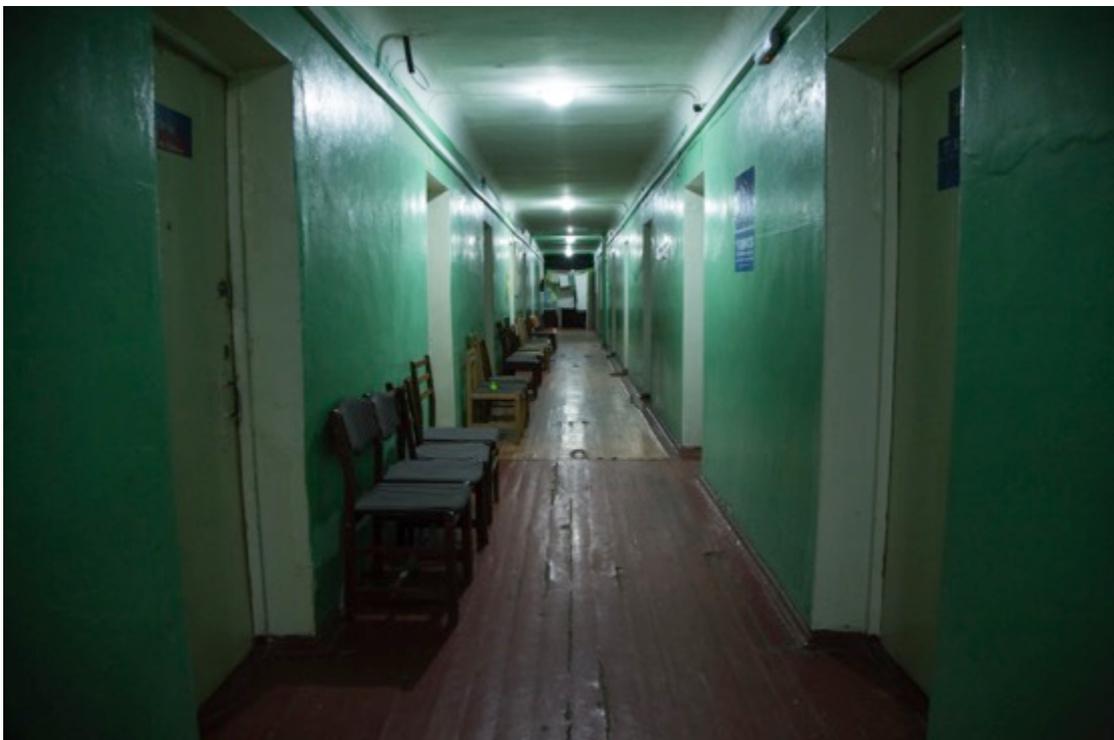


# HEARTS OF UKRAINE

***A place where displaced people find shelter, food and support***



Collective Centre (Благодійна організація) in Dnepropetrovsk is located in a building, which had not in used for more than 5 years; it has been educated to received displaced people from the conflict zones.

It is said that war brings up the worst of mankind, its evil side and awakens a monster within us. Some of the biggest acts of cruelty have been harvested during arm conflicts, including the most barbaric behaviour we have come to know. However, adversity also turns

into a nurturing soil to generate the most beautiful acts of compassion, kindness and love. It is in our darkest times that some of us choose to become a little candle and together they all form a shining beacon, a blinding light that engulf us all showing the way to a better future.



At the main entrance of the Collective Centre, an Ukrainian soldier protects the displaced people during day and night.



Food is very important for the people at the Collective Centre. They cook and eat together they are a big family.

Ukraine is going under very difficult circumstances because of its political turmoil, the conflict with the separatists and the huge numbers of domestic refugees. Nevertheless, the strength of the country is far from being diminished, specially the one in its citizen hearts. At the Dnepropetrovsk Collective Centre ([Благодійна організація](#)) arrive people coming from different regions of Ukraine, especially from Donetsk and Luhansk, each one with their own tale of tragedy tattooed all over their souls but also with a new one that they are starting to write, full of hope and generosity.

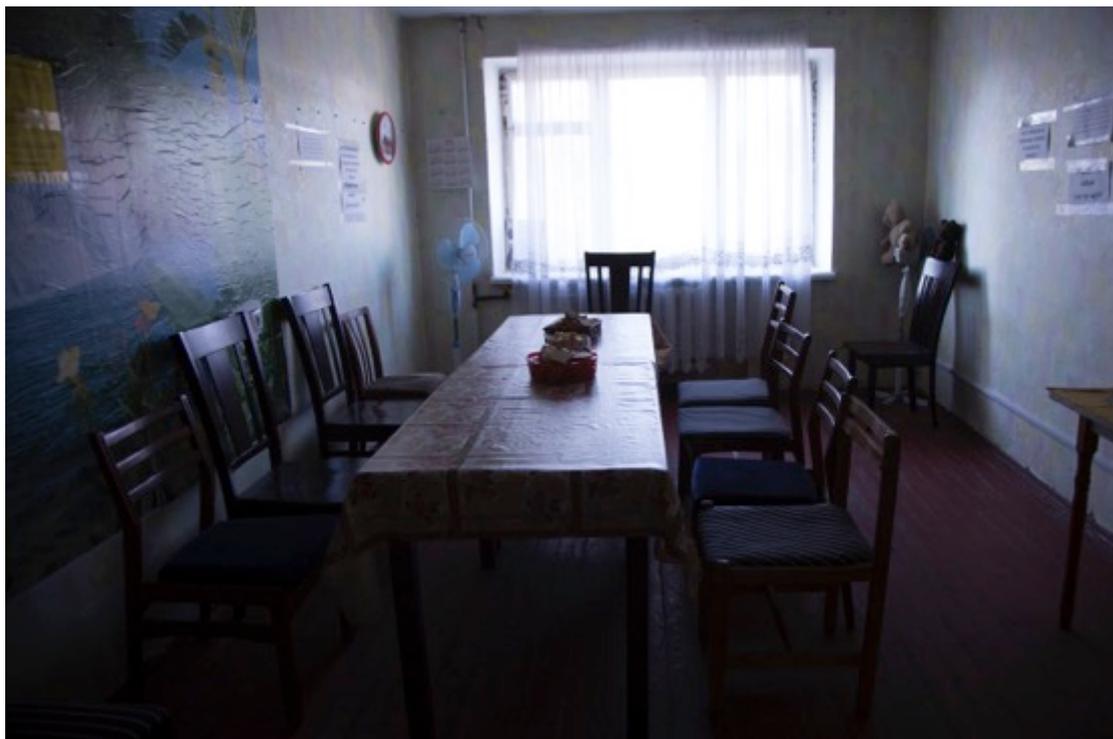


Andrey and Irina are a great example of young Ukrainian courage; they fight for a better country with heart and passion.

There is no better case to start with that the one of the volunteers of the centre who is a young man aged 23, Andrey. He participated in the Maiden Revolution and during that time, the

love for his nation and his people grew on him to the point of leaving everything behind and departing to that town in the border.

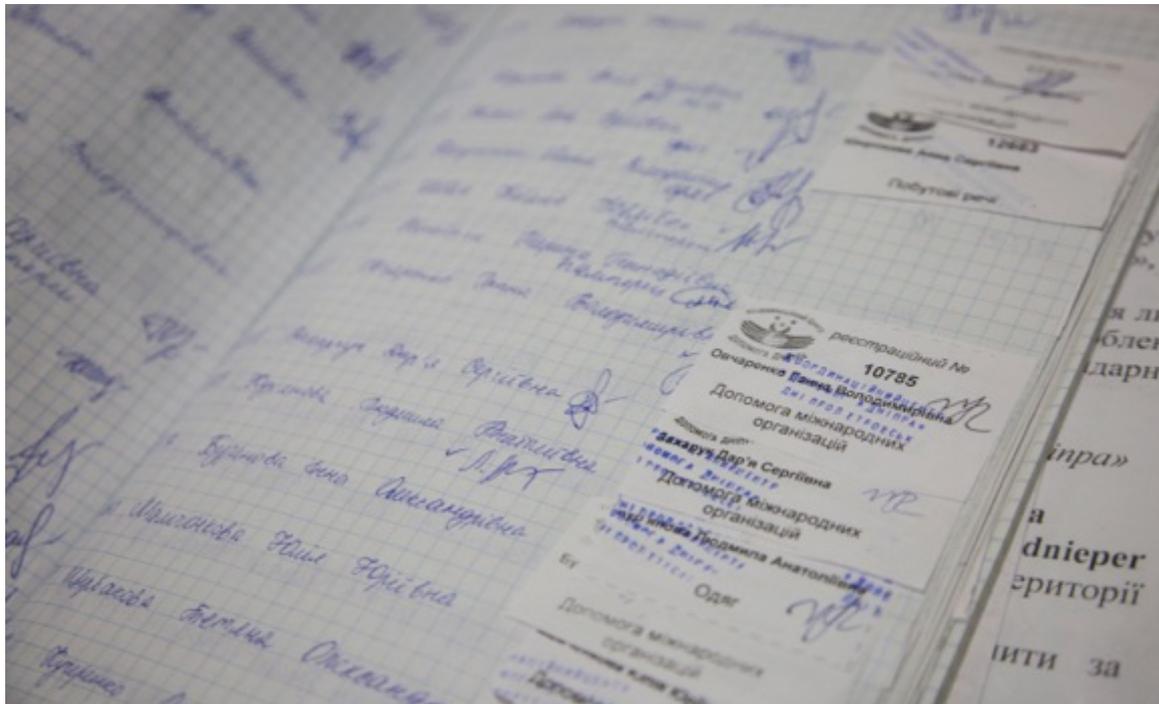
Once there, he started helping to run the Благодійна організація centre, a place where displaced people find shelter, food and support. He has infused every single resident there with a sense of community and togetherness. They all help each other either by cooking, cleaning, caring for the children and most important, healing the emotional wounds through the security of a safe place.



Cooking, eating and sharing a table have made domestic refugees to get together and create new bonds.

The stories of refugees are countless and we have the privilege of witness the tenacity of some of them, like Татяна (Tatiana). She had a good social and financial status at her

hometown but lost all of that during the conflict.



The Collective Centre has helped more than 25000 people since its doors were open.

### ***Healing the emotional wounds through the security of a safe place***

She arrived to the centre only with her child. The war in Ukraine does not know of social classes or background, thus affecting the poor and the wealthy alike. Tatiana was taken care of, protected and thanks to the help of many like herself she regained her strength and set up her own little business.



Tatiana is one of the endless examples of hope and strength.

She is happy to give a better future to her kid who will study in a University able to give him a European diploma and that make them proud.

Her gratitude has inspired her to take part in the her new town, so every weekend she volunteers to plant trees all over the city or to do other activities with former residents of the Collective Centre. They are the seeds of a better future, the symbol of a new emotional landscape. Wars affected a very person, it doesn't matter his/her status or social condition. Teachers, nurses, doctors, single mothers with children and so on are the people who are escaping to get another change. But they are more than can not leave their homes, families are become apart and separated for ideological reasons.



On a Saturday at midday they have planted over 100 trees, symbolizes a new future. All of them have left their homes and started a new life full of hope in Dnepropetrovsk.



Children and adults in workshops at the collective make handicrafts. Those are sold in fairs and boot sales.

Under the roof of that centre we met a photographer, a sales manager, fathers and sons. It is a slice of Ukrainian society, refusing to being victims and with the tenacity to stand

up for what is best, for what they truly believe in: Their country.



It always will be hope, a single mother left his job in a restaurant to give a birth her child in a land of opportunities.

Written by Hernan Barros and Omar Castañeda  
Photos by Quintina Valero