної Австралії. 22 учасники, які приїхали з України після початку повномасштабного вторгнення, і їхні родини взяли участь у розробці ідей та фотографій. Учасники відвідували регулярні майстер-класи з дослідницькою групою та фотографом, а також онлайн-сесії, і спільно розробляли виставку Photovoice.

Результати цього дослідження висвітлили кілька тем: раптові та складні життєві зміни через війну, непростий шлях в безпечне місце через кордони та океани, проблеми з

settling in the new place, initial support in Australia, psychological and community support, communication barriers, skills transfer and finding work, and reflections on Australia and the future.

Policy recommendations proposed by the participants themselves were related to additional support and included: less complex visa processes and certainty about the future, providing information about Ukraine by people with lived experience, understanding conflict and its historical roots, understanding challenges faced by DPs during an ongoing war, provision of timely and ongoing psychological and employment support and a complete up-to-date list of available support resources. Finally, providing opportunities for DPs to meet, socialise, and support each other is one of the effective ways to facilitate tailored social, emotional, and psychological support.

освоєнням на новому місці, підтримка на початку перебування в Австралії, психологічна підтримка та підтримка громади, комунікативні бар'єри, застосування своїх знань і навичок та пошук роботи на новому місці, а також роздуми про Австралію та майбутнє.

Рекомендації для розробки законів та регулятивних документів, запропоновані самими учасниками, стосувалися додаткової підтримки та включали: менш складні візові процедури та впевненість у майбутньому; важливість консультацій з людьми з досвідом переміщення; розуміння конфлікту та його історичного коріння; розуміння проблем, з якими стикаються переміщені особи під час війни, яка продовжується; надання своєчасної та постійної психологічної підтримки, допомоги з пошуком роботи, та повного актуального списку наявних ресурсів; створення можливостей та організація заходів для соціалізації та спілкування переміщених осіб між собою та з місцевою громадою.

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Background

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24th February 2022 created the fastest displacement of people in Europe since the second world war (Reuters, 2022). The humanitarian crisis resulted in the forced displacement of Ukrainians with many having to find refuge abroad (UNHCR, 2023). Over 9 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes with most Ukrainian displaced persons (DPs) finding shelter in neighbouring countries, however some have crossed the ocean to seek safety in faraway countries such as Australia (UNHCR, 2023; AFUO, 2022). As of 1 June 2022, while the humanitarian visa program was still in place, the Australian government granted 8000 entry visas for Ukrainian displaced persons with a prospective transfer to the humanitarian status with healthcare, education, and employment rights (AFUO, 2022). As of March 2024, over 11,400 Ukrainians entered Australia (DHA, 2024).

Large-scale forced displacement at such a significant pace and in a short span of time requires resources, infrastructure, and a coordinated response from host governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Bryan et al., 2023). Despite strong government and public support for Ukrainian DPs, initiatives to facilitate resettlement are often developed with little consideration for different groups, their context and circumstances (OECD, 2023). Tailored programs are required for support to be efficient in responding to the differing educational, professional, and healthcare needs of Ukrainian DPs and the need to also capitalise on their strengths, agency, resilience, and expertise (Posselt et al., 2018; Van der Boor et al., 2020).

Forced Displacement

Using the lens of forced displacement (FD), which is less of a choice and less voluntary than economic migration, we examined the impacts on and experiences of Ukrainian DPs, in collaboration with the displaced people themselves to emphasise their voices and perspectives. FD is a decision that is taken quickly following a sudden shock like war, natural disaster, and civil conflicts (Porter & Haslam, 2005). Due to the sudden nature of the incidence or shock, forced migrants only carry a few of their belongings and very little savings. FD has significant effects on mental health and psychosocial well-being of those

who are displaced (Porter & Haslam, 2005). Trauma experienced by forcibly displaced persons has a life-long impact on their physical and mental wellbeing (Kendell-Tackett, 2009; Nickerson et al., 2022). Understanding this is crucial in supporting displaced persons' socio-cultural, economic, and linguistic integration and participation in the host society, both short and long-term (Porter & Haslam, 2005; Van der Boor et al., 2020).

However, there is limited understanding about the long-term impact of forced displacement and the interconnection between language, displacement, and wellbeing (Fozdar & Banki, 2017). This is important given that supporting good health and access to health services is essential for successful integration and economic and social participation of displaced people in their host countries (Igbal et al., 2022; Van der Boor et al., 2020). Improved wellbeing and participation of humanitarian entrants further impacts on individual health outcomes and those of the wider multicultural community, as well as the nation's success in the global economy (Igbal et al., 2022; Van der Boor et al., 2020).

This report draws on a participatory research study undertaken in Western Australia in 2023 to gain a better understanding of the experiences, challenges and needs of Ukrainian DPs to inform the policies and initiatives that aim to assist them.

Aims

The aims of the study were:

- 1) to develop a better understanding of how Ukrainian DPs are experiencing their transition to life in Western Australia;
- 2) to help the wider community and researchers learn and understand about the impacts of forced displacement and settlement through a travelling and online photo exhibition;
- 3) to advocate for and support successful settlement and integration experiences for emergency humanitarian entrants.

Methodology

Using the participatory methods of Photovoice, we combined photography, critical dialogue, and experiential knowledge to record participant voices and collect images (Sutton-Brown, 2014). Photovoice allows the voices of marginalised communities to be heard and provides a platform for social change (Evans-Agnew & Strack, 2022). The practice of self-reflection and visual communication is empowering for participants (Lumbus et al., 2021), enhancing community engagement and fostering self-efficacy as it was for our participants (Budig et al., 2018). Furthermore, collaborative development of digital resources and websites are underscored to better engage, empower, and facilitate the development of skills for disadvantaged communities (Nordin et al., 2023).

Participants

A total of 22 DPs from Ukraine and their families participated in the photo exhibition development through face-to-face workshops and fortnightly online sessions. Participants ranged in ages from 23 to 82 years and comprised mostly of women as most men between the ages 18 to 60 years were not allowed to leave Ukraine. The participants were from a variety of professional backgrounds (e.g., accountants, engineers, lawyers, teachers, IT specialists) and most were employed in Ukraine before migrating to Australia to escape the war.

Some of the DPs joined family members already in Australia, others were invited by friends, and others came on their own. These displaced persons came from different parts of Ukraine with various levels of psychological and physical trauma, including the need to leave their homes and families, cross the border (often on foot), and travel over 12,000 kilometres to safety in Australia.

Methods

Ukrainian DPs and their families were invited to participate in face-to-face workshops and fortnightly online sessions to co-develop a photo exhibition reflecting their experiences of displacement and resettlement. Participants received initial photography skills training and developed their ideas and photographs throughout the workshops and

sessions. In the final workshop, participants discussed and chose photographs for the exhibition, and shared accompanying vignettes and stories.

They chose photographs to be displayed on the website in an online display and a travelling exhibition. Participants were also invited to participate in in-depth interviews to reflect on their experiences and aspects of their journeys. The preliminary analysis of the findings using the SHOWED technique (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1988), informed the co-design of the Photovoice sessions and the development of Photovoice banners. In-depth interviews were also undertaken with service providers to triangulate the insights shared by the participants. Findings from these interviews offered further insights to inform relevant policies and initiatives urgently needed in the context of the ongoing Ukrainian war and humanitarian crisis.

Data Analysis & Preliminary Findings

Qualitative data from the interviews and workshops were collected to explore Ukrainian DPs, community, and stakeholders' settlement and Photovoice experiences, including strengths, challenges, and possibilities for improvement. Interview and workshop transcripts were analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Data were organised into semantic meaning codes and collated into themes.

The main themes from the interviews were:

Sudden and complex life changes due to the war

Witnessing the impact of war is the main factor DPs decided to flee from their home. Some were living through explosions, which prompted their move; some decided to move due to personal safety being compromised, and others decided to move after witnessing the impact of trauma on their children. DP12 shared that they have moved because it was impossible for them to stay after witnessing first-hand bombing of a school, having survived an airstrike, and realised a shortage of resources:

“Then we left as a decision was made to run away from there because it was very scary and it was simply impossible to stay there. The water was running out and

that was it, well, some kind of humanitarian disaster was just beginning. Well, no one knew what would happen next.” [DP12]

The impact of war does not remain when living in the country, but it follows DPs throughout their journeys to safety. Some of the post-conflict impact is evident in how they appreciate time with their family with constant worry that they might never meet again. Some participants talked about a sense of loss that is not easily recovered.

The impact of war is also evident in physical symptoms, where DP10 describes how her “*nervous system was failing*”, clenching her teeth when she sleeps until “*the teeth were visibly cracked*” and having “*quite big problems with back and leg.*”

Challenging journeys to safety across borders and oceans

Journeying from Ukraine – their hometown to another country was neither an easy decision nor a straightforward path. While some reported that the decision was considered or planned before, for some it was a decision made quickly due to the ongoing war. DP15 described it as “*done almost on the go*”, and DP13 described it as “*I didn’t intend to, I wasn’t sure that we would leave*”.

The journey itself when leaving Ukraine was fear-inducing and terrifying for DPs, with DP13 reported her children were nearly unable to leave the occupied area but luckily, they were let out. For DP5, their journey was under constant threat of air attacks and from time to time they were told to leave the buses and scatter on the field.

There was a matter of uncertainty whether DPs were able to successfully leave Ukraine, whether it was by car, bus, or train, and this created many anxieties and fear. DPs also reported not bringing many of their belongings due to the nature of the journey. Some reported they only could bring backpacks containing their documents, computer, underwear, and a phone.

Fleeing from Ukraine was not a straightforward trip but rather a complicated multi-stage journey. Several DPs stated that the travel from Ukraine to Perth included several

countries and several lags. They needed to bus around to multiple cities and take several flights before arriving in Perth. For some, it was their first flight ever. On the other hand, some were first internally displaced prior to leaving Ukraine. DP11 shared that they needed to go through several detours because all refugee camps were full. The experience for fleeing from Ukraine was described as “*long and physically exhausting*” [DP2] and DPs went through a lot of uncertainties during this transitional period:

“Just like that photo, that's how we felt, we were torn away. We did not understand what to do, where to go next. And what should we do, where?” [DP5]

Challenges of settling in a new place

A common theme emerging from DPs was the uncertainty they first faced when living in Australia. Some uncertainties stem from visa conditions, being unsure what the future holds:

“Now the only thing that worries us is our future, because we are making quite a strong effort on our part. And my mother, and my [child], and we all make an effort. But we don't want it to be in vain because we've already lost everything once.” [DP7].

Others reported complex feelings of living away from past life, home, family, friends, connections, and work, despite living in a safe place in Australia. Though DPs described Australia as a friendly and comfortable place to live in; however, they were forced to be uprooted and terminate their lives in Ukraine.

Initial support in Australia

Most participants reflected that they were grateful for the initial support received in Australia, either from friends and relatives, community, and/or service providers. The main essence which made support helpful for DPs was that people, sometimes those who had never seen them before, cared for them. :

Support from the government and service providers was also mentioned frequently. DPs acknowledge that service providers were helpful because they reduced the “*support burden*” on friends and relatives. Some of this support could be more helpful if it was more timely, given the urgency DPs are facing when needing to seek accommodation, food to eat, applying for services and so on. One participant reflected:

“There was a problem with time because it was not done in time. [They] told us that they would arrange everything and we didn’t need to worry about anything, but actually we could do that more quickly with our relatives’ assistance and it would be more prompt.” [DP1]

Psychological and community support

DPs stated receiving psychological and community support from Ukrainian churches, schools and community clubs, which has made settling in Australia easier. The Australian community has also supported DPs through the provision of psychological help (e.g. psychologist sessions from Red Cross), community integration support (e.g. social sports club), and personalised support from teachers for their children. DP8 also stated that the support they received from TAFE on English language, information about the society and practical skills to live in Australia. DP8 reflected it “*had a positive effect on my health because I began to orientate better*”.

However, this contributed to the mixed feelings DPs encountered of staying in Australia versus returning to Ukraine:

“Well-being is probably better here, for example, everyone tells me to stay... The grandchildren will come, we will need you ... And I want to go home, if they release me, I want to go home, we left the house, the cats, people there say - we are all waiting for you. Welfare is better here, it will be easier to find a job ... And what will happen after [the war] ... however, a home is a home.” [DP10]

Despite the challenges that DPs faced, they also reflected reciprocal support was important. However, DPs have also reflected upon the need to proactively reach out to receive help from others.

Communication barriers

Communication barriers (in particular, related to the English language) are among the main challenges DPs have to face when moving to Australia. Language difficulties induced many emotional stressors (e.g., worry, stress, fear, misunderstandings, and delays). For instance, language barriers created difficulties when interacting with service providers, in particular when interpretation services were not readily available. The language difficulties also put DPs at disadvantage when finding work:

“It's a job that fits my experience, my knowledge, and that I would really like. For which I would get some work experience, but, indeed, with a lack of language skills, that's all [not possible].” [DP10]

DPs challenges were not only constrained by English as a language itself, but also by communication. DPs reported the challenges with communicating with service providers and being caught up with procedural communications. As an example, DP2 shared that the benefits and payments that they should receive were not issued to them. It was only through physically going to the Centrelink office where they noticed the necessary documents have not been included, and Centrelink did not notify the family about it. DPs have been experiencing delay in support through being caught up with procedural communications.

However, the Ukrainian community as well as TAFE English courses were reported as helpful to support DPs through the communication processes in Australia. It is also worth noting that some of our participants had very high level of English language proficiency and some managed to find employment in skilled roles rather quickly.

Skills transfer and finding work

Some DPs reflected that having work in Australia provided them a sense of independence and security.

But finding work is not an easy task for DPs, they need to overcome the challenges of finding a job, and also the existing disadvantages DPs faced, for example, language

barriers, age disadvantage, and psychological barriers such as fears and nervousness. DPs also find it challenging to find a job when they are unsure of their place in the country:

“Well, if I press on, I’ll probably find a job, on the one hand, and on the other hand, I’m at such an age that very hard work is scary, walking here at night, things like that. How nervous I am” [DP13].

Indeed, this is a stressor for DPs especially when they need to take care for their family without the support of the extensive and well-established friend, family, and professional networks they used to have in their home country.

Reflections on life in Australia

DPs reflect upon their move to Australia as positive and adaptable. They described feeling safe and accepted, and they were able to appreciate the friendly culture and beautiful, replenishing nature.

Some also shared that they feel more connected to Australia after seeing places that reminded them of home, such as sunflowers and some architecture:

And it is strange to me, well, unfamiliar.... I did not see the beauty. And somehow, I only liked these fences. From the very beginning I [thought] that they are similar to [the ones in] the Crimea. This was somehow familiar to me a little, and I am so grateful [to have noticed them]. [DP13]

Most DPs acknowledge that adjusting to Australia is a transitional process, and it “gets easier over time” [DP1].

Policy Recommendations & Implications

Support needed from the Government and wider Australian society in the following areas:

1) Less complex visa processes and certainty regarding the future:

One of the mentioned supports from the government is less complex procedure on visa application and more certainty regarding visa options for the future. DP1 stated:

“So, we are trying to organise our lives, and we don’t have enough time to prepare for [next] visa application. If this procedure [of applying for the visa] were, let us say, a bit simpler, it would greatly help a lot of people.”

2) Understanding challenges faced by DPs during an ongoing war:

The government has provided much help for DPs, but the full understanding of DP's difficulties needs to be more fully comprehended and supported. This needs to be based on the insights from the people with lived experience:

“I want to say that they already provide a lot of help. But the understanding of how difficult it is for us is probably not fully there.” [DP8]

Support for DPs should also be ongoing given the complexities of challenge they face post-conflict. These past and ongoing traumatic experiences create certain internal emotional filter that everything else is viewed through. Hence, there should be understanding that settlement takes time, especially under these circumstances

3) Understanding that conflict in countries has historical roots:

There is a need to educate the wider Australian society about the colonial history of the conflict and that this struggle has been deeply embedded in history and in the lives of local communities.

In addition to the logistic difficulties that DPs faced in Australia, there is also a greater need of understanding of the extent of pain and loss in DPs experience as most

Australians have never personally experienced military style destruction and imminent threat to life:

“The pain that Ukraine endures. There is pain, how to convey pain. Some ruins, I don't know. There are no ruins here. Loss, we've all lost, we've lost a lot, and we keep experiencing loss.” [DP11].

Educational programs were suggested to help develop these understandings and counter the noted ignorance and bias amongst the population that seemingly develop due to the fragmented and unverified nature of the Internet.

4) A complete up-to-date list of all supports available in Australia and targeted support with employment:

Summarised and up-to-date information with supports available in Australia would help DPs receive assistance more easily as many DPs are preoccupied with post-conflict challenges, including psychological trauma, language disadvantage, and family circumstances:

“I would have liked to immediately receive ... complete information about the various organizations that exist and operate in Australia, which can help you with the solution of various problems related to education, health care, health problems, [that would help us] control various aspects of life. You find this information in bits and pieces. [DP9].

5) The need for timely and tailored health care and psychological support for DPs:

Many DPs experienced post-traumatic stress symptoms (e.g., panic attack [DP4, 12]) even after fleeing to Australia. DP12 also shared the ongoing guilt she experienced and external hate from others due to surviving from the war. Hence, the government need to provide help and support that is tailored to their circumstances, and DPs should be included for support despite the variability of their experiences.

“The most important point that I would like to make is that if you are not there physically and your family is not there, it does not mean that you are not concerned about the situation. A lot of people perceive, they ask if your family is safe, and if you

say yes, then they think that's it, this problem just doesn't exist [for you], and you don't feel it.” [DP4]

Though the government provided psychological help to DPs, there remains an issue of not providing timely help. Timely and tailored help is crucial for DPs for them to settle and live in Australia, and importantly, to feel that the government and the people and organisations providing support genuinely care.

6) Providing opportunities for DPs to interact, socialise, and support each other to facilitate such tailored social, emotional, and psychological support:

Due to the significant physical distances in Australia’s spread-out lifestyle as well as the fact that Ukrainian DPs have settled across various suburbs and areas of WA, it is harder to meet with friends on a regular basis. Participants and stakeholders emphasised the essential role of creating a space for DPs to socialise with each other and with the wider Australian community, including larger events, picnics and coffee catch ups. This allows people with similar experiences to feel supported and given the opportunity to exchange community knowledge.

“Rotary Club ... gave an opportunity to organise an event for Ukrainians. They prepared some food and drinks ... it works very well when there is Ukrainian or other community there, they have the opportunity to talk together, because ... you feel that you are not alone and somehow it gets better and better because you meet people with the same needs and problems. And that's why, when the locals arrange some special meetings for the community, it works very cool. Where there is an opportunity to chat, also where they engage a little bit in Australian culture ...” [DP19]

The participants highlighted that it is important for such arrangements to take place as early on as possible and continue throughout for ongoing support.

Conclusion

The project was co-led by Professor Dantas and Dr Bogachenko, who is of Ukrainian background, which ensured that the research was inclusive and responsive to the priorities of the Ukrainian DPs (Manohar et al., 2019). Community members were engaged throughout the research process, from the initial planning to the dissemination of findings. This was facilitated by collaborating with the displaced people as well as settlement organisations. Furthermore, participatory research principles enhanced stakeholder engagement to ensure that the findings were meaningful to the participants (Liebenberg, 2018).

Through Photovoice, the DPs from Ukraine displayed agency to connect, inform and share with the wider community their photo images and vignettes, and hence have become ambassadors for Ukraine, for each other, and for those experiencing forced emergency displacement in general. The project provided them with the opportunity to reflect on and share their images in a creative way, gain useful language, understand project ethics, and learn skills they could later apply in different settings. The participants' photographs are currently being displayed to the wider community to gain an understanding of displacement, refuge, hope, and resilience.

The 'Fleeing the war across oceans' project participants were able to exercise their agency with their photographs and provide recommendations that would help shape the policies that affect them directly and indirectly, help with their well-being, and assist with their social and economic integration in the Australian society.

Publications & Project Outputs

1. Travelling exhibition displays:

- At the Refugee Week Family Day at Herb Graham Centre in Mirrabooka on 24th June
- In buildings 501, 400, 418, as well as at the Creative Quarter Gallery and Robertson Library at Curtin University
- In a range of Community Libraries across Perth, WA

2. Conferences & academic talks:

- At Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia in June 2023.
- At a national presentation for online International Health SIG PHAA – July 2023.
- At a national mentoring session of ASCILITE - shaping the future of tertiary education.
- At the research showcase for 53 Health Science agents from the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Mongolia, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, and China at Curtin University in September 2023
- At the national Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference in Melbourne in December 2023

3. Reports and academic publications are in progress.

Some of the Photovoice Images & Reflections



Australian flora is giving us strength. We are as resilient as this tree growing through the rocks. Nature teaches us resilience.

I wish we could stop the war as easily as we can stop a bus in Australia. Unfortunately, it's not possible.

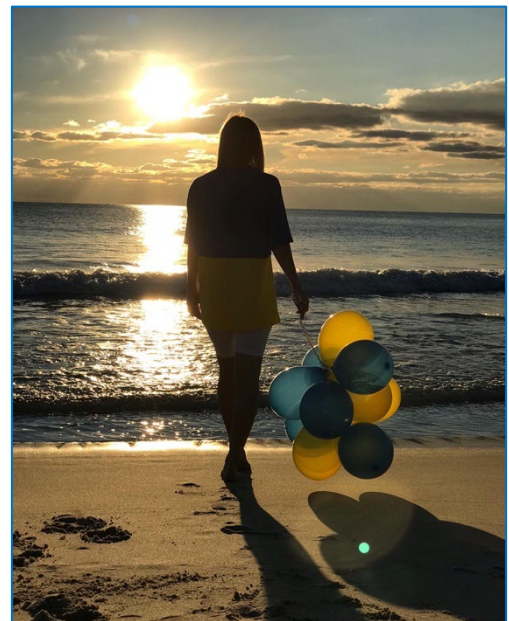


“Ukrainian varenyky are for your beauty and strength. Eat healthy and live in peace!” (a Ukrainian song).



Ukraine, Kharkiv 2022 – for us it is in the past, but for someone else it is still painful present.

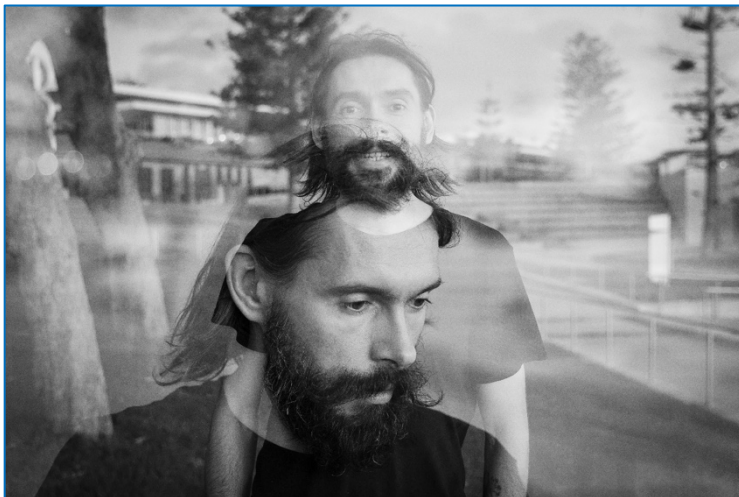
We entered a new chapter of our lives – with Ukraine in our hearts and opportunities vast as the ocean. But the shadow of the pain of war will stay with us forever.



Life can take us to unexpected places, but this is part of the path that leads us to what our home is.



Every displaced person finds their own way to reduce the longing for their home, one of them is participation in the choir. Ukrainian songs give me inner strength necessary for life in faraway Australia. We are also proud to showcase our national culture in Australia.



Within the depths of my being, an ethereal melancholy embraces my soul, for Ukraine weighs heavily upon my heart. Yet, as I cast my gaze upon the vast expanse of the world, a tapestry of infinite possibilities, an iridescent hope illuminates my path to the future.



I came to Australia to stay with my relatives.

Australian hospitality. We got this amazing cake for our first summer Christmas as a sign of support from a woman who didn't even know us!



The things we value keep us afloat.



Volunteering is one of the ways of making our contribution to Australia. I am delighted by this opportunity.

The sunflower is a symbol of Ukraine. It turns its head to the sun. Ukrainians are like sunflowers because they cannot live without Ukraine.





Australian apples on a tea towel patterned with traditional embroidery remind of Ukraine's orchards and meadows rich in harvest.

This photo depicts a woman fleeing the war and the most essential things she has decided to take with her: a laptop, her passport, money, glasses, a comb, and the keys to her apartment to which she hopes to return one day... Literally, all her life fits into one backpack. You can be accumulating things all your life, but at some moment you understand that things are not so important, and that you yourself and your faith in a better future are the key to happiness.



Ukrainian Photovoice Project – Community Report Launch Event

The Ukrainian Photovoice Project Community Report Launch was successfully held on the 10th of April, 5:30pm – 7:00pm at John Curtin Gallery Curtin. There were 86 attendees during the event, including 18 displaced persons (DPs) and special guest of honour Senator Zaneta Mascarenhas - Federal Member of Parliament for Swan. Dr Tetiana Bogachenko delivered a short speech about the significance and overview of the project.

Six DPs provided a short reflection on their participation in the project, which includes sharing their experiences along with the photographs taken as a part of this project. Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas said a few words of appreciation and relevance of the project to the community. The Echoes of Ukraine choir performed several songs, with Ms Marta Osoba-Buttrose introducing the choir and explaining the background and significance of the songs. The event ended with food and networking opportunities for the community to share with one another to learn more about DPs' experiences.



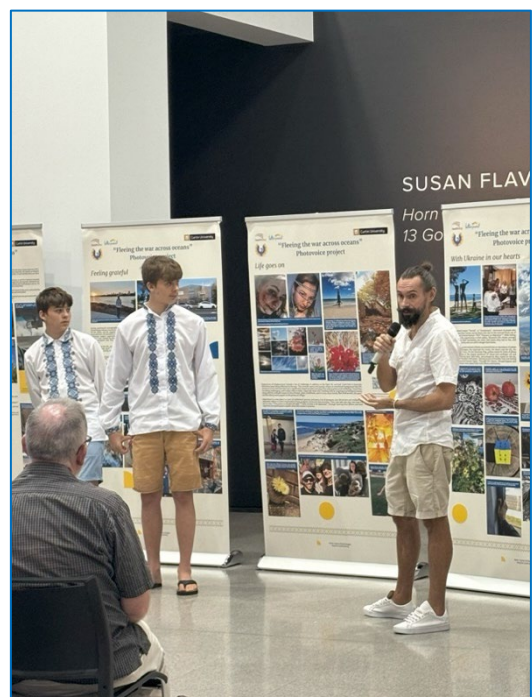
Research Team facilitating the Ukrainian Community Report Launch, along with Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas (Right 3).

Dr Tetiana Bogachenko providing the overview of the project, including the background, methodology, and findings.



DPs who shared their reflections along with Professor Jaya Dantas (Left 1) and Dr Tetiana Bogachenko (Left 2).

One of the DPs sharing the significance and stories behind the photo he captured.

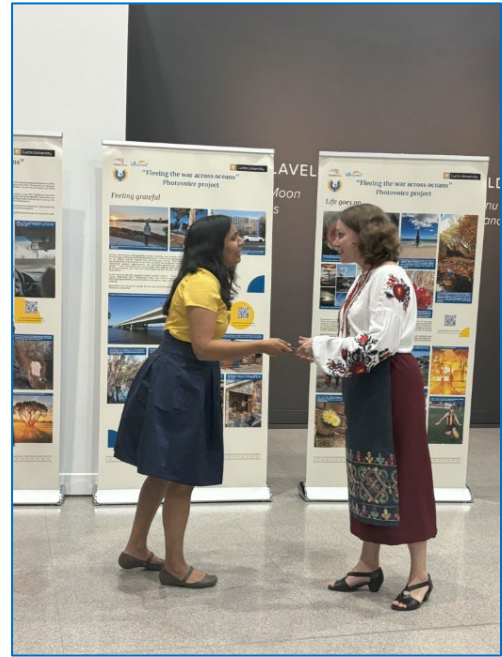


Professor Jaya Dantas as the Master of Ceremonies for the event.



Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas (Left), Professor Jaya Dantas (Middle) and Dr Tetiana Bogachenko (Right) launching the community report.

Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas (Left) presenting participants and choir members with a souvenir as an expression of gratitude.



Moving songs from the Echoes of Ukraine choir presentation.



Group photo with the Echoes of Ukraine choir. Dr Tetiana Bogachenko (Left 1), Professor Jaya Dantas (Left 2), Ms Marta Osoba-Buttrose (Left 6, Front row), Ms Zaneta Mascarenhas (Right 6 – Front row), and Conductor of Echoes of Ukraine choir (Right 1).

Comments about the Community Report Launch Event

“The event was not only a celebration of the Ukrainian community's strength and resilience but also a profound reminder of how storytelling can be a powerful tool in healing and uniting people. The stories shared last night, accompanied by compelling visuals, showcased the Ukrainian people's strong spirit and highlighted the critical role of community and solidarity in overcoming hardships. Thank you both for your dedication to this important project and for creating an event that did so much more than launch a report; it created a space for connection, reflection, and shared humanity.” *Attendee from a multicultural community organisation*

“Thanks for inviting me Jaya. What an amazing project- giving people hope and belonging in privileging their experiences” *Academic attendee from Murdoch University*

“Huge congratulations on the event last Wednesday! Personally, I am truly inspired, especially by the voices (including songs) of Ukrainian DPs being shared that night.” *Research assistant attendee from Curtin University*

“For me, this was quite a moving event, and dare I say brought some serious tears to my eyes.” *Academic attendee from Curtin University*

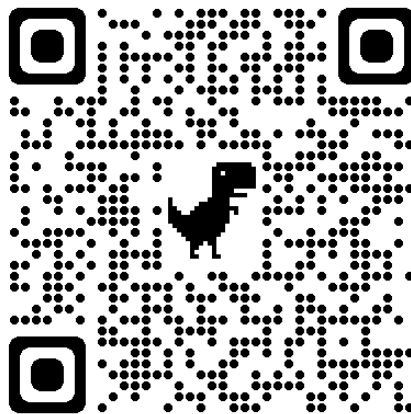
“It was a great event and I enjoyed it very much. I was crying when they were singing. I’m sure singing makes them feel better after the war experience. Well done this Ukrainian project 😊” *Research assistant attendee from Curtin University*

Photovoice Website

<https://www.ukraine.photovoiceproject.com.au/>



- About the project
- Online exhibition (5 tabs)
- Travelling exhibition locations and feedback



Photovoice Exhibition Locations

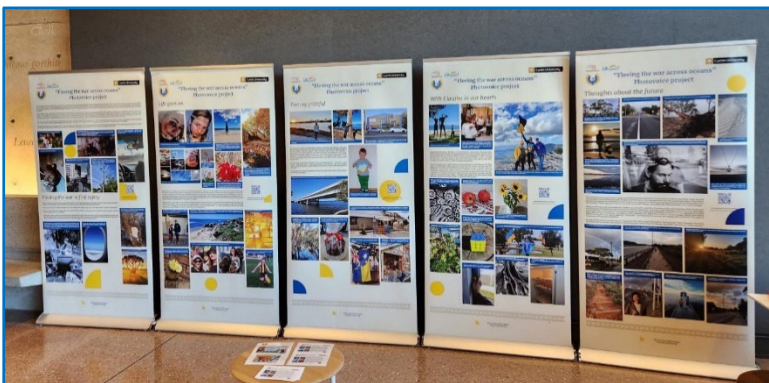
Date	Library/Venue
16 April – 3rd May 2024	Curtin University School of Nursing
10 April 2024	Report Launch Event Curtin University – John Curtin Gallery
25 March – 5 April 2024	Bullsbrook
11 March – 25 March 2024	Beechboro
26 February – 11 March 2024	Ballajura
12 February – 26 February 2024	Armadale
29 January – 12 February 2024	Ellenbrook
15 January – 29 January 2024	Scarborough
1 January – 15 January 2024	Karrinyup
11 December 2023 – 1 January 2024	Osborne Park
27 November – 11 December 2023	Inglewood
13 November – 27 November 2023	Dianella
30 October – 13 November 2023	Mirraboooka
16 October – 30 October 2023	Curtin University School of Design and Built Environment
29 September – 13 October 2023	Curtin University TL Robertson Library
25 September – 28 September 2023	Public Health Association of Australia Annual Conference
8 September – 22 October 2023	Curtin University Creative Corner
1 September – 8 September 2023	Curtin University School of Population Health
27 August – 1 September 2024	Curtin University School of Education
29 August 2023	Curtin University Faculty of Health Sciences
27 August 2023	Faculty of Health Sciences Bahir Dar University, Ethiopia
24 June 2023	Refugee Week Celebrations City of Stirling

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