

**Submissions from the Ministry of Reintegration
of the Temporary Occupied Territories of Ukraine and
the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine for the Secretariat
of the High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement**

1. The key issues, problems and urgent needs caused by internal displacement in Ukraine.

Since 2014, Ukraine has been facing new social challenges arising from the armed aggression of the Russian Federation and temporary occupation by it of certain territories of the state. Among those challenges is the need to establish effective system of social protection of the internally displaced persons (hereinafter – IDPs), who are forced to move from the temporarily occupied territories of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, as of April 24, 2020, the number of registered IDPs that have moved from temporarily occupied territories (TOT) (Donbas and the Crimea) amounts to 1 446 842 (1 173 367 families).

Both IDPs and the host communities equally feel the negative impact of the forced displacement. The burden on local institutions, the decline in the level of services' provision, social instability and distrust cause discontent and misunderstanding between the increasingly vulnerable IDPs, participants of the Antiterrorist operation and the Joint Forces Operation, who return home, and the communities of the localities where a significant number of IDPs lives.

Without an adequate response, forced displacement becomes an increasing burden on the ability of the host communities to provide basic services, disrupts civilian infrastructure and social cohesion, undermines the foundations of public investment into reforms and causes a feeling of uncertainty, hopelessness and despair among large groups of people, which can easily turn into national and global risks.

In new places of residence, single mothers and middle-aged women face most difficulties in finding jobs. In addition, for many women, a prerequisite for employment is the availability of a place for the child in a pre-school educational institution.

The problem of employment is also an acute one for those IDPs from Donetsk and Luhansk regions, who back at home had worked in heavy or mining industries and moved to agricultural areas where different professional skills are needed.

As it has been already mentioned, under ongoing internal displacement access to housing for IDPs remains a serious problem. Due to significant damage, many IDPs lost their residential property and were unable to find proper housing at affordable price.

Thus, most of IDPs are not able to return home and continue to live in temporary places of residence and relevant centers and are gradually exhausting their resources.

The lack of medical care, unsatisfactory living conditions and isolation are the main problems faced by the IDPs living in places of compact residence where people are at risk of eviction, and some of those already had to leave.

One of the serious problems of protection of the civil population, in particular IDPs, remains freedom of movement across the contact line in the temporarily occupied areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, which poses a significant threat to the physical security of persons who have become hostages to the armed conflict. Due to the limited number of entry-exit checkpoints at the contact line, people are forced to travel long distances and stand in long lines.

In this context, the “contact line” becomes a conditional “border” between the territories controlled and uncontrolled by the Government.

About 20-25 thousand people (before the introduction of restrictive quarantine measures), regardless of the time of year, cross this “line” daily, despite the danger and difficulties. People travel to gain access to administrative services, cash payments and to see their loved ones. Family separation, as well as the potential disruption of economic and social ties, has long-term consequences.

2. The relevance and role of humanitarian, as well as financial assistance from international financial institutions and organizations.

According to international organizations, since the beginning of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, about 4 million Ukrainians are in need of humanitarian assistance, and their protection remains a key issue.

Prolonged displacement is becoming protracted, and the lack of sources of income and affordable housing forces some IDPs to return to unsafe areas of residence as well as to the temporarily occupied territories.

At the same time, the occupation administration in the temporarily occupied territories continues to create obstacles for international humanitarian organizations to conduct humanitarian operations in order to access people in need.

Based on this, the necessity to meet humanitarian needs and, at the same time, to accelerate the process of restoring and building peace on the affected territories in eastern Ukraine remains relevant today.

3. Ways to solve and stop the processes of internal displacement in Ukraine.

Hostilities, mass human rights violations and restrictions on access to justice in the temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea are factors that prevent the cessation of displacement and the possibility for IDPs returning home safely. The volatile security situation, the presence of armed groups, fear of persecution, damaged infrastructure and destroyed buildings provoke internal displacement.

Responses to these problems are due to the urgent need to implement a set of measures aimed at restoring the socio-economic infrastructure of the affected areas in eastern Ukraine and building peace by ensuring socio-economic development of communities, increasing their ability to respond quickly to acute crises and eliminate potential risks.

4. Internal displacement as an additional lever for the development of the territorial community and the territory of displacement of IDPs.

IDPs can play an important role in society – as skilled workers, business owners who create jobs, provide revenues to local budget or support local initiatives with resources.

Measures, which contribute towards turning IDPs into a real development source for the territorial community, include:

- development of affordable mortgage lending;
- tax preferences for economic entities that employ IDPs;
- provision of affordable microcredit programs for the expansion of small and medium-sized businesses;
- establishing partnership and coordination networks between countries, public and

private sectors, as well as international organizations to coordinate IDP assistance projects.

Effective integration of such persons into the community creates conditions for turning the aggravating problems of host communities into strong additional development factors.

High-quality work organization at the community level is in line with the basic principles of decentralization of power and provides solutions for a number of key issues faced by IDPs, in particular: social protection, housing, health care, placement of children in preschool and secondary institutions.

5. Decisions made by the country to address internal displacement and its consequences, creating effective public administration tools, meeting the urgent and ongoing needs of IDPs.

The Government has concentrated considerable efforts on addressing the issues of IDPs. In particular, a number of measures aimed at the socio-economic integration of IDPs, making them more self-sufficient and independent, taking into account the interests of host territorial communities, has been introduced.

In order to provide social support to internally displaced families (persons), in October 2014 the Government adopted the Order № 505 “On providing monthly targeted assistance to internally displaced persons to cover living expenses, including housing and communal services”. In 2020, the Ministry of Social Policy allocated funds for the payment of cash assistance in the amount of 3 042.6 million UAH.

One of the main recommendations of the European Union to Ukrainian public authorities is to develop a clear, unified, financially sustainable and comprehensive strategy for IDPs, which takes into account their current needs and long-term integration.

Therefore, such a policy document, which is designed to comprehensively address these issues, is the Strategy for the Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and the implementation of long-term solutions for internal displacement for the period up to 2020 (hereinafter – the Strategy), approved by the Government of Ukraine (Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of November 15, 2017 № 909-r).

The goal of the Strategy is the socio-economic integration of IDPs and the introduction of long-term solutions for the realization and protection of their rights, freedoms and legitimate interests, increasing their self-sufficiency and independence, taking into account the interests of the host territorial communities, establishing effective cooperation between IDPs and the host territorial communities, State and local authorities on the principles of partnership, which results in social unity.

The Action Plan for the implementation of the Strategy (approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on November 21, 2018 № 944-r), in particular, envisages: consideration of the needs of IDPs in the development of regional and local programs; dialogue between state and local authorities with IDPs; inclusion of IDPs in the register of territorial communities; taking IDPs into account when allocating medical and educational subventions; participation of IDPs in local elections; social and temporary housing; credit and financial mechanisms for housing; preferential taxation of landlords; confirmation, documentation, verification of property rights, as well as their renewal; guaranteeing pension and social benefits; control over pension and social benefits automatically; new jobs; retraining of IDPs; support for small and medium-sized business of IDPs; restoration of documents; distance education programs; free accommodation in dormitories for IDP students and providing them with textbooks; integration of teachers; support for relocated higher education institutions; proper care in health care facilities.

Joint implementation of the Action Plan by all public authorities will help to solve the main systemic problems in the field of integration of IDPs, introduce durable solutions to internal displacement and ensure the implementation and protection of IDPs' rights, taking into account the interests of the host communities.

In particular, one of the positive examples of solving the problem issues of IDPs is the adoption of the Government Order of October 4, 2017 № 769, which approved the procedure and conditions for granting subventions from the state budget to local budgets for activities to support the territories adversely affected by the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The subvention is allocated for construction, reconstruction, major repairs of housing facilities of municipal property, in particular, social facilities, as well as for the purchase of housing for temporary use by IDPs.

In addition, in order to introduce a fair mechanism for the distribution and provision of housing for temporary residence of IDPs, taking into account the criteria of their vulnerability, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Order № 582 of June 26, 2019 "On approval of the procedure for the formation of housing funds for temporary residence of internally displaced persons and the procedure for the free provision of housing from housing funds for temporary residence of internally displaced persons".

Funding of subventions from the state budget to local budgets for the implementation of measures to support the territories adversely affected by the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine amounted to: in 2017 - 17 million UAH, in 2018 - 34 million UAH, in 2019 - 34 million UAH, since the beginning of 2020 - 20 million UAH.

It is clear that this amount of funding does not cover the requested needs, which cannot be met solely by the internal resources of the state. Thus, the assistance of international donor financial institutions, which have experience in supporting projects aimed at providing IDPs with housing in different countries, remains extremely important.
