

## KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

### ON THE REQUEST OF THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S HIGH-LEVEL PANEL ON INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

In August 2020, UNHCR conducted [nine focus groups with internally displaced persons \(IDPs\)](#) of different age and gender residing in the central, southern and western Ukraine. Students; displaced families raising children with disabilities; individuals representing IDP-led small-scale NGOs (communities); elderly who are dependent on social assistance/pension from the state; Crimean Tatars (discussions with men and women took place separately); Roma; IDPs residing in collective centers took part in the discussion. One group was with representatives of local authorities from Dnipropetrovsk, Zhytomyr, Ternopil, Kherson and Kyiv oblasts. In total, [37 males and 48 females](#) participated in these discussions.

Findings of the focus groups demonstrated that [IDPs in the central, southern and western Ukraine continue to have needs related to their displacement](#). IDPs feel that there is little attention to their needs from the side of multiple donors, international and non-governmental organizations.

- IDPs' primary concern remains [sustainable housing](#) (be it social provided by local authorities or possibility to obtain housing through different financial programs). Now that IDPs in Ukraine have been granted an opportunity to vote in elections of all levels, the lack of housing is main barrier to integration. With the need to allocate resources for COVID-response, the government reviewed the State Budget in March 2020 and cut expenses on all housing programs (such as affordable housing program and low-interest rate loans for IDPs), with one exception of a program that provides subventions to local authorities to offer social housing. Elderly IDPs who would not be able to obtain housing are eager for the elaboration of social housing programs and are ready to cover utility bills.
- Most groups did not mention any problems related to personal security in host communities apart from [psychological pressure caused by permanent risk of eviction](#) either from rented apartments or from collective centers. Roma IDPs, however, feel there is variety of attitude from very cautious to hostile from local population due to widespread bias. They feel [multiple layers of discrimination](#) due to their displacement, ethnicity and at times age and gender aspects. Other groups felt that mass media depicted IDPs negatively which might undermine social cohesion. All groups said that they felt discriminated against because the authorities treat IDPs differently when it comes to the provision of social services; IDPs have additional requirements for receiving social benefits, and other citizens are not under such level of scrutiny. IDPs who receive social payments and pensions from the state must use the state-run Oshchadbank for financial services.
- Maintaining good relations with local residents is important. This may be achieved through joint cultural, sport or other innovative events supported by both displaced and local population. [Displaced Crimean Tatars noted the importance of preserving their identity](#) during such events. This is where support to community-based organizations and their activities was noted positively.
- Most groups acknowledged [importance of common efforts to make their voice heard](#) by the authorities. Effectiveness of individual inquiries and official letters is assessed as low. In contrast, personal visits to local authorities proved their efficiency. Many participants informed that they or their friends established/participated in NGOs; some have joined civic councils (established at local authorities) to represent the displaced community in dialogue with authorities and raise issues faced by IDPs. This approach is of extreme importance for representing IDPs of Roma ethnicity and elderly displaced persons who may face difficulties in explaining their problems themselves and need support of intermediaries. In parallel, the groups demonstrated low awareness on available feedback/complaint mechanisms. Students had demonstrated low awareness with regard to where turn for legal assistance. This may be explained by their low level of trust that the authorities will address their complaints; the result is that existing complaint mechanisms are ineffective.
- Most groups observe [lack of coordination between state and local authorities, international and non-governmental organizations involved in IDP-related issues](#). They witness no networking and no

communicating among these actors. This results in **low information sharing and poor referral mechanism**, which causes delays in providing specific assistance (e.g. for persons with disabilities and their caregivers) and addressing inquiries. In parallel, UNHCR's efforts towards coordinating activities on IDP protection and referrals to relevant actors are noted positively. The groups called for direct communication between IDPs and stakeholders involved in IDP protection to be based on "nothing for us without us" principle.

- The groups faced **difficulties with understanding "peacebuilding" and "humanitarian-development nexus"**. As IDPs do not face specific security issues caused by the fact of displacement, they were thinking more of peacebuilding in the territories from which they were displaced. That is why almost every group was stating that peace is important, but in their particular locality no need for peacebuilding activities was identified. Alternative interpretation of "peacebuilding" was linked to prevention of hate speech bias.
- The **COVID-19 outbreak resulted in additional difficulties** for participants. While elderly IDPs noted lack of social contacts and meetings in person, displaced students said they lacked access to distance learning, as they often do not have funds for purchasing personal tablets/computers. Distance learning via smartphones causes extra harm to their eyesight. Persons with disabilities and their caregivers face additional obstacles in accessing healthcare facilities due to transport restrictions and limited capacity of doctors to conduct regular checkups. Most groups have full and equal access to information on COVID-related preventive measures and updates. In parallel, elderly IDPs faced some difficulties in obtaining flash updates due to lack of digital literacy. TV broadcast and newspapers may provide news with some delays. Apart from this, IDPs remain invisible for host communities, as under Ukrainian law, IDPs are not considered local residents. As a result, they are not included in local government's programs and budget allocations do not include them in the calculations. Consequently, local authorities did not include vulnerable IDPs into their distribution lists of free of charge food parcels. In parallel, representatives of local authorities do not acknowledge any specific troubles or difficulties for IDPs, as formally IDPs do not face additional obstacles in accessing services in need.
- In "miscellaneous" section the groups reinforced the message on increasing and diversifying housing solutions and employment opportunities for IDP students, elderly and others. Apart from this, they noted business education opportunities, access to bank services, health care services and infrastructure. From the strategic point of view, the groups highlighted the importance of restoring Ukrainian territorial integrity and introducing a single coordination mechanism for all IDP-related activities with involvement of humanitarian and development actors, where central authority would play a leading role.

UNHCR is ready to provide the table with key findings of FGDs explained in more detail and/or transcripts from every FGD in English.

Please submit your requests to email [ukrki@unhcr.org](mailto:ukrki@unhcr.org).