



Issues for long-term integration of female IDPs in hosting communities (Vinnytsia, Lviv and Kyiv regions)

This is a summary of the research implemented by NGO “Youth Alternative” for the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine in November-December 2016 in the framework of the project “Addressing conflict-related threats to social security in Ukraine” implemented at the request of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. The views, findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position of the OSCE and/or its participating States.

Objectives

- To map the issues that prevent IDPs (especially, women) from long-term integration to new living conditions in host communities.
- To collect and summarize recommendations for local, regional and national authorities in order to enhance strategy and policies for long-term integration of IDPs (with special focus on women).

Methodology

- Six focus group at local and regional levels (50% of IDPs (40% female IDPs and 10% male IDPs) and 50% of representatives from host communities (30% authorities and activists dealing with IDPs issues and 20% local women);
- In-depth interviews with representatives of local authorities, volunteers and public activists from Lviv and Vinnytsia regions dealing with IDPs problems, as well as central authorities in Kyiv;
- Two round tables in Lviv and Vinnytsia to discuss the outcomes of the research.

Summary of issues faced by female IDPs

Psychological adaptation

- In large cities, female IDPs adapt longer than male
- There is a need for psychological help in large and small cities
- Women who live in rural areas adapt faster
- There is a need to reach out to “inactive” IDPs who do not want to self-organize in order to involve them into community life
- In small towns there might a need to reconsider ways for providing psychological support (the word “psychological” sounds scary to people)

«You know, she is adapting, but she needed someone talking to her and at school she did not receive much attention from psychologists, no one even asked about her problems».

Female IDP

Employment and business opportunities

- In large cities, it is easier to find job, most female IDPs work in service sector, trade, education
- Women in cities engage in business and social activities more actively, but most women in small towns and rural areas are not willing to do business because of lack of financial resources and fear
- There are problems with employment due to the need to retrain, low wages and lack of flexible working hours, especially in small towns and rural areas
- A certain percentage of IDPs in the city of Kyiv and Kyiv region feels unwilling to find job or retrain

«They could not understand that everything is different - wages, people live differently, they say: “I have great skills, experience, earned 5000 and now I must work for 1500 and rent an apartment? How is it?” It was hard to understand for them that we have different labour market».

Representative of NGO

Financial assistance

- Payments prescribed by law are received by IDPs in full

- There are problems with obtaining subsidies for utilities
- IDPs are concerned about the requirement to confirm their location and limitation on using just one bank that can provide bank cards
- IDPs do not have access to bank loans and consider that the authorities should regulate the issue

«Our legislation is imperfect, it changes frequently. For example, in our area, registration, there is no database where all IDP-related information is stored. The software changes constantly, the database works one day and not the other. I do not see the database for the whole country. Imperfect information database, we cannot track exactly where IDPs move, where they get help. Currently, it is quite possible that IDPs receive assistance in several places. IDPs do not provide much information about their property. For example, if a person has an apartment. The same for deposits».

Representative of authorities

Education and health care

- Basic services are provided in full
- There are problems with access to educational institutions in Kyiv region
- There are problems with access to expensive treatments for people with serious diseases
- Poor quality health care for both residents of host communities and IDPs due to the lack of health reform on the ground

«A friend said that for IDPs it is easier to arrange children in kindergarten since kindergartens have quotas for IDPs. Priority placement of children-IDPs because parents have to go to work otherwise they cannot survive».

Female IDP

«Speaking about calling the doctor and treatment of flu - it is simple. A doctor prescribes medication and that is it. You buy it and take as prescribed. First aid is there...»

Patients with severe diseases are in particularly difficult situation. They remain on their own, because the state does not provide medication and buying it very expensive».

Female IDP

Housing

- Lack of housing and the prospects for its purchase is the most painful issue for women

- The inability to receive compensation for lost housing
- Lack of opportunities to receive a loan for the purchase of housing

«Housing issues are not solved. IDPs mostly rent accommodation. Compensation provided by the state is not enough. The owners do not want to rent housing to IDPs due to imperfect legislation: to receive a certificate of IDP status one should indicate address of residence. If a child is registered at a certain address (with a stamp of Migration Service), the child will have a right to this housing in three years. All the time I have to prove to the owner that I am not an apartment swindler. There is a great lack of trust from owners who rent housing».

Female IDP

Domestic and gender-based violence

- Respondents were not involved but have heard about rare cases
- In the city of Kyiv and Kyiv region, there are problems with the access to places of IDPs' dense residence that does not allow the authorities to carry out full control

«I think, it exists in all families where they abuse alcohol or have low income, but these are not widespread cases».

Female IDP

Legal issues

- Lack of voting rights
- Legal aid is provided on demand, its scope is not always sufficient
- There is lack of information on changes in legislation
- There is only small number of workshops, trainings on legal issues for IDPs and distribution of free information about services in this area
- In the city of Kyiv and Kyiv region, IDPs are aware about the offices providing free secondary legal aid, large number of NGOs dealing with these issues, hotlines

«They do not give us the right to vote, they do not give us loans, housing».

Female IDP

Communication

- The information is easier to find in large cities
- Poor communication exists in rural areas, lack of distribution networks thus the authorities become almost the only channel of information

«More channels to disseminate information among IDPs should be created, for example, websites, newspaper for IDPs, where the details of all new developments should be outlined. Changes in the legislation. There is a need to create public resources to explain IDP-related legal framework, its inconsistencies and changes...»

Female IDP

Interaction with host communities

- According to IDPs from large cities, cooperation between IDPs and host communities mainly depends on the activity of the IDPs
- In large cities, female IDPs are more active, they participate in public life, join volunteer initiatives
- Most female IDPs living in small towns and rural areas are less active, they expect the host communities to involve them in local initiatives

Recommendations

As a result of focus groups and in-depth interviews, the following suggestions were elaborated, summarized and discussed at the regional round tables:

- Promote employment of youth and female IDPs, use personalized approach to IDPs (employment and retraining given their employment history), establish unified database of vacancies, and provide technical support for IDPs entrepreneurial initiatives.
- Develop mechanisms to provide entrepreneurs among IDPs with special benefits, e.g. tax relief, tax compromise, writing off tax debts for companies that faced force majeure circumstances.
- Together with IPDs and employers' organizations, identify ways to stimulate IDPs taking jobs in the host communities.
- In order to continue doing business for IDP entrepreneurs, it is necessary to resolve at the legislative level the issue of compensation or reimbursement for real property located in the ATO area. A transparent mechanism for exemption from liability for violation of tax laws due to force majeure circumstances should be introduced allowing tax authorities to check and decide if force majeure on tax obligations can apply.
- Establish a status of social enterprises by law; legally define the criteria for enterprises to benefit from this category.
- Combat discrimination of IDPs in the banking sector at the legislative level due to the inability to use fully the cards of Oshchadbank and problems with using cards from other banks. Encouraging banks to provide loans for IDPs to start their own business.
- Provide legislative regulation for IDP housing by establishing preferential crediting, identifying ways to receive compensation for lost housing, etc. The respondents consider it is important to develop and implement a state programme aimed at construction or purchase of housing for IDPs with partial compensation from the state, development of mechanisms for selling the housing in non-government controlled areas.
- Introduce crediting programme for the purchase of housing from primary or secondary market, e.g. with the following conditions:
 - first contribution is 5% of the cost; loan at 3% per annum for 30 years;
 - minimum package of documents;
 - de-conservation of the housing stock of the country and establishment of a single up-to-date register of housing in the public domain.
- Develop a mechanism and timeline for regular checks of IDPs' (especially families with children) living conditions and violence incidents by social service providers. This can minimize domestic violence in IDP families.

- Develop a system on tax benefits for owners who lease apartments to IDPs to stimulate signing of lease agreements and receiving of subsidies, as well as payment of taxes in accordance with the law.
- Make changes to the current legislation to ensure the right of IDPs to vote. The absence of such provision does not permit IDPs to exercise their constitutional rights and prevent them from integrating into new communities.
- Conduct regular training on legal issues related to IDPs; create public resource to explain the IDP-related legal framework and respective changes in it.
- Reduce court fees for vulnerable citizens, including IDPs. Such high legal costs is one of the main reasons that prevent IDPs from applying to courts for protection of their rights.
- Develop special mechanisms to ensure transparent use of funds allocated to solve problems of IDPs.
- It is necessary to resolve issues that arise for students from temporarily occupied territories while entering the Ukrainian higher educational establishments and develop respective strategy for IDPs and persons from the non-government controlled areas, in particular:
 - Develop and adopt the procedure for those IDPs who cannot submit a full set of documents for continuing education in host communities;
 - Identify alternative ways of registration of school graduates from temporarily occupied territories for testing and obtaining necessary information. Since domain gov.ua is blocked in the non-government controlled areas, heads of local schools are forced to collect information about graduates who wish to undergo testing and to join Ukrainian universities that is potentially dangerous for children;
 - Organize accelerated distance learning studies in schools in the Luhansk and Donetsk regions; provide additional funding for such programmes; increase the number of educational institutions (kindergartens and schools) in host communities.
- Develop a mechanism to ensure priority expensive treatment for IDPs, including the transition to targeted support of IDPs in health care sphere.

Specific recommendations related to community-based efforts can be found in the Ukrainian version of the report.