Internally Displaced Persons and Electoral Participation

Hannah Roberts, International Foundation for Electoral Systems
Tetyana Durnyeva, NGO GROUP OF INFLUENCE
Since 1987 IFES has worked in more than 145 countries promoting electoral integrity and supporting citizens’ participation in elections, including the under-represented such as IDPs.

September 2016, IFES issued a white paper on IDP electoral participation to promote more attention to this under-addressed issue.
Opportunity to vote

Opportunity to stand as candidates
IDPs should be given the choice to vote for constituencies of origin or current constituencies.
Practical barriers

- Documentation requirements
- Difficulties in accessing information through regular methods
- Marginalized groups frequently overrepresented in IDP populations
Consensus-based decisions

Development of policies and laws should be undertaken well in advance of an election, to allow time for research, consultations, consideration of different implementation options, consensus-building, and the implementation of changes.

Groups representing IDPs, civil society and the election management body should all be involved.
Principle 22(1) which states that IDPs “shall not be discriminated against as a result of their displacement in the enjoyment of... the right to vote and to participate in governmental and public affairs, including the right to have access to the means necessary to exercise this right.”

Principle 29(1) states that IDPs “who have returned to their homes or places of habitual residence or who have resettled in another part of the country shall not be discriminated against as a result of their having been displaced. They shall have the right to participate fully and equally in public affairs at all levels and have equal access to public services.”

IFES’s White Paper includes 17 recommendations to support the realization of Guiding Principle 22(1):
IDPs’ election rights in Ukraine:

1,519,132 internally displaced persons from the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea had their voting rights restricted as of September 3, 2018, according to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine.
Approximately 4% of the Ukrainian electorate are IDPs who are deprived of exercising their full political rights. In Ukraine, persons can participate in local elections only in the constituency of their government registered address which is often different from their actual place of residence.
IDPs’ election rights in Ukraine:

- Can elect President of Ukraine
- Can elect Members of Parliament by Party-list proportional representation system
- Can stand as candidates for President, Parliament, Local elections
- Can NOT elect Members of Parliament in single-member constituencies
- Can NOT elect mayors and members of the local councils

Can NOT elect Members of Parliament in single-member constituencies.
About 500,000 people had no right to elect a member of parliament in single-member constituencies in the October 2014.

1,345,100 IDPs did not participate in the Local elections 2015 and were not able to elect local councils deputies.
Aiming to resolve the outlined problem, NGO “GROUP OF INFLUENCE” together with Civil network OPORA and International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) had developed the draft law on Ensuring Access to the Right to Vote of Internally Displaced Persons and Other Internal Migrants

On March 27, 2017
24 MPs from different factions signed the draft law No6240 which enables all Ukrainian citizens to vote in their actual place of residence by simplifying voter registration procedures
The Constitution of Ukraine clearly defines the equality of rights of all citizens, particularly in matters of electoral law. International principles also oblige Ukraine to ensure these rights.

However, the draft law #6240 which would enable all Ukrainian citizens to vote in their actual places of residence by simplifying voter registration procedures currently of little interest to MPs and requires information and advocacy support.
IDPs’ election rights in Ukraine:

• NGO Group of Influence in partnership with IFES will continue an countrywide advocacy campaign “EVERY VOTE HAS IMPACT” to grant IDPs the right to vote on all kind of elections.

• The local governments support such system changes and consider IDPs as the members of their communities. Within advocacy campaign “EVERY VOTE HAS IMPACT” local authorities of different cities of Ukraine adopted appeals to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine with a request to vote for Draft Law No.6240 and protect political rights of IDPs at local level.
IDPs’ election rights in Ukraine:

Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YEAzCdAIEm8&t=27s
Thank you for attention!

• Hannah Roberts, roberts.hannah99@btinternet.com

• Tetyana Durnyeva, donetsk safecity@gmail.com