

Together we will find housing solutions for IDPs:

Recommendations of the Cities of Solidarity Forum
Kharkiv, 3 October 2019

Background information about the Forum

Recognizing the importance of cities, as well as host and IDP communities, in the effort to find [durable solutions for IDPs](#), UNHCR has organized three “[Cities of Solidarity](#)” forums since 2016. The [Forum held on 3 October 2019 in Kharkiv](#) had a thematic focus on housing solutions for IDPs, since in surveys and assessments, IDPs consistently report that housing is a high priority. For example, in [IOM’s National Monitoring System Report](#) (June 2019), 41 per cent of IDPs stated that the lack of housing was their main priority; IDPs echoed this message in [UNHCR’s participatory assessment of 2019](#).

As the problem is widespread, so are the efforts to find solutions. In work with IDP community groups and local authorities across the country, UNHCR has witnessed many grassroots approaches to improve the housing situation of IDPs. The [Forum brought together over 100 participants - innovators and those eager to learn—from 36 cities and 12 regions of Ukraine](#). The participants represented local authorities, IDP community groups, and non-governmental organizations in the effort to find housing solutions for IDPs.

The Forum created a marketplace of ideas, in which local authorities and IDP communities shared experiences on approaches to housing. Lively and practical discussions covered social housing, cooperatives, land allocation, low-interest loans, subsidized housing, and much more. Building on these experiences, [four working groups developed recommendations](#) related to access to social, temporary and permanent housing ([affordable housing](#)), as well as finding [solutions for residents of collective centers](#). The below recommendations are an outcome of that work. With this document, the goal is to share these recommendations widely with the central state authorities, local executive authorities and self-government, NGOs, host and IDP community groups, as well as with diplomatic missions and donors who could contribute to the implementation of these recommendations.

Guiding principles for housing solutions for IDPs

There is no one-size-fits-all when it comes to housing solutions for IDPs, since IDPs and the communities where they live have different needs, resources and preferences. Ukraine needs a [comprehensive housing strategy for IDPs](#) that would expand availability of temporary and social housing for vulnerable persons, while also supporting a range of programs to make it affordable for IDPs to acquire permanent housing.

Given the priority of housing solutions for IDPs after more than five years of displacement, the authorities should [prioritize budgetary allocation for IDP housing](#) at central and local levels. The central authorities should consider the proportion of IDP population when calculating the budgetary allocations for any housing programs per oblast, as currently the calculations take into account only the number of permanently residents (those with residence registration). The central government can [stimulate local investment in IDP housing solutions](#) by matching local government budgets for IDP housing.

Development of a housing strategy for IDPs should be participatory, [including IDPs in decision-making at both central and local levels](#). The engagement of other stakeholders, such as banks and the private sector, is also important. The authorities should develop transparent mechanisms to facilitate the contribution of international development actors, and plan IDP housing projects jointly with them, including a financial contribution from the national budget.

Ukraine’s existing housing programs can be utilized better. Currently regulatory barriers limit IDPs’ access to these programs. A first step is to remove barriers to existing programs by [simplifying the](#)

eligibility requirements for IDPs. Also, information about existing housing programs and eligibility criteria should be made available to IDPs on a single portal.

A sound housing strategy for IDPs requires an evidentiary base. At present, while it is well known that IDPs need housing, there is no information about how many IDPs require which kind of support and where this support is needed. [The housing needs assessment](#) should be incorporated into the [Unified IDP Database](#).

There have been few changes in the [Housing Code](#) since it was adopted in 1984 during the Soviet period. It is time for change. Addressing IDPs' housing needs can be a catalyst for making long overdue housing policy reforms. The new [Ministry of Community and Regional Development](#) underlines the importance of elaborating a [new housing policy](#) that will more effectively utilize existing housing resources (through reconstruction and refurbishment) and diversify financial instruments for accessing permanent housing.

Recommendations to the Central Government

Regarding temporary and social housing

To remove barriers that limit IDPs' access to existing housing programs:

- Amend the [Housing Code](#) to render IDPs eligible for existing temporary housing programmes;
- Amend [Resolutions # 422 \(2004\) and #582 \(2019\)](#) to eliminate contradictory provisions that prevent IDPs' access to temporary housing;
- Shorten the list of documents required for IDPs to apply for social housing, especially [Cabinet of Ministers Resolution #682](#);
- Broaden the income-based eligibility requirements for IDPs applying for social housing – ([Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers #582 and 682](#)) since the excessively low thresholds prevent low income IDPs from applying for social housing.

To expand the quantity of temporary and social housing:

- Through [creation of tax incentives](#), stimulate construction companies to offer some housing for local temporary and social housing programs;
- Establish [procedures](#) for state and local housing authorities [to conduct an inventory of the temporary and social housing stock](#), as well as any vacant premises that can be used to provide temporary and social housing to IDPs;
- Elaborate a [registry of national communal housing stock](#) to identify free premises that can be used for providing social housing for IDPs;
- Adopt legal changes to allow local authorities to receive [ownership of vacant educational or medical institutions](#) for the purpose of their refurbishment and use as [social or temporary housing](#).

To make allocation of temporary and social housing more fair:

- Set [clear and transparent procedures](#) governing access to social and temporary housing, including, if necessary, a [scoring system for prioritizing](#) and managing the queues.

To simplify implementation of housing programs:

- [Amend legislation](#) to distinguish clearly the functions of social protection and housing departments to clarify which entity is responsible for refurbishment, since the current ambiguity makes it complicated for local authorities to utilize subventions allocated for improvement of conditions in social and temporary housing stock;

- Allow local authorities a measure of [flexibility in establishing eligibility criteria](#) for programmes, particularly so that the communities can retain persons with skills required by the local economy.

To build on the good practices of the Ukrainian Fund for Social Investment:

- Further [diversify its work with donors](#) in different oblasts of Ukraine in order to refurbish/build more social housing available to IDPs;
- Pursue opportunities to obtain [additional financial support for IDP-related temporary housing initiatives](#) through enhanced donor cooperation.

Regarding affordable and other forms of permanent housing solutions

To expand IDPs' access to existing affordable housing programs:

- Considerably [increase the budget allocation for the affordable housing](#) (known as the 50/50 program), which provides low-income families with a 50 per cent subsidy for purchase of modest housing;
- Revise the affordable housing program to make it possible for beneficiaries to [purchase apartments on the secondary market](#), not only in newly constructed apartment buildings;
- [Amend the rules of the affordable housing program](#) so that potential beneficiaries have more time to prepare the required documents once they are notified of their turn in the queue, since the current period of two weeks is insufficient for people to comply with the requirements;
- Give the [State Youth Construction Fund](#) the authority to [verify beneficiaries' IDP registration](#) directly with the [Ministry of Social Policy](#), since the local departments of social policy do not have a general practice of issuing new certificates to prove ongoing IDP registration;
- Amend procedures on the [change of ownership of state/communal property](#) so that the State Youth Construction Fund can redistribute property to individuals as per housing programs, including for IDPs, (Resolution #803 of 6 June 2007).

To establish new affordable housing programs:

- Establish an affordable housing program for participants who can contribute at least 20% of the cost of the apartment, while receiving [a low interest rate loan](#) (below 5%) from a state or commercial bank to cover the balance;
- Establish [pilot projects](#) supported by the necessary [regulatory framework for new affordable housing schemes](#), such as revolving funds, leasing and rent-to-own;
- [Reinforce rural housing programs](#), such as the “[My own house](#)” program, with necessary skills-building activities to ensure that people would be able to work in rural areas;
- Offer low-interest loans to IDPs for the purchase of housing.

Regarding collective centers

To support IDPs residing in collective centers to find durable housing solutions:

- Include IDPs in collective centers in the [housing strategy for IDPs](#), as well as in any updates to the existing [IDP Integration and Durable Solutions Strategy](#);
- Introduce an [individual case management approach](#) to support IDPs in moving out of collective centers; this approach should be implemented by local authorities in cooperation and coordination with civil society organizations;
- Give residents of collective centers [priority in access to social and temporary housing programs](#);
- Elaborate a [strategy on durable solutions](#) for residents of collective centers with further involvement of international humanitarian and development agencies;

- Where appropriate given the collective center's current ownership, explore the [privatization of collective centers](#) by IDPs residing in those centers.

Recommendations to local executive authorities and local self-government

Regarding social and temporary housing

To make local housing programs more accessible to IDPs:

- [Involve IDPs in decision-making process](#) with regard to social housing solutions, for example through working groups or civic councils;
- Study the experience of other local authorities to learn about best practices for including IDPs in social housing programs.

To expand availability of social housing programs for IDPs:

- Allocate resources in the local budget to [procure social housing for IDPs](#), since this allocation will help local authorities in successfully applying for subventions from the central government;
- Ensure that funds transferred from the state budget are [used within six months as provided for in the Budget Code](#); make all due preparations, following simple and transparent procedures for procurement of premises as temporary or social housing stock;
- At oblast, rayon and local levels, [assess the existing housing stock/other buildings stock](#) that could be refurbished to satisfy IDPs' social housing needs, and share this information regularly with central authorities, donors and other stakeholders who could contribute its refurbishment;
- Work with local businesses that could [provide temporary \(or corporate\) housing a part of an employment opportunity](#), and link IDPs to these opportunities;
- Elaborate a [program of "renting from city authorities"](#), particularly for IDPs who work in communal enterprises or in other public institutions, such as schools and medical facilities.

Regarding affordable and other forms of permanent housing solutions

To expand IDPs' access to affordable housing opportunities:

- Elaborate [tri-partite affordable housing programmes](#), where IDPs could pay 30%, local authorities 30% and the central authorities 40% of the price of housing;
- Establish a [revolving fund](#) so that IDPs can purchase housing and pay back, making more funds available for other IDPs;
- Establishment of [rent-to-own and financial leasing programmes](#), which are solutions available in the existing Ukrainian legal framework; since these programs involve IDPs paying back to the local communities over time, they are financially sustainable and increase commitment of both local communities and IDPs to successful integration;
- Allocate [land plots for housing cooperatives](#) free of charge or at minimum cost.

Regarding affordable and other forms of permanent housing solutions

To support IDPs residing in collective centers to find durable housing solutions:

- Establish ongoing [dialogue with the residents of collective centers](#) in the effort to find durable housing solutions for them;
- Provide IDPs with [access to all housing programs available](#) to members of host communities, by including them in local programs and providing recommendations to central authorities on the needed legislative amendments to national legislation;

- Consider best practices of other regions/settlements through exchange visits, as well as replication of successful practices;
- Introduce an [individual case management approach](#) to support IDPs in moving out of collective centers; work with civil society organizations in implementing this approach.

Recommendations to other stakeholders

To support the central and local authorities in implementing durable housing solutions for IDPs:

- IDPs and IDP community groups (initiatives, groups, alliances, NGOs, etc.) can make a difference by [actively engaging with local and central authorities](#) on the development of housing solutions. They can share experiences and good practices with one another, so that existing housing opportunities are fully utilized and new programs are piloted. They can also [raise awareness among IDP population on existing housing opportunities](#) so that more IDPs find housing solutions;
- The [Association of Cities of Ukraine](#) has the potential to be an active partner in finding housing solutions for IDPs;
- [International financial institutions](#) are encouraged to [engage with the Ukrainian authorities on durable housing solutions for IDPs](#), since their offer of financial support could stimulate the national government to allocate resources toward this goal;
- [Development agencies](#) are encouraged to [implement employment and self-employment programs \(such as business grants\) for IDPs](#) in collective centers, since this would help the residents to become financially stable and eligible to obtain loans for the purchase of housing;
- [Private sector](#) actors can offer [employment opportunities](#) together with temporary housing.
- [Humanitarian actors](#) are encouraged to [build on the expertise](#) they have in the areas of [IDP protection, humanitarian shelter, and housing, land and property rights](#) to support stakeholders in elaborating the normative framework for durable housing solutions, promoting transparency and fairness in the procedures, and in advocating for [greater investment in durable housing for IDPs](#).

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