



# Social work practice and social work education needs and response in the wartime in Ukraine



**Oksana Boyko,**  
PhD in SW, MSW, Associate Professor,  
Chair of the Faculty School of Social Work  
National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy  
November 12, 2022



# Social work education and practice in Ukraine

- Followed by the USSR collapse, social work as a profession was established in early 1990s in Ukraine which was undergoing a transition from centrally planned economy to market-oriented one, dramatic growth of drug and alcohol abuse, mental health problems, HIV/AIDS etc
- In 1995 the first in Ukraine Master Degree Program in Social Work was launched (SSW NaUKMA) within the EU Tempus Tacis Project, followed by training of SW educators, practitioners, researchers from various regions of Ukraine, by the support of the EU, UK, USA, Canada projects etc
- 1999 – until present - social work academization and professionalization within the context of social stratification, lack of cohesion of political actions (including social care reforms), ambivalent and limited impact of international norms, social political rhetoric etc. (Boyko&Semygina, 2014)



# Current social work education context

- 1) Academic education and training: BA, MA (since 1995), PhD in Social Work (since 2016); programs are accredited by the Ministry of Education of Ukraine, in over 60 universities across Ukraine
- 2) Non-academic training: provided by various agents (charitable foundations, NGOs, international organizations, UN system organizations etc); not certified by any government responsible institution or any national professional organizations
  - Educational standards have been recently developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine.
  - Professional standards: some have been approved; some are being developed at present for different social work occupations

# Current context challenges

- War of Russia against Ukraine (since 2014, 2<sup>nd</sup> active invasion stage – February 24, 2022)
- Hybrid war stereotypes established by russian propaganda across the world: ‘language issue’, Nazi in Ukraine, Ukraine presented as ‘under nation’ or ‘nation which doesn’t exist’/ ‘never existed’/ ‘doesn’t have any right to exist’...
- Professional SW communities response to the war in Ukraine:
  - understanding: ‘Armed conflict in Ukraine’, ‘Ukraine conflict/problem/issue’ VS WAR
  - responding:
    - collective VS individual responsibility (‘how can I be of support to you’ VS ‘this war is not in my name’);
    - ‘Good or bad refugees’?
    - ‘Solidarity and Support with Ukrainian Social Work Educators from the Schools of Social Work’ - the Initiative by the EEsrASSW, EASSW, IASSW
  - Hear more: <https://socialworldpodcast.com/episodes/> (#127).



# Challenges for SW practice



- Massive number of IDPs: 7 million people (1/6 of the population)
- Lots of people fleeing the war and not knowing when they might return back
- Massive needs to be addressed due to destruction of housing, high level of unemployment (30%)
- Lots of various services to be provided to address the needs, main focus – on humanitarian support (food, shelter, everyday means)
- Lack of access to health care/social services/food/shelter, especially by the most vulnerable groups (palliative clients, people with mental health problems, disabilities etc)
- Lots of children who became orphans, without care
- IDPs, Ukrainians who stayed at their houses despite the war, Ukrainian refugees abroad: social cohesion issue
- Training needs of SW practitioners: ready and not ready
- Work in shared trauma context: implementing social work in permanent war and terror across the country
- Massive humanitarian needs, lack of social work practitioners to address them
- High level of burnout amongst SW personnel

# Training needs of SW practitioners

- First psychological aid – for individuals, families in difficult life situations
- How to help yourself and others not to panic
- Techniques, methodologies, practice of work with women and children who have been sexually abused during the war
- Social work with elderly people (home care and in-patient care), social work and social maintenance for people with disabilities in war context
- Organization of social work and services for people in difficult life situations during the war
- Suicidal ideation prevention amongst clients
- Supervision for social workers



- How are you, kitchen cabinet?
  - I am still hanging on 😊



# BE STRONG

like this Ukrainian kitchen cabinet





# Challenges for social work students & educators

- COVID pandemic, then the war: social isolation VS social cohesion
- Distance/online VS live education
- Shared trauma: missile attacks, bombing, occupation, living in terror by Russian troops
- Need to care about yourself, your family, your SW clients in parallel
- Students and educators are refugees/IDPs/forced to flee the war, many of them living outside their city/town of origin
- Various roles, in addition to students/educators: volunteers, fundraisers, promoters, 'stop fake' activists, refugees, IDPs, soldiers etc
- Mental health problems of various severity: implications and coping
- Conditions of teaching and learning: lack of electricity, water, heating, housing

# Challenges for social work students & educators (2)

## **SW educators:**

- Need to care about themselves, families, jobs and students
- Difficulties in concentration, in planning/implementing teaching and training
- Reviewing the university education format – from synchronous to asynchronous: lots of extra work, need to demonstrate creativity while being challenged by war adversities
- Must still follow all the academic requirements (students' enrollment for the next year; final qualification tests, BA&MA papers etc)

## **SW students:**

- MH problems (high anxiety, restless, sleep disorders, depression), lost concentration, learning difficulties etc
- Need to combine study and work, most of the time to earn living for them and their parents abroad
- Difficulties to study & to attend classes
- Must still follow all the academic requirements

# Response to the needs

- Students and lecturers' creation&participation in various initiatives, volunteers movements
- Psychoeducation for students as part of the courses delivered
- Reviewing courses' syllabus and adding some extra topics on social work in a war context
- Flexible asynchronous/ synchronous teaching and learning
- Universities as centres for arranging community support, e.g. L'viv Catholic University hub for support, our UKMA Centre for Social Work, Support and Adaptation for the University Students
- Creating community 'hubs' for people fleeing the war ('Me-Mariupol', 'Me-Kherson')
- Social media groups (Facebook groups, Instagram, Viber, What's App, Signal): MHPSS, self-help, mutual aid, referral, various types of support, fundraising, community networking and cooperation
- Online self-help groups for students, youth, adults
- Ad hoc trainings and workshops for social work practitioners by international organizations, local universities and civic organizations on work with IDPs, PSS support in emergencies, case management etc
- Developing brief certificate programs on PSS support in emergencies for SW practitioners



# Response to the needs (2)

- **The Initiative by the IASSW, EASSW, EAsrASSW: Solidarity and Support with Ukrainian Social Work Educators from the Schools of Social Work (volunteer):** coordination&networking
  - identifying with the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine support the training needs for the state SW practitioners and responding to them (agree on the trainings/expertise needs, facilitate networking, conducting workshops on SW in War issues, SW with sexual violence survivors etc);
  - networking with Ukrainian SW educators&practitioners to meet their education and training needs;
  - identifying needs and matching people&ideas or/and people&resources etc
  - fundraising to support Ukrainian SW organizations: Japanese Association of Social Work Education case
- **IASSW Project on SW in War Context** (Ukrainian SW educators and IASSW, EAsrASSW): collecting empirical evidence from Ukrainian context, developing training modules on SW with elderly people and SW with people with disabilities in war context



# Fundraising to support Ukrainian SW organizations: case of Japanese Association of Social Work Education

- Charitable Foundation ‘Slov`jansk Heart’: humanitarian and social support of displaced people, children and elderly people
- Charitable Foundation ‘Save Ukraine’: humanitarian, social, rescue support for children, families, disabled persons, elderly people, support of IDPs, case management











# Stork as a symbol of family&home in Ukraine



@Kate Gresko







# Contacts



Facebook: @SSW.NaUKMA (School of Social Work NaUKMA)

**Oksana Boyko,**  
PhD in Social Work, Cand. of Ped. Sciences,  
Associate Professor, Chair of the Department  
the School of Social Work,  
National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy  
email: oksana.boyko@ukma.edu.ua