



ADRA UKRAINE



2025 / MAY



Veteran - is not a "hero" and not a "problem," but a person who has the right to feel

Along with psychological assistance, which most Ukrainians probably need, the support of defenders who returned from the war is especially relevant in our time. We are talking about helping this particular category of people with Anna Matvienko, coordinator of the psychosocial component of ADRA Ukraine assistance.

— How does supporting veterans as a direction of ADRA Ukraine differ from other initiatives for veterans?

— Our charitable organization approaches the support of veterans not as a separate social service, but as a life trajectory that requires comprehensive support. We do not limit ourselves to legal advice or psychological assistance - our approach is humanitarian, with a deep focus on the psycho-emotional state, family, social adaptation, based on dignity, trust and a real understanding of the human experience of war.

We work not only with the veterans, but also with their family, children, wife, partners who often live near the trauma, but remain "invisible." We work with veteran colleagues who do not always understand that the real experience of the front of war is behind the phrase "I can't get into the crowd." We involve neighbors, local communities, heads of Administrative Services Centers, schools, hospitals - everyone who will face it in everyday life.

A strong element of our model is mutual support groups - this is a space where you can not explain, but simply be heard. The format "equal to equal" is especially effective: when a veteran speaks with a veteran, on equal terms, without evaluation, with the understanding that it is not always necessary to "correct," sometimes it is enough to be close.



The ADRA Ukraine approach is about restoring the connection between human and the environment. This is not just "help," it is - support, adaptation, new skills for a peaceful life. We speak not the language of regret, but the language of equality and partnership, where a veteran is a person with experience, dignity and the right to a full life. And that is why we are building systemic support, not a one-time action.



● Not to "treat," but to listen and support

- What psychological difficulties do veterans most often have after returning from the front of war?

- A common misconception is to think that every veteran necessarily has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It's not. Not everyone who has seen war has clinical trauma. But everyone returns another - even if they does not recognize it immediately.

Among the most common difficulties are increased anxiety, sleep disturbances, sudden outbursts of anger, social isolation, emotional alienation. But the deepest often turn out to be a loss of meaning, a sense of uselessness, emptiness, when a peaceful life seems superficial, and the world around - distant and unreal.

Flashbacks deserve special attention - sudden, intrusive memories that arise not as a thought, but as a complete experience of an event, as if it were happening again right now. It can be pictures of the explosions, the moment of death of a fellow, being under fire. A person at this moment does not control himself, because the psyche transfers him back to the "war," to the very place where there was pain and threat. This is not a theatrical scene and not an exaggeration - for veterans it is a reality, not a memory.

It is important to understand: trauma is not only about shelling, it is also about interacting with people after returning. A person can be injured not so much because of the war, but because of indifference, condemnation or lack of support in the rear, that is like "because of a person." That is why we at ADRA Ukraine work not only with veterans, but also with their environment - to create a space where you do not need to "survive," but you can just live.

- How is the work of psychologists in the project constructed: where does support usually begin?

- Support for a veteran begins with the most important thing - contact based on respect, equality and security. We do not impose help, do not make diagnoses from the threshold. The first step is an



individual meeting, during which the psychologist gets acquainted with the person, his experience, current state and request.

Next comes the initial assessment - not to "identify problems," but to understand what the veteran is living with right now. It can be psychoeducation (so that a person understands what is happening to him), empathic conversation, sometimes - just silence, which gives peace.

Based on this, an individual support plan is formed. It may include:

- individual therapy (cognitive-behavioral, body-oriented, EMDR, etc.),
- mutual support groups,
- involving the family in the process,
- work with aggression, anxiety, loss,
- restoration of communication skills, search for new meanings and roles.

We do not "treat" veterans as patients. We go along, support, help to understand themselves in a new reality and build a new internal operation that will allow them not only to survive, but to live after the war.

- What methods or formats (individual, group, trainings) are most effective in the experience of helping veterans?

- The best results are given by a combination of different formats, adapted to the needs of a particular person.

Individual therapy is the basic form of support. Particularly effective for veterans are:

- cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) - helps to work with anxiety, aggression, sleep disturbance, negative thoughts;



● Maksym, a veteran who received assistance

● There activities not only for children with special needs, but also for children from families of veterans





- EMDR - a method that "repackages" painful memories and reduces their emotional impact;

- body-oriented therapy - makes it possible to restore contact with the body, ground (return to the moment "here and now"), relieve tension, which for years "stuck" in the muscles.

Group formats - especially groups of mutual support "equal to equal" - are very valuable for those who are used to keeping everything in themselves. A simple but powerful principle works here: you are not alone. In the group, the veteran does not have to explain anything - the rest already know.

Trainings on emotional self-regulation, work with anger, breathing practices, motor techniques, restoration of communication skills are those things that give a quick, noticeable effect and increase internal control.

Sometimes the strongest tool is not even a technique, but just a safe space where you can be not a "hero," not a "problem," but a person who has the right to feel and live. This is the space we create.

- How do veterans react to the opportunity to join such programs?

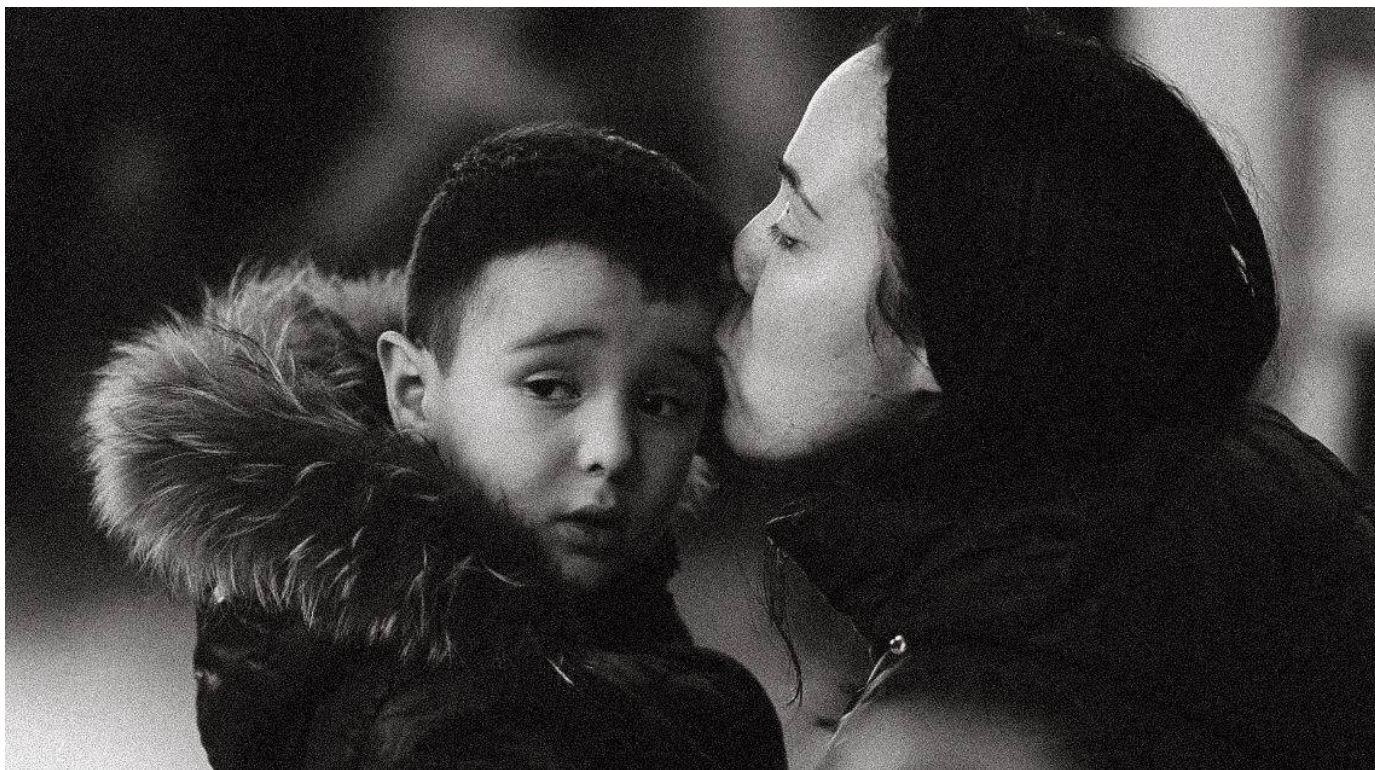
- For the first time, a veteran comes in with caution. And often with distrust. "Probing."



● Children of veterans also need support

There is internal resistance, skepticism: "Why do I need this?," "I can do it myself," "It will not help me." Veterans have a habit of keeping everything inside and relying only on themselves - and this is not about pride, but about survival. The tone of communication plays an important role. If we speak pathetic phrases "I will cure you," "we help all Heroes," use a pathetic tone or "psychological jargon" - a person is lost even before the start of the session. But if it is simple, humanly, with dignity, without pressure and with respect - the barriers are reduced.

Very often the first contact is initiated by the wife, mother, commander, brother - someone who has already passed this path or simply trusts. Sometimes it is a short conversation in the corridor, a casual acquaintance, a meeting at the Administrative Services Center or at a training session. And this is where the path begins.



- Are there special support programs for the wives of veterans? For the kids? How do they work?

- Yes, within the project there are targeted support programs for families of veterans - because not one person returns from the war, but the whole family changes with him.

For wives and partners we hold:

- mutual support groups where women can share experiences, hear others, remove the feeling of "I'm alone with this";
- individual consultations with psychologists on emotional burnout, communication, self-support;
- practical trainings: how to respond to aggression, how to talk about trauma, how to build a new quality of relations after the front.

For children, there are programs designed taking into account the age and form of trauma:

- art groups and game therapy - through drawing, fairy tales, movement and play, the child can safely express his experience;
- classes on the development of emotional intelligence;
- joint family activities that restore the connection between parents and children.

Our main goal is not to "rehabilitate" the family, but to create a space where each of its members has the right to be with the feelings that exist and gradually move towards peace, support and new close relations. This is no longer about survival, but about life. Even after the war.

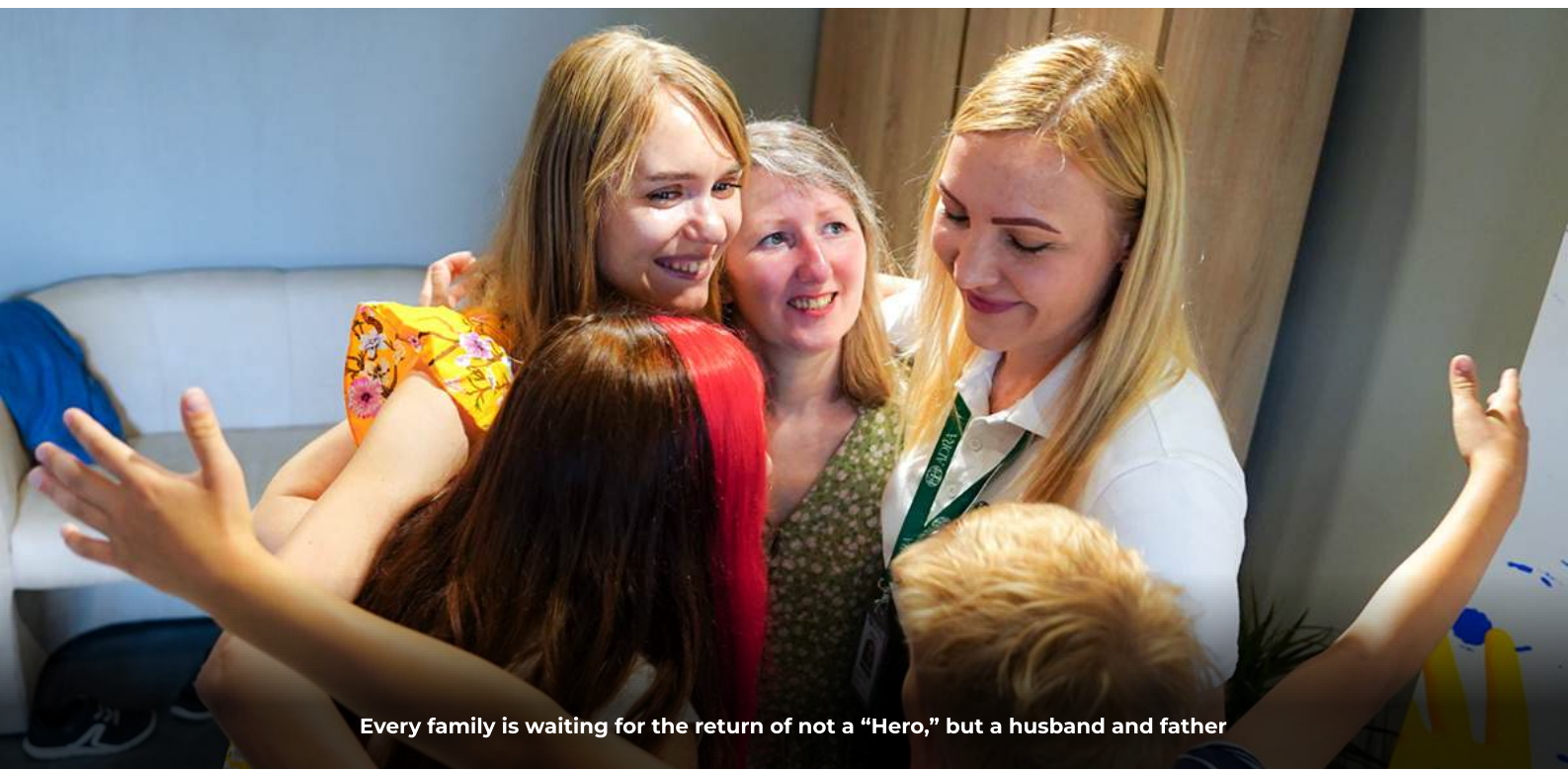
- Is there a request from government agencies or other NGOs to share experiences or scale your approach?

- Yes, and this request is constantly growing. We receive appeals from government agencies, communities, other non-governmental organizations that want to introduce or strengthen psychosocial support for veterans and their families.

Of particular interest is the integrated approach of ADRA, which combines individual psychological work, group formats, work with families, as well as the training of local specialists - social workers, psychologists, volunteers. Many communities lack not only resources, but also understanding where to start. Therefore, we do not just "share experience," but accompany the launch of programs, advise, conduct training, help adapt models to local realities.

There is also interest from the public sector, especially where there is a personnel shortage, emotional burnout of specialists or lack of systematic practice of working with veterans. We cooperate with communities that receive a large number of soldiers returned from the front, and help create a friendly environment around them - not only in the family, but also in social services, educational and healthcare institutions.

This request is evidence that society is maturing to a deeper understanding of the needs of veterans. We are open to partnerships because we are convinced that the challenge of returning from war is not individual but national. And only together you can create a country that knows how to thank not only with words, but also with action.



Every family is waiting for the return of not a "Hero," but a husband and father



Statistics of assistance provided for April 2025

Component of assistance	Number of beneficiaries	Amount of assistance	Region of assistance	Name of donor
Food security	222 682 beneficiaries	116 036 food kits, 778 canned food kits, 423 110 loaves of bread, food for 2 protection centers	Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Dnipropetrovsk, Lviv regions	The UN World Food Programme & ADRA Switzerland; AWW Deutschland, ADRA Germany & ADRA Czech Republic, Aktion Deutschland Hilft
Legal assistance	50 beneficiaries	-	Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Zhytomyr regions	ADRA Germany & ADRA Czech Republic, Aktion Deutschland Hilft
MHPSS	3 318 beneficiaries	2 487 individual sessions 449 group sessions 382 trainings	All of Ukraine	Radiohjälpen & ADRA Sweden; ADRA Germany & ADRA Czech Republic, Aktion Deutschland Hilft; The Government of Canada & ADRA Canada
Protection centers	1 481 beneficiaries	11 protection centers	Zhytomyr, Poltava, Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi, Chernihiv, Sumy, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv regions	Radiohjälpen & ADRA Sweden; The Government of Canada & ADRA Canada
Social transportation	2 912 beneficiaries	134 trips	Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson regions	ADRA Germany & ADRA Czech Republic, Aktion Deutschland Hilft
Education	27 beneficiaries	Co-finance of education for 14 students, 13 students participating in the career guidance radio lab program	Lviv region	German school «Schulzentrum Marienhöhe» & ADRA Germany
Education MHPSS	610 beneficiaries	187 individual sessions 212 group sessions 110 psychotherapy sessions 101 catch-up classes	Lviv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi, Poltava, Vinnytsia region	ADRA Australia
Cash assistance	177 households (604 beneficiaries)	157 185 \$ / 6 523 200 €	Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv regions	ADRA Japan & Japan Platform
Non-food assistance	2 households (4 beneficiaries)	Cash for solid fuel 1 156 \$ / 48 000 € (24 000 € per household)	Chernihiv region	The Government of Canada & ADRA Canada



HIGHLIGHT

In Zolochiv village of Kharkiv region, residents were given more than 600 food kits from the UN World Food Programme

On April 10, in the village of Zolochiv, that located in the Kharkiv region, ADRA Ukraine volunteers distributed food kits from the UN World Food Programme with the support ADRA Switzerland. Representatives of vulnerable categories of the population received assistance – a total of 628 kits were distributed.

The village of Zolochiv is located only 17 kilometers from the country border, so the local community is constantly in a zone of increased danger.

Published on: 05 / 05 / 2025

Publication on the website:

<https://www.adra.ua/en/in-zolochiv-village-of-kharkiv-region-residents-were-given-more-than-600-food-kits-from-the-un-world-food-programme/>





HIGHLIGHT

In Kyiv, students with visual impairments learned to manage emotions together with ADRA Ukraine

On May 14, in the Special School No. 4 of the Obolonsky district of Kyiv (Pushcha-Vodytsa), a psychological training “How to cope with negative emotions” was organized by the ADRA Ukraine team. The event was attended by 18 seventh graders – children with visual impairments.

The training was conducted by Natalia Konopkina, a psychologist at ADRA Ukraine. In an accessible and playful way, students learned about emotional thinking, learned detective thinking, which helps to find a realistic, adaptive thought that affects the state, mood and behavior. They also learned to apply self-regulation exercises and find their own resources.

A special moment was a creative exercise: participants made a symbolic craft about their internal resource, choosing colored paper in accordance with their own emotional state.

The event was held within the framework of the project with the support of ADRA Sweden and the Radiohjälpen charity organization.

Published on: 15 / 05 / 2025

Publication on the website:

<https://www.adra.ua/en/in-kyiv-students-with-visual-impairments-learned-to-manage-emotions-together-with-adra-ukraine/>





HIGHLIGHT

ADRA Ukraine warehouse in Izyum suffered from a drone strike: humanitarian aid from the UN WFP was destroyed

On May 30, at about five in the morning, as a result of night shelling in the city of Izyum, Kharkiv region, a humanitarian aid warehouse of ADRA Ukraine was damaged. A kamikaze combat drone hit the warehouse where food kits from the UN World Food Programme (WFP) were stored.

At the time of the attack, there were 4,906 food kits in the warehouse. As a result of hitting the wall of the building, a fire broke out, which destroyed a large amount of humanitarian cargo. In addition, ADRA Ukraine trucks located on the territory were damaged. At the time of the attack, there was only one guard in the warehouse – he was not injured.

Thanks to the operational intervention of firefighters, the fire was extinguished. The final assessment of the extent of damage will be carried out by a commission of the UN World Food Programme.

Published on: 31 / 05 / 2025

Publication on the website:

<https://www.adra.ua/en/adra-ukraine-warehouse-in-izyum-suffered-from-a-drone-strike-humanitarian-aid-from-the-un-wfp-was-destroyed/>





STORY

Valentyna Vatsenko **Posad-Pokrovske village, Kherson region**

At the beginning of the full-scale war, the Kherson region was very hot. Constant shelling and explosions scared people. Therefore, Valentyna and her husband briefly left for another, safer place, but later returned.

However, they were disappointed. Instead of home - only ruins.

"Windows, doors are broken. The kitchen burned out like it wasn't there. There is a lot of garbage in the house, it is impossible to approach," says Valentyna.

Only the walls and roof remain. However, nowhere to go is the only housing that the family has. That is why they began to restore it.

There were many difficulties. Although they have a pension, it is not enough to provide all the needs. However, little by little, housing was restored, and now the family already lives there fully.

To save some money, the family started a farm. They raise chickens and also take care of the garden, where a lot of vegetables and greens grow.

Nowadays, Valentyna and her husband regularly receive assistance from ADRA Ukraine, [the UN World Food Programme](#) and [ADRA Switzerland](#). These food kits help people a lot. Thanks to them, the villagers always have something to eat.

"For help - thank you very much! It is significant, we are not starving," says Valentyna.

April 2025





STORY

Serhii Starodubets Mykolaiv city

"We have a very difficult situation, and we are very grateful that we were given such help," says Serhii. The man is already retired, has a disability due to diabetes. Every day he has to take various medications in order to at least alleviate his condition a little.

It would seem, what could be more difficult? But the answer is disappointing: Serhii wife is also sick - she has kidney failure. She constantly needs expensive medicines to maintain life. The woman regularly goes to the hospital for dialysis, but it is difficult for her to endure the road in the bus - there she often loses consciousness. Serhii is very worried about her and cares, so when he can, he takes her away in his own car. Fuel is not cheap, and not always the family has the means to fill the car, but they try to save where possible.

It all sounds like a bad dream. Serhii's pension is UAH 3, 900 - this is almost half the cost of only one medication for his wife. ***"Every month is dear to us - we are fighting for life," the man says with tears in his eyes.***

Every day Serhii does everything that depends on him for his wife to survive. He fights with her. The man is very grateful that he was told about the charitable organization ADRA Ukraine and this project, thanks to which he was able to receive financial assistance. Serhii could not hold back tears when he talked about his life and received support.

He is sincerely grateful that [Japan Platform](#), [ADRA Japan](#) and ADRA Ukraine and volunteers do not forget about the peaceful population of Ukraine and take care of everyone who appeals. For Starodubets family from Mykolayiv region such support is vital!

May 2025





STORY

Tetiana Kozhukh Dnipropetrovsk region

Tetiana works as a teacher of the Ukrainian language in a school in the small village named Liubymivka of the Dnipropetrovsk region. The situation in the region is still tense - children often hear explosions and air raid alarms, which, of course, affects their moral and psychological state.

In order to calm down students and support them in this difficult time, the school, together with the charitable organization ADRA Ukraine (the "WMT Ukraine project"), organized a trip for students to a neighboring city. It was a great opportunity for children to see something new, because many of them have never left their native village.

"Today, a trip to the city of Kropyvnytskyi was organized in order to entertain the children, distract them from the tense situation, and improve their psychological and emotional state," says teacher Tetiana with warmth and care in her voice.

Children with different life stories went on a trip. Someone is an active student, the winner of school competitions, and someone is a child who has lost relatives or close people. For them, this journey was a real opportunity to at least briefly forget painful memories.

"No one was left without attention," Tetiana adds with a smile.

Thanks to this trip, every child felt that he was remembered, that he was important and not alone. Such events are extremely necessary for today's students - at a time when there is practically no sense of security. The children were sincerely grateful for this journey, because for many of them it became the brightest memory and will forever remain in their mind!

April 2025





MORE NEWS

Residents of Dnipropetrovsk region will receive financial assistance from ADRA Ukraine
07 / 05 / 2025

Shared support and drew: ADRA Ukraine held an event for mothers in Chernihiv
08 / 05 / 2025

Psychological training in Zhytomyr combined art, music and the path to oneself
09 / 05 / 2025

Training for Rapid Response Teams: ADRA Ukraine employees improved their skills in Slovakia
13 / 05 / 2025

The humanitarian mission of ADRA Ukraine and the UN WFP was subjected to a drone attack in the Kherson region
16 / 05 / 2025

Zhytomyr Magistrate celebrated the Vyshyvanka and Family Day with events to maintain mental health
20 / 05 / 2025

Spring event in Khmelnytsky combined art, psychology and family values
20 / 05 / 2025

Training in Chernihiv helped teenagers to see their strengths and believe in themselves
20 / 05 / 2025

ADRA Ukraine brings psychological care closer to schools in remote communities
20 / 05 / 2025

The head of ADRA Ukraine congratulated the Lyceum "Academy of Wisdom" announced a new project
23 / 05 / 2025

More than 150 people underwent trainings on psychosocial support in the Dnipropetrovsk region
23 / 05 / 2025

Support for everyone: ADRA Ukraine psychologist took part in a round table in Khmelnytsky
27 / 05 / 2025





CONTACTS



[@adra_ukraine](https://www.instagram.com/adra_ukraine)



[@ADRA.Ukraine](https://www.facebook.com/ADRA.Ukraine)



www.adra.ua

You can join the charity
by supporting ADRA Ukraine Projects



Thank you for supporting Ukraine!