IDPs in Ukraine: intersectionality, vulnerability and exclusion

Irina Kuznetsova October, 18 2018

IDMC Geneva
1 491 528 internally displaced people or 1 217 071 families from Donbas and Crimea
MSP Ukraine 23/03/2018

Map [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org) 18/09/2017
The majority of Ukraine’s IDPs are pensioners: a breakdown of Ukraine’s IDPs and general population by labour-market cohorts

Number of people in need of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 2017)

Humanitarian needs overview 2017 Ukraine. November 2016. UN OCHA
SDG defined for Ukraine as priority

The level of incorporation of the SDG targets into policies*

Research Methodology

Ukraine's hidden tragedy: Understanding the outcomes of population displacement from the country's war torn regions’ (Arts and Humanities Research Council UK, Kuznetsova - PI, Mikheieva, Dragneva, Gulyieva, Mykhnenko, 2016-2018)

- In-depth interviews with internally displaced people in Lviv, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhia regions and Mariupol (total 104)
- Two focus-groups with IDPs
- Survey of NGOs (n=138)
- Interviews with representatives of NGOs, civil society, authorities, international organizations (n=25)
- Regional economic analysis
- Desk research, analysis of policy and legal documents
- Discourse-analysis of popular websites and television channels, popular blogs

‘Mental health and well being of internally displaced people: copying tactics and resilience in conflict-affected societies’ (Wellcome Trust UK, Kuznetsova - PI, Catling, Round, Mikheieva, 2017-2018)

- Survey of 1000 IDPs and 1000 non IDPs (2018)
- Interviews with IDPs and professionals in mental health (2017-2018)
Pensions

• Ukrainian citizens from NGCA have to register as IDPs in order to receive pensions and social benefits (for disability for example) (from 1st of December 2014).

• Authorities verifies IDPs place of residency in GCA every 6 months.

• ‘The number of persons from the NGCA receiving pensions dropped dramatically from 956,000 in January 2016 to 391,000 in April 2017, due to ongoing verifications. This represents only 30 per cent of pensioners who were residing in the NGCA in August 2014. More than 500,000 Ukrainians lost their pensions since January 2016.’ (UNHCR August 2017)

• The draft law no. 6692 was elaborated by Rights for Protection, Donbas SOS, UNHCR and other international and local organizations and MPs and was registered on 12/07/2017. It aims to de-link pension payments from IDP status, ensuring the right to a pension irrespective of the place of residence; reduce verification procedures.

• The process of receiving pension documents from Crimea takes from several months for a year as it goes via Moscow or Krasnodar.

‘I will explain why today there was a need to keep account of internally displaced persons: because there is now such phenomenon as ‘pension tourism’ - that is people just leave, receive pensions outside this region, and then come back, and we don’t know who these people are, why they come back to the anti-terrorist operation zone and in what events they are involved.’ (Denisova, former Minister of Social Policy, 2014)
Checks of places of residence

• ‘Now it seems a bit better and I can to prolong my IDP document within a day. But then they said: we will be checking, you have to sit at home. But it is very inconvenient, if they call and say you must be at home for 3 days. For example, I am very pleased when I was asked to distribute leaflets, it is some income for me. I ask if I can come to social services by myself, and they say – ‘no, you cannot – maybe you lie, and you go to Donetsk area. This is very hard. It means they do not believe us. They think that we travel backwards and forwards’. (female, 71 years old, from Horlovka, lives in Kharkiv)

Corruption and inefficiency of social services

• ‘I had problems. They [social services] said that they lost a folder with my documents. Of course, because I have to receive 1600 for a child, plus 2400 as a mother of several children, so 4000 overall. Why to pay me? It is better to throw my folder via the window. Always corruption. I have realised that they simply hidden my folder by purpose. And there are many cases like that. It calls corruption.’ (female, focus group in Chernihiv)
Pensions for IDPs from Crimea: legal quiz and violation of human rights

• From I.K. interview with Anna Rossomakhina, Helsinki group for Human Rights, Kyiv in June 2017;

• ‘Nowadays the pension fund of Russia has personal data of all pensioners who became IDPs in Ukraine. They have all database, several thousands people’.

• The process of receiving pension documents form Crimea takes from several months for a year as it goes via Moscow or Krasnodar.

Case 1. ‘In our practice, one woman with her relatives left Crimea in 2014. She had a severe cancer. She died in April 2016. Before that she was in a bed for one and a half years. After her death we requested her pension documents, they arrived and it was said that the pension was paid till August 2016 in Crimea. And they said to relatives that they do not have any rights as all pension was paid’.

Case 2. ‘Another one amazing case: a retired military man from Ukraine left Crimea at the beginning of April 2014 and went to be military volunteer. His data is on tribunal, so he cannot come to Crimea obviously as he is under threat. After demobilization, he applied to benefits as a injured former militant as he used to receive a military pension. Pension fund of Ukraine requested Russian Ministry of Defence and Federal Security Services and provided them with his current place of residency. After a year there was a response from Crimea that he was receiving his pension in Crimea all time when he was fighting in Donbas. And what is interesting, it was signed by the colonel Balabanov who is a formerly worked for Security Service of Ukraine and now works in Russian FSS’.
Lack of adequate and affordable housing

• Most IDPs live in rented apartments. The living conditions in many cases are not appropriate in relation to family size and/or special needs

• To rent an apartment is very difficult because owners do not want to rent it for IDPs and also they often increase a price for IDPs.

• In some towns the market of apartments became very tight because of a number of IDPs

‘You cannot integrate into society without housing. You always live with suitcases. Owners always look and if they feel you have stability they put the price of the rent up. Which plans could you make? Nothing really is you do not have any stability. ...when you are elderly, and touchwood will get sick – which landlord would keep you in a flat? It is very frustrating.’ (Female, 58 years old, from Luhansk oblast, lives in Kharkiv)

Photo credit: Ben Robinson
Lack of adequate and affordable housing

• Dormitories provided by the state for IDPs were not able to accommodate everyone in need, now some are closing down. The IDPs social benefit is not enough to pay for the rent.

• The situation with housing is stop elderly people to move from NGCA.

• The necessity to pay for the rent, difficulties of employment force many families to move back to NGCA

Photo credit: Ben Robinson
'We were offered to move to different city – to Sumy or Kryvyi Rih, I do not remember now. But we are not stray musicians, rights? We are **temporarily** displaced people. When the war will be finished we will go back home. (...) Where could I go to another city? Children go to kindergarten. Lena – to kindergarten, Irina – to school, Anna - to college. Olga – in spite the fact that she has disability, has a bronchial asthma, she went to work to the factory informally. What to do? I would like to work but I cannot physically, I have such a rare disease, one for a million people.’

(female, 50 years old, from Alcheevsk, lives in Chuhuevo Kharkiv oblast, names have been changed)

The State is ready to subsidize 50 % of cost of buying new accommodation for IDPs. However, in 2018 there is only enough money for 350 families, when in a list are over 3000. Furthermore, Bank policy is that applicants have to have a very high formal salary.
‘My father [lives in NGCA] was injured in a coal mine in 2001, he barely survived and received disabled status. But then he was not able to prolong it in Ukraine as he was due three years ago before the war [in Ukraine people with disabilities has to re-registered their status regularly]. Then we tried to do it in Kyiv but they do not have an expertise in coal mine injuries. (...) My grandma has chronical diseases. It’s very difficult, father has to go to Mariupol to buy a medicine for her because it is 3 times more expensive there. Her condition became worse all the time as there are no qualified doctors.’ (male, 27 years old, lives in Kyiv, from Donetsk)

All informants in our research had to pay for medicines while being in hospitals and for a x-ray films. One fifth of those who addressed medical help faced difficulties that they have not been registered in that medical centres or was not able to provide the document of IDP.
Health issues reported by IDPs and not-displaced population (%)

Survey of 1000 IDPs and 1000 non-IDPs across government control territory of Ukraine, August-September 2018
Mental health

• ‘When we just arrived we addressed to psychotherapist. We had some medicine. Because this endless anxiety we did not sleep at all. And then we started to sleep, but then it became worse, and all three of us [she, her husband and son] had medicine. We took it but our son still has an anxiety and does not sleep well at all. There is not stability at all, it is all uncertain. Also, no people with whom you can just talk and share some memories. It is just an age and difficult to make new friends.’ (Female, 58 years old, from Luhansk oblast, lives in Kharkiv)

• ‘Specialists [psychologists] cried. As soon as I began to talking to them they starting to cry and ask ’just stop it’. I say, well, maybe you have to be fired and somebody else could help then?’ (laughing) (Male, 36 years old, from Debaltsevo, lives in Kharkiv, has a severe injury from war and his mother was killed)
Mental health

General Anxiety Diagnosis
Significantly higher in displaced cohort 13.4 vs 12.1 (absolute scores)
Clinically significant with 37% (IDPs) vs 25% (non IDPs) with severe Anxiety

Depression
Significantly higher in displaced cohort 16.2 vs 14.5 (absolute scores)
Clinically significant with 25% (IDPs) vs 14% (non IDPs) ‘severely’ depressed

Seeking help
Among those who suffer from anxiety and depression
21.7% of IDPs vs 9.5% non IDPs

Survey of 1000 IDPs and 1000 non-IDPs across government control territory of Ukraine, August-September 2018
‘What do you usually do when you feel distressed for a long time?’ (%, both IDPs and non IDPs)

Survey of 1000 IDPs and 1000 non-IDPs across government control territory of Ukraine, August-September 2018
Survey of 4290 persons crossing the ‘line of contact’ in the five operating EECPs located in Donetsk (EECPs Maiorske, Marinka, Hnutove and Novotoitske) and Luhansk (Stanytsia Luhanska) Oblasts (UN, Right for Protection June-July 2017)
Internal drivers of return after forced displacement

- Lack of appropriate and affordable housing
- Suspension of pensions/low pensions
- Lack of informal networks and peer support
- Lack of access to justice, ‘desk bureaucracy’

 Decreasing level and quality of life

- Life ‘between’ host areas and war areas
- Loss of sense of belonging to the host region and to country
- Practicing various copying tactics in host areas

 Return to war-torn areas
About the project/ Короткий огляд проекту

‘Ukraine’s hidden tragedy: understanding the outcomes of population displacement from the country’s war torn regions’ is a research project of interdisciplinary team from the University of Birmingham, University of Oxford and Ukrainian Catholic University (AHRC PCCSR award). Period – November 2016 - April 2018.