



IOM
UN MIGRATION

GLOBAL DATA INSTITUTE
**DISPLACEMENT
TRACKING MATRIX**

FROM PLACE TO PLACE:

Community perceptions of
displacement and durable
solutions in Ukraine

MAY 2024



The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the publication do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries.

IOM is committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and society. As an intergovernmental organization, IOM acts with its partners in the international community to: assist in meeting the operational challenges of migration; advance understanding of migration issues; encourage social and economic development through migration; and uphold the human dignity and well-being of migrants.

This publication was made possible through support provided by the Government of Canada, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom and the Government of Belgium. The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM and the Government of Canada, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom and the Government of Belgium.

Publisher: International Organization for Migration
17 route des Morillons
P.O. Box 17
1211 Geneva 19
Switzerland
Tel.: +41 22 717 9111
Fax: +41 22 798 6150
Email: hq@iom.int
Website: www.iom.int

This publication was issued without formal editing by IOM.

This publication was issued without IOM Publications Unit (PUB) approval for adherence to IOM's brand and style standards.

This publication was issued without IOM Research Unit (RES) endorsement.

This publication was issued without official translation by TRS Unit.

Unofficial translation of the original version in English, entitled "From Place to Place: Community perception of displacement and durable solutions in Ukraine."

Cover photo: IOM field workers welcome people from Ukraine in Záhony to support them and provide information. © International Organization for Migration 2022

Required citation: See the [options](#).

© IOM 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the [Creative Commons Attribution-Non Commercial-No Derivs 3.0 IGO License](#) (CC BY-NC-ND 3.0 IGO).*

For further specifications please see the [Copyright and Terms of Use](#).

This publication should not be used, published or redistributed for purposes primarily intended for or directed towards commercial advantage or monetary compensation, with the exception of educational purposes, e.g. to be included in textbooks.

Permissions: Requests for commercial use or further rights and licensing should be submitted to publications@iom.int.

* <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/legalcode>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was researched and written by Cassandra Mathie with support from Ewa Gheeraert, Joshua Phillippo-Holmes, and Nazar Maksymych. The Right to Protection (R2P) conducted the data collection and initial analysis.

The Right to Protection (R2P) Charitable Foundation is one of the leaders of the human rights movement in Ukraine. Its mission is to protect people in conflict, disasters, and forced displacement and enable systemic changes that prevent such situations. R2P operates in 22 oblasts of Ukraine.

We extend our gratitude to all internally displaced persons (IDPs) and members of host communities who generously shared their personal stories, insights, and expertise. Without their invaluable contributions, this research and analysis would have been impossible.

We are grateful to our donors, including the Government of Canada, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

of the United Kingdom and the Government of Belgium, for providing valuable funding to resource this work. However, the views expressed and information contained in this report should not be regarded as reflecting the position of these donors.

The opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). The information contained in this report is for general information purposes only. The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout the report do not imply expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities, or concerning its frontiers or boundaries. All maps in this report are for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on maps do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The war in Ukraine has resulted in profound displacement, with approximately 3.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) facing the upheaval of leaving their homes, land, and loved ones.¹ Amidst the crisis, a significant majority express a desire to return to their areas of origin, highlighting the urgent need for a recovery and transition approach that bridges the humanitarian-development divide, meets the immediate challenges of displacement-affected communities, and lays the groundwork for their collective futures.² Recognising this imperative and aligned with the global action on internal displacement, the Government of Ukraine, the United

Nations, and partners are adopting a comprehensive recovery and transition response that emphasises data-driven approaches and engagement so that internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the communities hosting them have the means to inform and achieve durable solutions to internal displacement. **This report contributes to these initiatives by exploring community perceptions of displacement and durable solutions, offering valuable insights to inform the development of a 'Joint Analytical Framework' in Ukraine to measure progress towards solutions pathways and guidance on future policy-making and programming.**

Methodology

This research project adopted a participatory approach to understanding the perceptions of displacement and durable solutions among displacement-affected communities in Ukraine. Through focus group discussions and key informant interviews conducted across five locations, the study engaged internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host community members to capture their diverse perspectives and

lived experiences. The research focused on four key areas: exploring key terminology related to displacement, understanding aspirations for the end of displacement, identifying concrete steps that can lead to these solutions, and the perceived roles and responsibilities for creating supportive conditions for solutions to progress. This approach ensured a thorough examination of the key issues, with key findings summarised below.

Defining displacement: What's in a name?

Exploring language within displacement contexts shows it is pivotal in shaping perceptions, identities, and interactions for IDPs and host communities. The analysis reveals a diverse range of interpretations among these groups regarding key terms such as 'IDP' and 'refugee', often diverging from accepted or legal definitions. Definitions are commonly constructed based on factors like displacement duration, emotional state, and level of assistance received, indicating and reflecting a broader lack of clarity in terminology among stakeholders. Some IDPs self-identify and adopt labels to validate their lived experiences and use them as a pragmatic response to navigate access to services and assistance. In contrast, others express reluctance or resistance to such labels.

Social dynamics and perceptions significantly influence the labels used by others to describe IDPs, with tensions and discrimination based on cultural and linguistic differences and access to assistance emerging as key factors affecting social cohesion and integration possibilities. Age plays a significant role in shaping IDPs' responses to labels, with older individuals often exhibiting more pronounced emotional reactions compared to their younger counterparts. These nuances underscore that terminology matters in both understanding and guiding responses to displacement, including implications for accurate data collection and effective engagement and support for displaced populations on their pathway to solutions.

Ending displacement: Which pathway to choose?

Exploring how IDPs and host community members envision the end of displacement and their preferred solutions provides valuable insights into their perceptions of reclaiming a sense of belonging. Regardless of the chosen pathway — return, integration, or resettlement — there is a unanimous emphasis on the importance of physical safety, underscored by a collective desire for an end to the war, seen as a victory, as a foundational element for any solution.

predominantly advocate for return as the optimal solution, they also recognise integration as a viable pathway for IDPs to end displacement. However, attitudes toward integration vary among different communities, with those in the West often expecting IDPs to adapt to local norms, including the sole use of the Ukrainian language. Resettlement, within Ukraine or abroad, remains a rare choice, typically prompted by immediate safety concerns or reductions in assistance.

Across generational lines, older IDPs often express a strong desire to return to their original homes. At the same time, younger counterparts approach durable solutions pragmatically, considering factors such as livelihood prospects and familial well-being. Although many IDPs intend to return home, they acknowledge the challenges of achieving this aspiration. Those considering local integration at their displacement site are as much driven by the absence of alternative options as they are by a sense of satisfaction or belonging in their area of displacement. While host communities

Establishing stability emerges as a central priority for IDPs considering different pathways, with the importance of housing and sustainable livelihoods closely linked, mutually dependent, and underscored for all. Access to social housing programs and alternative financing mechanisms emerges as potential pathways toward securing housing during displacement and ultimately achieving an end to it. Supporting IDPs necessitates flexibility to enable individuals to freely choose and adapt their pathways without sacrificing progress or opportunities amidst evolving factors and contexts.

^{1,2} Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 15 (November – December 2023) | Displacement Tracking Matrix (iom.int)

Taking the next steps: Where to from here?

IDPs grapple with defining their concrete next steps amidst the challenges of adjusting to new environments, cultural norms, and bureaucratic procedures, compounded by persistent security concerns, especially in heavily affected regions.

While some contend that an end to the war is essential before comprehensive planning can occur, others advocate for proactive, individualised approaches focused on acceptance, adaptation, and flexibility. Generational perspectives on these next steps diverge, as older IDPs proposed development-focused recovery efforts in their place of origin, while younger counterparts tend to advocate for incremental, individual progress towards personal stability. However, common threads emerge, including prioritising safety, addressing housing struggles, securing stable livelihoods, and rebuilding communities. Safety linked to the war's end

remains paramount, with pressing concerns surrounding housing issues extending to compensation for damaged or destroyed properties. The need for financial stability through securing stable employment was imperative and underscored by a call for retraining and support to enhance employability. Reconstruction efforts in places of origin extend beyond housing to encompass essential infrastructure, services, and the revitalisation of local economies. Once again, IDPs prioritise stability and safety as they plan their next steps, whether embarking on new beginnings or anticipating a return to familiar surroundings. Understanding their realities and identified priorities is crucial for progress towards durable solutions, necessitating engagement with host communities, mitigating social tensions, and promoting locally-driven recovery efforts.

Driving solutions: Which roles, whose responsibility?

Progress toward durable solutions involves multiple actors. Examining the perceptions of both IDPs and host communities regarding who they see as responsible for creating supportive conditions and their roles in facilitating progress offers a starting point for effective engagement and collaboration in achieving solutions.

IDPs and host communities recognise the Ukrainian government as the primary duty bearer in facilitating solutions to internal displacement, yet acknowledge its limitations, particularly concerning funding constraints. Both groups have a limited understanding of the roles of specific government bodies. Generally, they task the national government with reconstruction and recovery efforts, while local governments are perceived as responsible for managing social and subsidised housing, overseeing reconstruction, and providing local safety measures. However, the role and expectations of international actors remain unclear, especially in areas with limited external assistance. IDPs' perceptions of their roles within

displacement vary widely. Some feel responsible for engaging with local actors to influence recovery plans, while others, particularly older IDPs, take a more passive approach, waiting for opportunities to return.

Embracing the concept of being a responsible citizen, including paying taxes, is common, though frustration with government exists. Despite showing initiative in various activities, many IDPs lack a defined strategy to exercise agency in their current situations and future aspirations. Host community members stress unity and collective action, emphasising self-reliance and shifting away from entitlement towards empowerment. Within these varied perceptions and roles, there are opportunities for enhanced engagement and understanding among stakeholders. Facilitating informed decision-making and promoting legitimate participation are essential for making progress on pathways towards durable solutions that preserve dignity and foster agency while IDPs and host communities are waiting.

Conclusions and recommendations

Analysing the insights from both IDPs and host communities provides a valuable understanding of their displacement experiences, aspirations, and priorities for sustainable solutions. As discussions on durable solutions frameworks gain prominence in Ukraine, stakeholders, including the Government as the primary duty bearer, must engage communities effectively. This entails empowering displacement-affected communities to co-create responses that address immediate needs while laying the groundwork for long-term solutions. Active participation, rather than passive consultation, is crucial in this process. Supporting IDPs and the communities that host them to navigate the challenges of displacement and providing opportunities for safety, secure housing, and stable economic prospects are vital for their present and future well-being. These summaries of the recommendations offer guidance for stakeholders in shaping durable solutions and supporting communities' pathways to sustainable futures.

1. Stakeholders should establish consensus on terminology and utilise inclusive data collection methods to respect the diverse experiences of displacement-affected communities and ensure accurate categorisation while safeguarding dignity. Shared and participatory data exercises should be prioritised to minimise

extractive data processes and fatigue among displacement-affected communities.

2. Maintaining conflict sensitivity in programming is crucial. To manage and prevent conflicts effectively, tensions between host communities, IDPs and returnees should be addressed, and community-driven tools, including alternative dispute resolution and peer mediation, should be considered.
3. Programming initiatives must prioritise a durable solution lens, remaining flexible and responsive to evolving decision-making processes, and reinforcing rights and protections for IDPs.
4. Displacement-affected communities' active participation is vital in early recovery and transition efforts. Monitoring trends and perceptions of displacement-affected communities and ensuring policies are shaped on community priorities can guide the relevance and sustainability of programming toward durable solutions. Support should be extended to existing or, where necessary, new forums to ensure the participation of all stakeholders.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	6
2. METHODOLOGY	6
2.1. Approach	6
2.2. Research Locations and participants	7
2.3. Study limitations	8
3. KEY FINDINGS	9
3.1. DEFINING DISPLACEMENT: WHAT'S IN A NAME?	9
3.1.1. Defining Displacement: Exploring the influence of lived experiences	9
3.1.2. Shaping the Narrative: Self-identification among IDPs	10
3.1.3. Being labelled: Inclusion and Exclusion, Acceptance and Expectations	10
3.1.4. What's in a name? : Conclusions	12
3.2. ENDING DISPLACEMENT: WHICH PATHWAY TO CHOOSE?	12
3.2.1. Getting there: Imagining the end of displacement	13
3.2.2. Home Again? Perspectives on return	13
3.2.3. Integration: A choice or lack of options	15
3.2.4. Resettlement: Pushed or pulled?	16
3.2.5. Which pathway to choose?: Conclusions	17
3.3. TAKING THE NEXT STEPS: WHERE TO FROM HERE?	17
3.3.1. Moving forward: Defining the pathway.....	18
3.3.2. Moving forward: Priorities for the next steps	18
3.3.3. Where to from here?: Conclusions	20
3.4. DRIVING SOLUTIONS: WHICH ROLES, WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?	20
3.4.1. Looking outward: Identifying responsibilities and roles	20
3.4.2. Individual Contributions: IDPs and Host Communities	20
3.4.3. Which roles, whose responsibility?: Conclusions	21
4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	21
5. ANNEXES	23

1. INTRODUCTION

“Displacement is being forced to leave your home, your land, and your loved ones and go somewhere, not knowing where you are going to live or where you are going to sleep. It is wandering from place to place... you're forced to sleep here today, in another city for a month, moving from place to place. You don't feel at home.”³

The words of a twenty-six-year-old woman who fled her home in Donetsk to Pavlohrad in April 2022 vividly capture the profound upheaval experienced by around 3.7 million internally displaced Ukrainians amidst Russia's full-scale invasion, now in its third year without resolution. Recent data indicates that only a fraction - 780,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) - wish to remain in their current location, while the majority express an intent to return to their area of origin.⁴ However, the ongoing conflict leaves them uncertain about when their displacement will end, and they will no longer feel they are 'wandering from place to place'.

With the global number of IDPs exceeding 71 million at the end of 2022,⁵ there has been significant recognition of the need for comprehensive responses to internal displacement challenges. This is articulated in the Secretary General's High-Level Panel report and Action Agenda,⁶ which together emphasise the importance of integrating humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts as well as the pivotal role of data in finding solutions to internal displacement.

Aligned with global trends, Ukraine's governmental bodies, the UN, and partners are working together to shift from purely humanitarian assistance to supporting community recovery planning and implementation of cohesive, area-based interventions. Responding directly to the framework developed by the Data for

Solutions to Internal Displacement (DSID) taskforce⁷ aimed at enhancing data for internal displacement solutions and addressing data-related challenges, Ukraine's Transitional Framework (2022-2024)⁸ explicitly advocates for 'data-driven approaches' to ensure inclusive recovery efforts. Additionally, IOM convenes and co-chairs Ukraine's Data for Solutions and Recovery (D4SR) working group, facilitating enhanced stakeholder coordination for evidence-based decision-making to support early recovery and transition planning in Ukraine.

Within this human-centred approach, understanding and supporting solutions to internal displacement is a complex priority. Without a common understanding of how global frameworks of 'durable solutions' are defined in Ukraine, nor an agreed-upon set of indicators for monitoring progress towards those solutions, stakeholders face a challenge to ensure that their efforts not only contribute to sustainable recovery but also empower displacement-affected Ukrainians to overcome the needs and challenges they face and pursue the futures they desire.

This report constitutes one element of the D4SR strategy. It explores community perceptions of displacement and durable solutions and seeks to understand how IDPs and the communities that host them envision their futures and hope to navigate the journey from their current unstable realities to a sustainable, durable solution. The research not only gives voice to displacement-affected communities, offering recommendations for stakeholders for future policy-making and programming, but it will also be a key resource to inform the development of a 'Joint Analytical Framework' to measure progress towards achieving durable solutions in Ukraine.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Approach

Led by an independent consultant and supported by R2P, a national NGO, this research project aimed to adopt a participatory approach to understand the perceptions of displacement and durable solutions among displacement-affected communities in Ukraine. It began with a desk review to contextualise the research within the post-2022 conflict landscape, revealing a notable gap in understanding community perspectives on durable solutions. Subsequently, a research framework was developed, and research questions were refined through collaboration with the D4SR working group. Initially focused on engaging IDPs, the research scope expanded to include host community members, acknowledging their interconnectedness with displaced individuals and supporting the call for accountability to affected populations and participation which are prominent elements of the Action Agenda on Internal

Displacement. This underscores the importance of integrating host community perspectives to inform supportive conditions and community-driven initiatives, fostering self-reliance, social cohesion, and efforts towards (re)integration.

Qualitative research tools for Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were designed with participatory exercises to engage IDPs and host community members. These tools were organised into four chapters corresponding to the research questions.⁹ A two-day training session was conducted for R2P data collection teams to introduce the tools and participatory exercises and ensure consistency and quality in data collection across research locations.

³ KII (40+) in Pavlohradska

⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM), November – December 2023, DTM Ukraine [General Population Survey Round 15](#)

⁵ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/>

⁶ High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, 2021, *Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future*, <https://internaldisplacement-panel.org> and United Nations, 2022, *Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement* <https://www.un.org/en/content/action-agenda-on-internal-displacement/>

⁷ A time-bound Data for Solutions to Internal Displacement Taskforce was convened in November 2021 as part of the UN Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement to examine opportunities and barriers to more effective use of data for solutions and put forward a proposal to address data-specific issues and gaps.

⁸ <https://ukraine.un.org/en/232866-united-nations-ukraine-transitional-framework>

⁹ See [Annex 1](#) for the Research Structure: The four chapters

Box 1: Research Questions

1. How do displacement-affected communities define and understand key displacement terms and concepts such as IDP and returnee “durable solutions”?
2. How do different contextual factors influence the perspectives of displacement-affected communities?
3. To what extent do age and gender dynamics influence the perspectives of communities affected by displacement?
4. Whom do displacement-affected communities hold responsible for facilitating durable solutions to displacement? Who plays a role?
5. How do displacement-affected communities perceive their role in facilitating durable solutions?

Unique to other perspective-style studies, the research tools focussed on actively engaging IDP and host community participants in brainstorming, ranking and group exercises. In addition, the structure did not direct them to adhere to or reflect on specific criteria, such as the IASC criteria for durable solutions;¹⁰ rather, it

intentionally encouraged individual and personalised explorations of visions for ending displacement. Where necessary, broad prompts related to the concept of the ‘four safeties’ (Box 2) for achieving durable solutions guided discussions.

BOX 2: The ‘four safeties’ for achieving a durable solution

The research framework broadly encompasses the concept of achieving a durable solution through what is referred to as the ‘four safeties’.



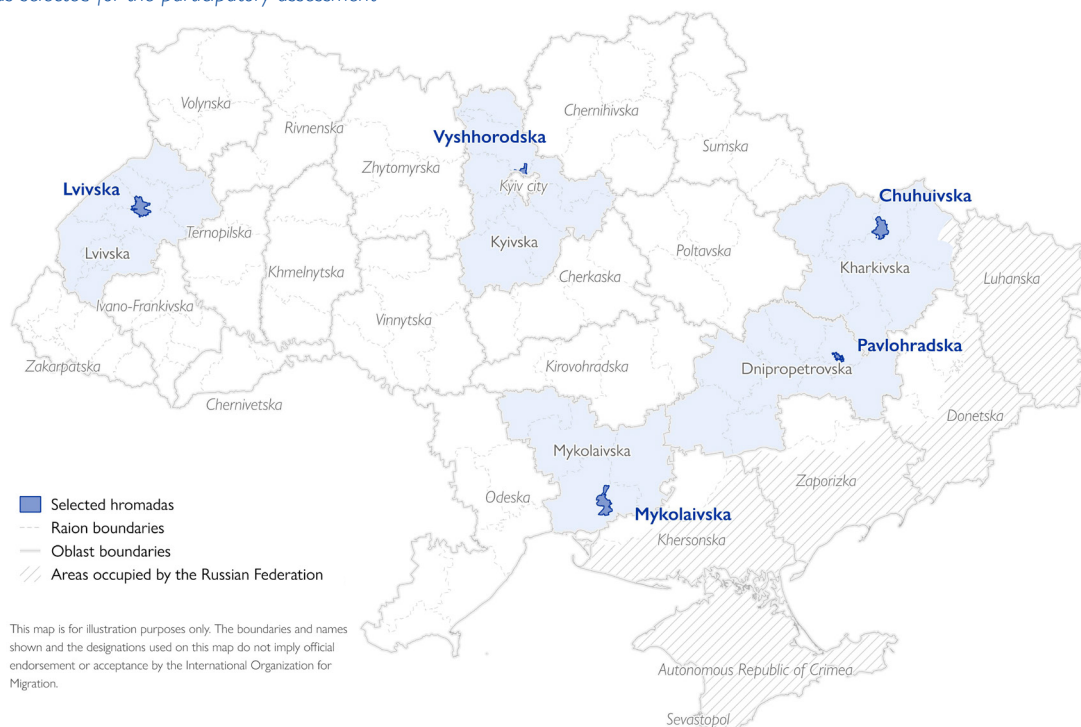
The concept of ‘safeties’ is drawn from established frameworks for durable solutions. Legal, material, and physical safety are adopted from the ReDSS Solutions Framework,¹¹ while psychosocial safety, including perceptions of integration, is derived from the Durable Solutions Platform Syria Solutions Analysis.¹²

During FGDs, participants collaboratively created a Journey Map¹³ - a visual depiction allowing IDPs to chart their displacement experience from their place of origin to their imagined end of displacement, including the steps to achieve it. Host community members, on the other hand, charted the paths for IDPs within their communities, highlighting how they perceived their end of displacement for IDPs.

2.2. Research Locations and participants

Five research locations were chosen based on geographic location, proximity to the frontline, urban or rural setting, and the size of the IDP population relative to the host community. Demographic information for the populations in the research locations is included below.

Map 1: Hromadas selected for the participatory assessment



¹⁰The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons defines the following eight criteria that may be used to determine to what extent a durable solution has been achieved: safety and security; adequate standard of living; access to livelihoods; restoration of housing, land and property; access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; and access to effective remedies and justice.

¹¹Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), 2016, [ReDSS Durable solutions framework](#)

¹²Durable Solutions Platform (DSP), 2022, [Syria Analytical Framework](#)

¹³See [Annex 2 and 3](#) for photographs of the Journey Map from FGDs with host community and IDPs in Lvivska

Table 1: Research locations - Population and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) by Oblast and Hromada¹⁴

Oblast	Hromada	Resident population ¹⁵	# of IDPs	IDP to population ratio
Dnipropetrovska	Pavlohradska	117,781	19,067	16%
Kharkivska	Chuhuivska	43,145	9,875	23%
Kyivska	Vyshneva	51,612	13,722	27%
Lvivska	Lvivska	869,549	133,694	15%
Mykolaivska	Mykolaivska	378,969	51,308	14%

Across the research locations, 15 FGDs and 16 Klls were conducted to gather data from IDPs and host community members. All FGD groups were mixed-sex, with IDP groups categorised by age into

two groups: 18-39 years and 40+ years. The breakdown of FGDs and Klls by population, age, and gender is detailed below.

Table 2: Focus Group Discussion participant breakdown by population, age and gender

Group	FGD total #	FGD 18-39 #	FGD 40+ #	Male %	Female %
IDP	10 groups 84 Individuals	5 groups 38 individuals	5 groups 46 individuals	24 %	76 %
Host Community	5 groups 42 individuals	—	—	24 %	76 %

Table 3: Key Informant Interview participant breakdown by population and gender

Group	Kll total #	Male #	Female #
IDP	11	1	10
Host Community	5	1	4

The selection of IDP participants aimed to include representation from various sub-populations, including youth,¹⁶ older people,¹⁷ people with disabilities (PwD),¹⁸ female-headed households,¹⁹ residents of both rural and urban areas, and those who have experienced multiple displacements. Klls provided a deep dive into the insights from 11 IDPs, reflecting diverse displacement experiences. Additionally, host community representatives, chosen for their longstanding ties, offered important perspectives from non-displaced individuals.

2.3. Study limitations

This research study encountered several limitations. Firstly, due to time and resource constraints, a fully participatory approach that would have seen displacement-affected communities involved in every stage of the research process, from identifying problems and forming research questions to sharing the results, was not feasible. Nonetheless, efforts were made in the methodology to train data collectors in participatory techniques and involve IDPs and the host community as much as possible in the construction and analysis of collected data. Additionally, there was insufficient time to pilot the research tools with communities. In response, a debriefing session was held after the first FGD, providing individual support and additional guidance to research teams by the R2P research manager.

During data analysis, collected data was organised by location and examined for patterns and themes. A debriefing session with the data collection team followed, deepening understanding of participants' perspectives. Subsequently, data was cross-referenced across locations to identify trends. Community validation sessions were held with IDPs from FGDs in two locations to ensure key findings' accuracy and relevance.²⁰

Recruiting male participants presented difficulties. Despite aiming for a gender-balanced representation using an age-stratified approach, males, in particular, voiced apprehensions regarding mobilisation and tended to limit their movement, affecting their involvement in the study.

Ranking exercises were interpreted differently across the areas; as such, a complete cross-comparative analysis is not possible across the different locations.

It is essential to acknowledge that while the data provides valuable insights, it does not claim to represent the entire Ukrainian IDP and host community populations. Instead, it offers detailed insights from specific groups, which may have broader relevance to other populations.

The report prioritises incorporating quotes from both IDPs and members of the host community to highlight their authentic voices, reflecting their experiences, priorities, and preferences. This recognition underscores that discussing durable solutions needs to begin with these perspectives. The quotes of IDPs are included in *blue* text, with host community voices represented in *orange*.

¹⁴ IOM Ukraine, February 2024, *Mobility and Needs Assessment, Round 6*

¹⁵ Population numbers include IDPs, returnees, non-displaced residents.

¹⁶ Youth was defined according to According to the Law of Ukraine "On Promotion of Social Development of Youth in Ukraine" (Article 1) young people/young citizens are persons aged 14 to 35 years.

¹⁷ Older person was defined as a person over 60 years old.

¹⁸ An individual with a disability or an individual with an immediate family member who has a disability.

¹⁹ Female headed households were defined as households where no adult men are present, owing to divorce, separation, migration, non-marriage, or widowhood, or where the men, although present, do not contribute to the household income (not due to unemployment).

²⁰ Community validation sessions were held in Pavlohradska and Lvivska. Sessions were categorised by age into two groups: 18-39 years and 40+ years.

3. KEY FINDINGS

3.1. DEFINING DISPLACEMENT: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

The role of language in responding to displacement, with the need to establish a common understanding of key terms, has gained increasing attention as stakeholders recognise the necessity for high-quality, trusted, and harmonised data to develop effective programming supporting displaced populations on their path towards solutions.²¹ The terminology currently used to describe displacement and displaced populations is wide and disparate, with terms defined differently and used interchangeably or inconsistently.

This section explores how IDPs and host communities define and use labels to interpret their displacement-related experiences. It explores how they understand key terms, the labels they choose to interpret their experiences, and the impact of labels used by others on their own experiences.

BOX 3: Definitions

Internally Displaced Person (IDP) - 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

“Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalised violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognised state border.”²²

Refugee - Article 1 of the 1951 Convention

“someone who ‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of [their] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail [themselves] of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of [their] former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’”²³

3.1.1. Defining Displacement: Exploring the influence of lived experiences

IDPs and members of host communities have varying interpretations of the key definitions and terms related to displacement. While both groups used the terms ‘IDP’ and ‘refugee (*bizhentsi*)’, their understanding and application of these terms did not always match with accepted or legal definitions. The term ‘returnee’ was absent from discussions.

Constructing key definitions

The most common pattern observed during FGDs was the construction of definitions based on factors such as the duration of displacement, distance moved, emotional state and the level of assistance received. This reflects a broader lack of clarity and consensus around definitions among government, humanitarian and international actors.²⁴ For example, an IDP in Chuhuivska explained their understanding of the difference between an IDP and a displaced person, stating,

“IDPs are not forever. They plan to return...but displaced people (*pereselentsi*) plan to stay here. They are building their lives there, their children have already started school. I mean, displaced people want to stay and integrate.”²⁵

In FGDs, most participants understood the essential elements of the IDP definition: involuntary movement within national borders. However, when using the term ‘refugee’, many overlooked the aspect of crossing a national border to seek temporary protection. Instead,

they used the term to describe those who had endured a difficult displacement experience²⁶ or perceived it as a permanent status.

“[I call myself] a refugee (*bizhentsi*) because the word ‘displaced’ doesn’t fit with the situation, to my mind. No one would have displaced me, if everything was peaceful, I would have lived in Kherson. But we were forced to flee.”²⁷

“I just don’t want to be called a refugee. Because to be a refugee (*bizhenets*) means this status will stay forever. I still hope to return.”²⁸

The term ‘refugee’ generally carried negative connotations and undertones for IDPs, often arising from media portrayals, particularly of the refugee crisis in Europe and the depiction of those fleeing African and Middle Eastern countries.²⁹ Consequently, IDPs largely rejected it as a tarnished label to describe their experience - even if they had sought protection abroad - or to characterise the experiences of others. Instead, they leaned towards alternatives such as the government-preferred term ‘displaced persons from Ukraine,’ along with labels like ‘exile,’ ‘externally displaced,’ and ‘those who received temporary protection’.

“Refugees are offensive; I don’t want to hear it.”³⁰

“No, we called ourselves temporarily protected, and they [people in Germany] called us refugees.”³¹

²¹ IOM Ukraine, 2023, *Data for Durable Solutions: Ukraine Symposium Summary Report and Way Forward*

²² UN Human Rights Commission, 1988, *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*

²³ United Nations, 1951, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ FGD IDP (18-39) in Chuhuivska

²⁶ FGD IDP (18-39) in Vyshneva

²⁷ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykalaivska

²⁸ FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska

²⁹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Chuhuivska

³⁰ FGD IDP (40+) in Chuhuivska

³¹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Chuhuivska

Discussions about individuals who had left Ukraine revealed that those with children were generally viewed more favourably, with their efforts to prioritise the security for minors considered legitimate by both displaced and non-displaced participants. However, criticism was directed towards those who left and were perceived to profit from renting their properties at inflated prices or seen to be flaunting their lifestyles abroad or offering advice to those who stayed.

The use of the term 'returnee' to describe an individual who returned from a host country to Ukraine was not mentioned in discussions. Instead, IDPs used various labels to describe individuals who had left and returned depending on whether their departure was perceived positively or negatively. Some were described as "tourists";³² - highlighting a sense of privilege among those who engaged in pendular movements, coming and going, while others were labelled as "patriots"³³ - those who left but later returned permanently, often perceived as sacrificing for their country.

3.1.2. Shaping the Narrative: Self-identification among IDPs

When asked about the terms they used to describe themselves, IDPs across all locations commonly referred to themselves interchangeably as 'IDPs' and 'displaced' (*pereselentsi*), viewing these terms as the most neutral. Some saw the label as validating their experience of forced displacement and accepted it as an accurate reflection of their current reality. Others, while not fully identifying with a label that reduced their identity to a single dimension, pragmatically adopted the term 'IDP' when interacting with official authorities or accessing humanitarian assistance. The widespread usage of the term 'IDP' within government offices and by national and international actors has contributed to its acceptance among displaced and non-displaced communities.

“It doesn't bother me that I am called a refugee or an internally displaced person. It is true, so why should it bother me? This is the life we live now, and these words say it all.”³⁴

Exploring alternative labels

In discussions, IDPs also offered various alternative labels beyond 'IDP' and 'displaced' to articulate their lived experiences, emphasising the personal nature of displacement and rejecting terms that seek to homogenise, stigmatise, or reinforce the sense of being out of place. Some IDPs rejected the notion of being labelled as 'displaced' and instead emphasised their physical relocation more simply, with statements like "I just moved to Vyshneva."³⁸ Others conveyed their literal sense of being without a home and experiencing material loss by adopting the label 'homeless' as a more appropriate description.³⁹

“I'm homeless (*bomzh*)...when you have nothing of your own — neither a home nor what was at home.”⁴⁰

“I partially agree with the idea of 'homeless (*bomzh*).' You had everything, but you lost everything.”⁴¹

“I had to leave Kherson and move to another city, so I consider myself a displaced person.”³⁵

“I think that in government administrative service centres, passport offices, and others, they need to say IDPs; it is needed in the professional sphere. But in everyday life, it is not necessary.”³⁶

For the most part, host communities also identified and adopted the terms 'IDP' and 'displaced' as the most appropriate and neutral descriptors for those affected in their communities.

“The main label used is displaced persons (*pereselentsi*). It is not offensive; it is because they were forced to move or evacuate from the territories where the fighting is taking place. Also IDPs. These are the two main categories that we have.”³⁷

For some IDPs, labels were a means of asserting their identity, either by differentiating themselves from other displaced or host community members or by highlighting commonalities. Those who employed differentiation highlighted their identity with phrases like "We from Donbas"⁴² and "not from Lviv."⁴³ Conversely, others emphasised their Ukrainian identity to underscore commonality. This dual approach was often a response to negative sentiments and to deflect discrimination from the host community, serving to affirm their equal rights and sense of belonging.

“We call ourselves Ukrainians. What does it matter where we live? It doesn't matter to me...at first, I was concerned by the fact that I wasn't home. But now, I've let it go and accepted the situation.⁴⁴ I am at home, in Ukraine.”⁴⁵

“I don't have a definition. I am a citizen of Ukraine...There is discrimination, and there have been several cases of discrimination based on language.”⁴⁶

³² FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska

³³ FGD IDP (18-39) in Vyshneva

³⁴ KII IDP in Chuhuivska

³⁵ KII IDP in Lvivska

³⁶ KII IDP in Pavlohradaska

³⁷ KII IDP in Mykolaivska

³⁸ FGD IDP (18-39) in Vyshneva

³⁹ FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska, FGD IDP (40+) in Chuhuivska, FGD IDP (40+) in Pavlohradaska

⁴⁰ FGD IDP (40+) in Pavlohradaska

⁴¹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

⁴² FGD IDP (40+) in Pavlohradaska

⁴³ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

⁴⁴ FGD IDP (18-39) in Pavlohradaska

⁴⁵ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

⁴⁶ FGD IDP (40+) in Vyshneva

3.1.3. Being labelled: Inclusion and Exclusion, Acceptance and Expectations

When examining how IDPs experienced labelling by others, clear trends and patterns emerge, shedding light on feelings

of inclusion and exclusion and notions of acceptance and expectations.

Age and perceptions of labels and labelling

Facilitators observed that IDPs aged 40 and above, across all areas, displayed heightened emotional responses to labelling, seemingly due to their more profound connection to their pasts and the intensity of feelings associated with the experiences of displacement and loss.⁴⁷ Younger IDPs, on the other hand, largely managed to distance themselves from labels, particularly negative ones, and in certain instances, responded to labels with humour.⁴⁸ The exception to this trend is observed among younger IDPs in Lvivska,

who, despite their ability to navigate language barriers and secure employment opportunities, demonstrate less willingness than their older counterparts to understand the discriminatory behaviour of host community members. Younger FGD participants unanimously supported the sentiment raised by one participant that “there are no plans to stay in Western Ukraine,”⁴⁹ indicating how a nuanced interaction between age, perception and the impact of social tensions on individuals’ intentions to stay or leave their current location.

Implications and empathy

To some extent, IDPs across all areas recognised the efforts of host communities towards inclusion. Some even expressed contentment with the situation, stating, “We already feel like locals here, and we are fine.”⁵⁰ Despite this, IDPs struggled to shake off the stereotypes and implications associated with labels and their displacement status. They reported facing barriers to accessing employment, feeling burdensome in health centres, and difficulty securing housing.

In discussions with host community members, empathy often depended on how successful IDPs were perceived to be integrating, finding employment, and achieving independence from external assistance. This sentiment was captured by one community member in Vyshneva who highlighted the need for IDPs to make strides in these areas to be included,

“These labels affect people’s whole lives; whether you get a document or get a job, these designations are a hindrance.”⁵¹

“Only when they behave the way we do. I understand that it will be difficult for them, but they have to try to show that they want to work and help us in the same way. Only then.”⁵³

“It has an impact on employment. They don’t want to hire [us]. They say, “You’ll go back home in 2-3 months. Why should we invest in you? In training you?”⁵²

Diversity and Geography: Influencing Factors

Labels used towards IDPs reflect deeper social divides and stereotypes in specific areas, reflecting discrimination based on cultural and linguistic differences as well as perceived privileged access to assistance. Previous social cohesion research shows that homogeneous communities like Chuhivska generally experience fewer social cohesion challenges than areas with more diverse populations like Lvivska.⁵⁴

their perceived effort to adopt these customs and norms. In some cases, negativity is also linked to a perception of a lack of patriotism among IDPs. As one member of the host community observed,

During FGDs in Lvivska and Vyshneva, IDPs from Ukraine’s eastern regions reported cultural and linguistic discrimination due to derogatory labels such as ‘Easterners,’ ‘Muscovites,’ ‘Katsaps,’ ‘separatists,’ and ‘Russian-speaking.’ While some IDPs report having faced confrontations, others anticipate friction, as expressed by one participant,

“They spoke Russian at the beginning; now they speak Ukrainian. They want to do something, so they strive and make efforts. Some people understand the importance of this but do not make any effort.”⁵⁶

“It is hard to be an IDP. The relocation itself, new people, a new city. I haven’t adapted yet...there have not been any conflicts [with the host community] yet. But they don’t like us. Because we are Russian-speaking, we were under occupation. I guess there is some distrust.”⁵⁵

IDPs report that cultural and language-based discrimination materialises in confrontations in public spaces and instances of bullying in schools and playgrounds. Accessing essential services also poses challenges, with IDPs facing difficulties in banks and being refused service in stores.

In Lvivska, adherence to local values, traditions, and ways of life, including speaking Ukrainian, is deemed vital for acceptance by host community members, with IDPs facing criticism or praise based on

“At the bank... I started telling her [the teller] about my needs. And she responded, “I don’t understand Russian... We are a state institution, I don’t understand.”⁵⁷

“We have a child, 13 years old, who was told that you are homeless (bomzhi) here. And if you speak Russian, it’s even worse.”⁵⁸

Negative perceptions and labels were also attached to IDPs who were considered to be disrespectful to the community and violate the rules of behaviour in public places.⁵⁹

⁴⁷ FGD facilitator debriefing sessions

⁴⁸ FGD (18-39) in Mykolaivska; FGD (18-39) in Vyshneva

⁴⁹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

⁵⁰ FGD IDP (40+) in Chuhivska

⁵¹ FGD IDP (40+) in Pavlohradska

⁵² FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

⁵³ KII HC in Vyshneva

⁵⁴ See also, International Organization for Migration (IOM), September - October 2023, Thematic Brief - [Social Cohesion and Public Trust](#)

⁵⁵ KII IDP in Lvivska

⁵⁶ KII HC in Lvivska

⁵⁷ FGD IDP (40+) in Vyshneva

⁵⁸ FGD IDP (40+) in Vyshneva

⁵⁹ FGD HC Vyshneva

In Mykolaiv and Pavlohrad, where both IDPs and the host population face more direct consequences of the war, IDPs were often labelled as ‘newcomers’ (*ponaiikhaly/pryezshye/novoprybuli*) and ‘consumers’ (*potrebiteli*). Tensions arose from perceived unequal access to assistance within the host community, leading to IDPs feeling frustrated over being viewed as privileged. This fuelled a desire among IDPs to swap roles with host community members, highlighting previously reported challenges in social cohesion linked to aid distribution.⁶⁰

“Some locals are angry that I receive these 2000 UAH⁶¹ from the state. And I would gladly give them 20,000 UAH so that we could exchange statuses.”⁶²

Attitudes from officials and institutions

In Mykolaivska, IDPs reported having faced issues when dealing with state institutions. Some noted the lack of differentiation in addressing differing needs and vulnerabilities, while others attributed it to a broader attitude prevalent among staff in these institutions. Similarly, older IDPs in Pavlohradska reported experiencing challenges related to the attitude of authorities.

“They think that because of these support payments, we have it very good here. We receive food packages all the time, we have food in abundance. All right, let’s become locals and let them become IDPs.”⁶³

Conversely, in areas like Chuhuivska, where the majority of IDPs are displaced from within the same oblast, a different dynamic emerges. Here, IDPs often perceive themselves as guests rather than outsiders. This sense of belonging is accompanied by a sense of empathy within the host communities, which facilitators attributed to the population’s homogeneity, aligning with findings from IOM data regarding population dynamics and social cohesion.⁶⁴

“Officials paint everyone with the same brush, old and young, but there are also elderly people who can’t even cook for themselves.”⁶⁵

3.1.4. What’s in a name?: Conclusions

Inquiries into how IDPs and host communities understand and apply labels in the context of displacement underscore the pivotal role of terminology in interpreting experiences, defining key terms, and shaping perceptions, identities, and interactions. Terminology matters because it influences how displacement is perceived and guides responses to it. The labels and terms used offer valuable insights into the lived

experiences, tensions, underlying sensitivities, and potential triggers that currently impact and could affect social cohesion and (re)integration processes. Beyond an awareness of terminology, actors must devise strategies to ensure the labels and terms they use contribute to accurate and coherent data, opening avenues for engagement and support during displacement and on pathways to solutions.

3.2. ENDING DISPLACEMENT: WHICH PATHWAY TO CHOOSE?

“Perhaps each of us dreams of having his or her own place, [a place] you will not be asked to leave ... where you will be sure that you can hang a picture in a particular place because it is yours, and you have the right to do so.”⁶⁶

Forced displacement is a deeply personal journey characterised by profound experiences of loss, disconnection, and a pervasive sense of being out of place. While the end of this journey will differ for each individual, the quote resonates with the shared aspirations of many IDPs as they contemplate an end to their displacement.

There is a broad consensus that IDPs have three options for achieving a durable solution with an emphasis on the importance of making a voluntary and fully informed decision. (Box 4) This section explores the perspectives of IDPs and host community members and how they envision the way forward. During FGDs and KIs, IDP participants discussed and nominated their preferred solution. They also prioritised the factors contributing to their chosen pathway, providing valuable insights into the journey toward no longer feeling displaced and out of place.

BOX 4: Durable solution to displacement for IDPs

A durable solution is reached when a displaced person no longer has any protection or assistance needs related to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. There are three internationally recognised durable solutions for IDPs which they must be able to pursue in a safe, voluntary, and dignified manner:

- Sustainable return and reintegration at the place of origin;
- Sustainable local integration in the place of displacement; or
- Sustainable relocation and integration in another part of the country (settlement elsewhere).

The pathway to durable solutions is a long and complex process that addresses human rights, humanitarian, development, reconstruction and peace-building challenges, requiring timely and coordinated engagement of different actors.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ International Organization for Migration (IOM), September – October 2023, Thematic Brief - [Social Cohesion and Public Trust](#)

⁶¹ Approximately 50 USD based on exchange rates in May 2024

⁶² FGD IDP (18-39) in Mykolaivska

⁶³ FGD IDP (18-39) in Pavlohradska

⁶⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM), September – October 2023, Thematic Brief - [Social Cohesion and Public Trust](#)

⁶⁵ FGD IDP (18-39) in Mykolaivska

⁶⁶ FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska

⁶⁷ Brookings Institute and University of Bern, April 2009, Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Durable Solutions: [Framework: Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#)

3.2.1. Getting there: Imagining the end of displacement

Physical safety is a prerequisite for all solutions

In all locations, an end to the war, often perceived as a victory for Ukraine, was closely associated with the prospect of living in peace with the accompanying assurance of personal and familial security. This was unanimously regarded as the primary need by IDPs and supported by host community members, regardless of the preferred durable solutions. However, as IDPs contemplate and come to terms with the likelihood of prolonged displacement, they expressed uncertainty about their future options. Security concerns, the unpredictable nature of shifting frontlines, and the ambiguity surrounding what infrastructure and services will remain intact highlight the significant challenges IDPs face when choosing and imagining a pathway to a durable solution.

“ I don't know. I don't know what my fate is. I don't even have a way home. Do you understand? There is no Antonivskiy Bridge. There is no Kakhovka dam. There is no way to get there.”⁶⁸

“ There is no village any more, the border is nearby, we share a forest, it is half Ukrainian and half Russian. So, what will I do there in my old age? What will I build there? I see no way to live there.”⁶⁹

“ And besides, there are no hospitals, no kindergartens, no schools there now. Everything has been destroyed. There are no prospects of the situation stabilising, even in ten or fifteen years.”⁷⁰

Hope and Pragmatism: Generational perspectives

During FGDs, a clear generational divide emerged in how participants perceived the prospects for a sustainable resolution to displacement. Among those aged 40 and above, envisioning a sustainable resolution to displacement posed challenges. The sessions revealed a tension between hope and hopelessness, with many clinging to the familiar past and struggling to imagine a future beyond returning to their pre-displacement life.

“ Safety in the place where I am from. When I am sure that I can visit my relatives, who can return there, at any time and that I can peacefully visit the cemetery because my mother died just before the full-scale invasion. That will be the end of my displacement.”⁷¹

In contrast, most younger IDPs approached the notion of a durable solution more pragmatically, factoring in considerations such as livelihood prospects and the well-being of their children. While they also considered the emotional significance of returning home, younger IDPs demonstrated a readiness to explore alternative

options and adopt a more flexible approach in evaluating different criteria and driving factors. This adaptability can be partly attributed to fewer physical and emotional ties to their place of origin than their older counterparts.

“ My salary here is four times higher than there [the place of origin]. If everything ends, it will take more than a year, two years, or three years for everything to be restored and for me to be able to work there. My child likes it here. I would stay here, even though I am still drawn home.”⁷²

Host community members emphasised the personal nature of decision-making, highlighting the importance of IDPs prioritising and setting plans according to their motivations and aspirations.

“ I think displaced persons themselves need to understand what they want. And set a goal for themselves on how to change it. I think it mainly depends on the people. On how they work on themselves and their lives.”⁷³

3.2.2. Home Again? Perspectives on return

The prevailing sentiment among IDPs across Ukraine, especially those over 40, is a shared dream of returning home one day, even though many admit this is currently unattainable. This sentiment aligns with existing IOM data indicating that older IDPs (aged 60 and above) are more likely to express the intention to return to their place of habitual residence compared to younger IDPs.⁷⁴

“ After all, it will end someday...I will consider the displacement finished when I can live safely in my home.”⁷⁵

Most host community members also viewed IDPs returning to their place of origin as the most appropriate solution to end

displacement, perceiving it as a restoration of familiarity and a sense of home. In areas heavily impacted by conflict, residents interpreted the return of IDPs as signalling the end of hostilities and hardships for their communities, effectively equating it with the resolution of the conflict as a whole.

“ I would prefer that all those who have become IDPs return to their homes. Wherever we are, whatever city, village, country, our home is the one we are constantly drawn to; it's our walls, our beds, our chairs. We want everyone to return to their homes. We want this horror that is happening here to end.”⁷⁶

⁶⁸ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

⁶⁹ FGD IDP (40+) in Chuhuivska

⁷⁰ FGD IDP (18-39) in Pavlohradaska

⁷¹ FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska

⁷² FGD IDP (18-39) in Vysheve

⁷³ KII HC in Vysheve

⁷⁴ International Organization for Migration (IOM), November – December 2023, DTM Ukraine General Population Survey [Round 15](#)

⁷⁵ KII IDP in Chuhuivska

⁷⁶ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

Insights across Generations: Return

IDPs aged 40 and above who discussed the prospect of returning expressed a profound longing to restore the familiar aspects of their lives. This was particularly prevalent among IDPs in Chuhivska, Mykolaivska, and Pavlohradaska, who remained close to their original homes. When describing their aspirations for return, they emphasised the significance of reclaiming and, if needed, rebuilding or renovating their own homes, reuniting with family members, and establishing a sense of normality and stability. IDPs aged 18-39 demonstrated a less rigid attachment to the concept of return, often viewing it more symbolically. For this age group, returning was frequently linked to reclaiming their past lives as a matter of principle rather than a practical decision offering a sustainable future.

Overall, both age groups recognised the complexity of this pathway and acknowledged that mere physical relocation would

not be their end goal. While some expressed an idealised vision of rebuilding, hopeful that an end to the conflict would facilitate a seamless transition, the majority, despite being emotionally driven, demonstrated an understanding of the comprehensive needs and efforts ahead.

“Yes, everything will be rebuilt after the war. That’s how it’s done.”⁷⁷

“I really want to return to my home, to my old haunts, to all my neighbours, who we lived together with for a long time and became like family, and now they are scattered. There should be no hostilities ... and the infrastructure needs to be restored in some way so that we can use water supply, sewerage, and electricity. Shops and pharmacies should be open... life should be comfortable.”⁷⁸

Building a Foundation: Safety and stability as cornerstones

IDPs overwhelmingly prioritised physical and material safety for a sustainable return. Their vision centred on victory, living without fear, finding peace, and achieving psychosocial well-being. An IDP displaced in Lvivska was able to describe how this would be,

“One of the conditions is peace, not when you’re walking and crouching down every step of the way because of the explosions... when you’re walking, and it’s noisy around you in the good sense of the word, children are laughing, kids going to school... people are running to work, and so on.”⁷⁹

Discussions with IDPs highlighted possible future security measures such as a border wall and the need for demining to ensure freedom of movement. In FGDs in Lvivska, Chuhivska, and Mykolaivska, the liberation of occupied territories and the restoration of civilian control were also highlighted.

“I will cancel my IDP status after the complete de-occupation of my village. When I have a conscious choice of where to live, where I will see my future.”⁸⁰

Essential Pillars: Housing and financial security

Both age groups prioritised housing and financial security as interdependent needs linked to stability. They desired “at least some corner from which you will not be asked tomorrow,”⁸¹ emphasising the importance of a secure and predictable living situation. Solutions sought included state-provided housing, reconstruction efforts and compensation for damaged or destroyed properties.

“Housing provides permanence, a kind of certainty that it is yours and this is your home.”⁸²

Financial security was described differently by younger and older IDPs. Younger IDPs described steady, well-paid employment, while older IDPs in Lvivska and Pavlohradaska emphasised the importance of access to social benefits.

Infrastructure and services: Addressing additional concerns and priorities

Less emphasis was placed on restoring infrastructure, although healthcare services were noted as crucial for older IDPs in Mykolaivska. Parents stressed the importance of offline education for children to restore a sense of normality and social connections. Legal safety measures were mentioned briefly, primarily in

compensation and legal procedures related to housing and property rights. Other aspects supporting social cohesion and psychosocial safety, such as family reunion, reconnection with friends, and intangible concepts like faith in the future, happiness, and freedom, received comparable attention.

Reluctance to return: Post-conflict realities

In Vyshneva, the perspective on return as a durable solution differed significantly from other areas. While a single IDP expressed a desire to return, citing employment opportunities linked to his place of origin, others viewed return with apprehension. Concerns and

fears about the influence of occupation and conflict, particularly the impact on those who stayed, made them perceive their hometowns in the East as potentially undesirable locations incompatible with their aspirations.

⁷⁷ FGD IDP (18-39) in Pavlohradaska

⁷⁸ KII IDP in Mykolaivska

⁷⁹ KII IDP in Lvivska

⁸⁰ FGD IDP (18-39) in Mykolaivska

⁸¹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

⁸² FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

“ I do want to go home, but you have to understand that even if you come home, everything will not be the same as before... many went to work for the Russian Federation, and your attitude towards them will be completely different. You will no longer be able to communicate with them as you did before. You will no longer be able to take your child to kindergarten or school because you know that these teachers have already taught other people under a different programme. It won't be the same life.”⁸³

3.2.3. Integration: A choice or lack of options

In weighing their options, some predominately younger IDPs viewed local integration at their place of displacement as their preferred solution. Notably, this choice was not considered feasible for younger IDPs in Lvivska and older IDPs displaced in Mykolaivska, where prevalent social tensions with the host community were seen as barriers to sustainable integration. For those who favoured integration, a dual dynamic emerged: some grappled with the conundrum of having nowhere else to go, while others felt sufficiently satisfied with their current location for the long term. Integration seemed a logical compromise for many, offering stability amidst uncertainty. Nonetheless, it often coexisted with the possibility of onward movement if circumstances, particularly security-related, were to change.

Reasons to remain: Factors influencing integration

For IDPs contemplating local integration, establishing a sense of belonging, adapting to their surroundings, finding stability in daily lives, and developing regular routines, including work and education for children, were crucial considerations. Those who had made progress towards achieving some of these goals since arriving appeared more likely to opt for this pathway. Families with children cited them as a motivation to stay - predominantly to keep them from harm's way.

Host community perspectives: Attitudes towards integration

In host communities across all research locations, including those where IDPs expressed discomfort with social tensions, community members generally saw local integration of IDPs as a viable pathway to ending displacement. Some articulated integration as a mid-term solution during recovery, while others imagined it as a permanent, sustainable move. Attitudes towards integration varied among host communities; communities in Vyshneva and Pavlohradska demonstrated a general acceptance towards integration, with caution prevailing in Mykolaivska and a focus on mutual respect in Chuhuivska. In Lvivska, there was, as noted previously, a prevailing sense of expectation regarding acceptance, emphasising IDPs taking active steps to exhibit flexibility, adopt local customs, and achieve self-reliance, such as by accepting any available jobs.

⁸⁴ FGD HC in Chuhuivska

⁸⁵ KI IDP Lvivska

⁸⁶ KI IDP (40+) in Pavlohradska

⁸⁷ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

⁸⁸ FGD IDP (18-39) in Pavlohradska

⁸⁹ FGD IDP (40+) in Pavlohradska

⁹⁰ KI IDP (18-39) in Chuhuivska

⁹¹ FGD HC in Mykolaivska

⁹² FGD HC in Pavlohradska

⁹³ FGD HC Vyshneva

Recognising the potential for challenges post-conflict, such as social tensions and barriers to (re)integration in their places of origin, a host community member in Chuhuivska echoed the concerns highlighted by IDPs in Vyshneva regarding the divide between those who left and those who stayed.

“ My assessment is based on what is happening on the street; people who stay in the community's territory have aggressive attitudes towards those who left in the first days of the war.”⁸⁴

“ I felt displaced for a month or two at most when I felt like a fish out of water.”⁸⁵

“ Live your life because I understand that you can't go back to ruins. There is just nowhere to go. And you try to adapt here. If you're here, then you're here. And if something doesn't suit you here, then you look for a better place. My family and I try not to dwell on it.”⁸⁶

“ I would like to return to Mariupol just to say goodbye. I cannot live in a cemetery, that is how I feel.”⁸⁷

“ I like it here; all my needs, especially child-related ones, are covered. With all the extracurricular activities and kindergarten, I'm satisfied with everything.”⁸⁸

“ Everyone makes their own choices. I am considering the option of staying in this community because my husband's job is very important to him, and we're tied to it. That is, he has a year left to work here, we will stay here for this year, and then we'll see.”⁸⁹

“ Of course, first, I think about my child so that he does not see or hear all this.”⁹⁰

“ We have to help them as much as we can, to come to our community, to provide care so that people feel at home and that this city becomes their home. So, firstly, we have to accept them all.”⁹¹

“ Many displaced families have been living in our city for more than a year and a half and have already become active residents of this city. They cooperate with the authorities, volunteers, and volunteer centres.”⁹²

“ If a person has found a place, found a job, why should they break loose and leave here?”⁹³

Pursuing stability: Shelter and security

IDPs preferring integration echoed similar physical and material safety priorities to those wanting to return. Safety concerns centred on an end to the conflict, while housing access emerged as the primary priority, alongside livelihood needs, particularly for younger IDPs managing the interplay between incomes and securing a home.

Host community perspectives align closely with IDPs' priorities for sustainable integration, particularly in recognising the importance of meeting basic needs.

“The only thing they [IDPs] can do here to bring themselves closer to such a condition [safety] is to have all their basic needs met: housing, work, financial security, and so on.”⁹⁴

In housing discussions, stability and predictability were critical, with some IDPs explicitly stating that the provision of housing would

substantially influence their decision to remain in their current location. IDPs stressed the importance of accessing social housing programs, with younger participants who were not homeowners before or recognised that they would not be prioritised for limited social housing, highlighting the need for supportive and accessible state housing programs. These subsidised or low-deposit programs were seen as providing an economically feasible pathway for them to secure housing in new communities.

“If housing will be provided here, then there will be no problems... I want to go home, but if there is housing here, I don't care where I work. Here, you are in a safe city.”⁹⁵

“Housing. It's a crucial factor, but when it's your own, not rented. Then, I wouldn't consider myself an IDP.”⁹⁶

Financial stability: Navigating challenges and vulnerabilities

Stability re-emerged as a central theme in discussions about livelihoods, emphasising the importance of secure employment for achieving integration. In addition to providing financial security, stable jobs were perceived as essential for re-establishing a sense of normality. IDPs in Vyshneva highlighted the need for retraining to bridge skills gaps and capitalise on opportunities in their current location. Some older IDPs also associated financial stability with accessing social support and state benefits, highlighting the challenges of covering essential expenses, especially healthcare costs.

“Those who live here are pensioners... You need so much money, where do you get it? They [hospitals] don't care that you are displaced, as they say, give us the money, or go without...”⁹⁷

Following revisions to the IDP allowance criteria in March 2024, discussions underscored the financial vulnerability of

IDPs and the potential to impact the sustainability of their preferred durable solutions. These revisions restricted access to the allowance based on specific socio-economic vulnerability profiles, raising concerns about the ability of vulnerable households to meet basic needs and rebuild their lives.⁹⁸ In Pavlohradaska, IDPs previously committed to integrating now contemplated relocating abroad if the allowances, described as a “guarantee of tomorrow,”⁹⁹ were reduced, seeking assistance from temporary protection schemes in EU countries to address their basic needs.

“They say that payments to IDPs will be cancelled. Tell me, how am I and my child going to live? I get these UAH 5,000. It's not much, but how will I live without it? And I don't have a job.”¹⁰⁰

Addressing urgent needs first: Considering additional concerns

IDPs in Chuhivivska and Mykolaivska emphasised critical infrastructure restoration, highlighting the local challenges in heavily affected communities. While education, health services, social cohesion, and psychosocial well-being were noted, they ranked lower in priority. Similarly, factors related to family reunion and a

lack of discrimination were mentioned but garnered little attention. This lower prioritisation does not imply that additional factors are unnecessary; rather, it is understood they were overshadowed by more immediate and primary needs that many IDPs currently face, particularly in local integration.

3.2.4. Resettlement: Pushed or pulled?

Resettlement, whether within Ukraine or abroad, is seldom the preferred durable solution for IDPs, except when prompted by immediate safety concerns or reductions in assistance. While younger IDPs were open to the possibility of relocating for

job opportunities within Ukraine, aligning with existing data indicating a greater willingness among younger adults to move,¹⁰¹ most were not actively seeking relocation despite some uncertainty about the permanence of their current location.

⁹⁴ FGD HC in Lvivska

⁹⁵ FGD IDP (40+) in Vyshneva

⁹⁶ FGD IDP (18-39) in Mykolaivska

⁹⁷ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

⁹⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM), April 2024, DTM Ukraine, Thematic Brief: Defining Vulnerability: [Impact of the Changes to the IDP Living Allowance](#)

⁹⁹ FGD IDP validation (18-39) in Pavlohradaska

¹⁰⁰ FGD IDP (18-39) in Chuhivivska

¹⁰¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), November – December 2023, DTM Ukraine General Population Survey [Round 15](#)

Exploring options: Within and beyond borders

When IDPs spoke of relocating within Ukraine, they were generally driven by a lack of connection to their current location and the possibility of fulfilling unmet needs that they considered unattainable in their current situation.

“It’s hard to say where my displacement will end, where there is peace. I’m not sure if it’s in this community, I don’t know yet.”¹⁰²

“I don’t care where to live. The city doesn’t matter. We just have to consider my husband’s work, and that’s it. Otherwise, it doesn’t matter at all. Let it be even some collective farm. We just need a place to live. Everything comes down to housing.”¹⁰³

This sentiment and detachment is understandable for many who had little say in their displacement location and struggled to establish roots in their current surroundings.

“We didn’t have time to choose. We got in the car and just drove wherever our eyes led us. We were leaving the war zone, and Pavlohrad was the first city. When we arrived, there were places available, and they could accommodate us, so we stayed there.”¹⁰⁴

For the few IDPs who mentioned resettlement outside of Ukraine, it was primarily in response to push factors such as deteriorating

security or reductions in assistance rather than an intentional, voluntary choice towards a sustainable solution.

“When it gets dangerous, I’ll give up my job and will be abroad in two hours.”¹⁰⁵

“If something happens tomorrow, I will go abroad. The decision has already been made. I don’t want to wander around Ukraine; I’ve already done it, and I’d rather go abroad.”¹⁰⁶

Current legal constraints, including conscription orders and border closures for men imposed by martial law, hinder those expressing a desire to relocate abroad. Such restrictions risk family separation, a compromise many are unwilling or unable to accept. Future changes to this policy could alter mobility intentions.

“I could consider the option of going abroad, but I have a son who is already 19 years old, so why should I take the younger child and go, leaving behind the older one here? That’s not an option either, so we’re only staying here.”¹⁰⁷

When discussing priorities for this option, IDPs emphasised affordable housing and job opportunities as crucial factors for making any future relocation, whether within or outside of Ukraine, viable. Additionally, some highlighted the importance of having a supportive community and access to leisure facilities.

Disappointment abroad: Struggles with belonging

Despite what some saw as generous provisions under the European Union’s Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), testimonies from women IDPs who returned to Ukraine spoke of an isolating and unfulfilling experience. The emotional and physical toll of displacement abroad and the challenge of finding meaningful employment made it difficult to overcome the disconnection from their homes and families. Safety concerns

took a backseat to the desire for a sense of belonging and feeling at home.

“While abroad in Poland, I felt like an uprooted old tree which had not been replanted in any way. I was slowly dying mentally and physically... I could only find a menial job, like a hotel housekeeper, kitchen worker, or another similar position.”¹⁰⁸

3.2.5. Which pathway to choose?: Conclusions

Exploring how IDPs envision the end of their displacement reveals consistent priorities, notably safety and security, alongside meeting crucial needs of housing and livelihoods to achieve longed-for stability and a sense of being ‘back in place’. However, individual and underlying factors such as age, family structure, pre-war quality of life, and their current realities in displacement significantly influence their decision-making and plans. With IDPs and host communities faced with

protracted displacement and ongoing uncertainty, the importance of flexibility and adaptability in supporting IDPs as they navigate their pathways is essential. As factors and contexts continue to change, the challenge for actors supporting progress towards durable solutions is ensuring that all IDPs, whether young job seekers looking for opportunities or older individuals seeking to return, can freely choose and adjust their pathways without losing ground or opportunities.

3.3. TAKING THE NEXT STEPS: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

“People live the first year, the second year, and they believe that they will return. Then, they develop apathy and depression. And then they realise that they need to start life anew, start from scratch... I just haven’t gotten to it emotionally yet. To give up, forget and start over.”¹⁰⁹

The journey towards durable solutions for IDPs is inherently dynamic, complex, and gradual. Solutions may only become durable after years or even decades following the movement to the place of origin or resettlement or after the decision to integrate locally has been made.¹¹⁰ The opening quote provides a glimpse into the complex and emotionally charged experience of forced displacement, highlighting the overwhelming burden of ‘starting over’.

¹⁰² KII IDP in Pavlohradska

¹⁰³ KII IDP in Vyshneva

¹⁰⁴ KII IDP in Pavlohradska

¹⁰⁵ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

¹⁰⁶ FGD IDP (18-39) in Mykolaivska

¹⁰⁷ FGD IDP (18-39) in Vyshneva

¹⁰⁸ KII IDP in Chuhuivska

¹⁰⁹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Lvivska

¹¹⁰ Brookings Institute and University of Bern, April 2009, Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Durable Solutions, [Framework: Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons](#)

This section examines the concrete steps IDPs and host community members identified to transition from their current displacement contexts toward achieving their preferred durable solution,

3.3.1. Moving forward: Defining the pathway

IDPs encountered challenges as they attempted to define their next steps toward durable solutions. Adapting to new environments, cultures, and bureaucratic procedures while grappling with ongoing security uncertainties posed significant hurdles, especially for those displaced in heavily war-affected communities. Conversations about IDPs' next steps were often framed by the prospect of conflict resolution. Some IDPs believed that comprehensive planning could only occur once the conflict has ended.

“If there is no more war, then we can all say that we are starting a new stage, we are already starting to make plans.”¹¹¹

Others presented a more proactive individual approach, insisting that acceptance, adaptation, and flexibility were key to progress. One woman described how, despite being a qualified veterinarian, she is unwilling to put her life on hold and has started to work as a teacher's assistant.

Generational perspectives: Collective goals or individual paths?

When discussing their next steps, IDPs shared diverse perspectives. Older groups, in particular, hinted at the need for strategic, development-focused approaches to recovery efforts, emphasising the need for engagement with local government, with some suggesting legislative changes. Notably, in Mykolaivska, those in the older group called for a pre-agreed

3.3.2. Moving forward: Priorities for the next steps

Safety first: Peace for security

Safety concerns remained at the forefront of all discussions, with IDPs advocating for measures to ensure physical and material security. Distinct priorities were identified among different age groups, yet all emphasised the urgency of ending the ongoing conflict and occupation of territory for lasting peace. Older IDPs highlighted specific measures

Housing struggles: Seeking shelter and redress

Addressing immediate housing issues and seeking compensation for properties are paramount concerns for IDPs of all ages. In the short term, younger IDPs advocated for affordable credit terms or joint financing programs to facilitate homeownership, whereas older IDPs, many of whom were homeowners before displacement, emphasised the importance of social housing provided by the state or international donors. Host community members echoed these calls, noting the importance of meeting IDPs' housing needs through schemes like low-rate home loans and underscoring the need for continued state financial support. IDPs across several locations highlighted the necessity of transparency measures and needs-based eligibility criteria for the distribution of social housing,

¹¹¹ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

¹¹² KII IDP in Vyshneva

¹¹³ KII HC in Lvivska

¹¹⁴ The majority of participants in this group were displaced from Kherson

¹¹⁵ FGD IDP (18-39) in Vyshneva

¹¹⁶ FGD HC in Chuhuivska

recognising that a durable solution is a process rather than an endpoint.

“They said that my specialisation was not their field at all, but if I had a degree, they would hire me. Of course, my salary is not high. I get the minimum wage because I have no work experience... I was idle for a year and a half, and then I realised that I needed to integrate into society.”¹¹²

Host communities tended to resonate with this latter point of view, particularly in areas where language and cultural divides were identified, focusing on IDPs learning the language and adopting local cultural norms.

“The main thing is desire. If a person wants to work, they will start with any job. You shouldn't be ashamed of any job. If you are going to achieve your goal, you need housing, and you need to earn money for it. This is the priority. What about language?”¹¹³

action plan to restore affected communities, emphasising area-based plans aligned with assessed needs and vulnerabilities.¹¹⁴ Conversely, younger IDPs often proposed more generic ideas aimed at individual incremental progress towards stability. Despite this diversity, common themes and patterns emerged from their discussions.

such as demining activities, which are crucial for families to access outdoor spaces. Younger IDPs stressed reliable border protection as a long-term investment in security, alongside immediate needs like bomb shelters, especially at children's institutions, and spreading awareness about the potential threat of mines.

In Lvivska, particular attention was drawn to the challenges faced by the older IDPs, highlighting their unique difficulties.

“It is necessary to take into account the affordability and the capabilities of people. If I was talking about the down payment, it should be realistic, not 20% of the apartment's cost. Who can pull money out of their pocket and pay 20% of the cost of the apartment right away?”¹¹⁵

“People should have some kind of income to be able to allocate funds for housing and utilities food to provide for their children and family. Unfortunately, there is no way to live your life without money.”¹¹⁶

“When we walk through the city, no one looks at the most beautiful house; everyone looks at the most broken one and thinks, give us at least this one.”¹¹⁷

“Elderly people who were confident in their old age, who lived in their own houses, who had everything...they need housing, and then they can be confident again.”¹¹⁸

There was a shared call among IDPs to ensure compensation for damaged or destroyed housing or property. While older IDPs in Pavlohrad and Chuhuivska advocated for compensation on a parity basis, suggesting what was lost should be gained, others in Mykolaivska proposed construction-based compensation, citing risks associated with cash devaluation in the current context.

Securing stable livelihoods: A central element

Taking concrete steps towards stable employment emerged as a critical focus for IDPs across all research locations. IDPs stressed the pressing need for job creation opportunities and underscored the importance of state support in this regard. Retraining and specialised support to enter the job market emerged as a common demand to address skills mismatch and improve access to employment options within their current areas of displacement. Despite expressing an openness to potential career changes, younger IDPs remained sceptical about the actual availability of suitable opportunities. One participant highlighted the challenges encountered when seeking employment,

“Let’s take the employment centre. What is needed on the market now? This is a locksmith, an electrician, a construction worker, and that’s it. And you can’t always choose the one you want from the list they offer. If it’s a narrow speciality, you won’t go to work.”¹²¹

Both IDP age groups and host community members commented on the need for decent remuneration to ensure financial stability. Older IDPs highlighted a need to address age discrimination in the workforce, pension increases, and an increased commitment to timely payments of state benefits.

“If we are given a decent salary, we will work in our country and not go anywhere.”¹²²

Rebuilding for renewal: The need for revitalisation

When translating their hopes for the recovery of their areas of origin into action, IDPs stressed the need for restoration beyond housing encompassing essential infrastructure, services, and leisure spaces. Older IDPs highlighted the importance of revitalising local economies by restoring industrial enterprises and transforming agricultural practices. Overall, IDPs underscored the importance of bringing communities back to life, prioritising access to employment and education services for children and youth, and reinstating

“Wait, we have property rights. Today, for example, my housing is inaccessible. Then, my property was simply taken away from me, and that’s it. Am I right? I believe that there should be compensation for the lost housing.”¹¹⁹

“Compensation is one thing, but if a dwelling is completely destroyed, they will issue housing certificates. Such a certificate should be equal in value to the destroyed dwelling.”¹²⁰

In both Pavlohrad and Mykolaivska, older IDPs called for reparations from Russia to address housing and infrastructure needs, facilitating the restoration of affected communities.

“But now we have very few jobs where you can earn enough for housing. You can go and work like this. Here, you can only cover your basic needs with these jobs. I don’t know.”¹²³

IDPs and host communities noted practical barriers to employment access, particularly for mothers re-entering the workforce due to limited childcare options. Some shared calls for a more significant commitment to remote work opportunities to accommodate individuals facing such constraints.

“There is almost no employment. And even if there is a job offer, there is no one to leave the child with because of the non-working childcare facilities.”¹²⁴

“If they are displaced persons, they don’t have grandparents, and the kindergarten doesn’t work. Mom needs to go to work and has nowhere to leave the child. It’s very difficult for all displaced persons. Kindergartens must function because it’s hard.”¹²⁵

Younger IDPs in Lvivska and Chuhuivska expressed interest in accessing state business support programs and suggested simplified procedures for obtaining business grants as alternative avenues to pursue economic stability.

health facilities and qualified personnel. Investment attraction to support reconstruction efforts from International actors emerged as a shared priority for most groups but came alongside calls for a heightened focus on fostering transparency and accountability across all levels of government, especially regarding the allocation of housing and management of funding for reconstruction and recovery plans.

¹¹⁷ FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska

¹¹⁸ FGD IDP (40+) in Lvivska

¹¹⁹ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

¹²⁰ FGD IDP (40+) in Chuhuivska

¹²¹ FGD IDP (18-39) in Vyshneva

¹²² FGD IDP (18-39) in Mykolaivska

¹²³ FGD HC Vyshneva

¹²⁴ KII IDP in Chuhuivska

¹²⁵ FGD HC in Pavlohradska

3.3.3. Where to from here?: Conclusions

As IDPs plan their next steps, whether ‘starting from scratch’ or awaiting a return to familiarity, their priority is establishing stability and feeling safe. Understanding their short to mid-term realities and identified priorities offers clear guidance on achieving the stability they seek. Efforts to address immediate needs and align them with longer-term goals are crucial for progress towards durable

solutions. Engagement with host communities, acknowledgement and response to social tensions, and promoting locally led and community-driven solutions are central to recovery planning, fostering supportive conditions for increased self-reliance and progress towards (re)integration.

3.4. DRIVING SOLUTIONS: WHICH ROLES, WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

States are primarily responsible for assisting and protecting IDPs, recognising their rights as citizens and residents and upholding their dignity. However, making progress towards durable solutions requires various actors’ active engagement, including IDPs.¹²⁶

To ensure that displacement-affected communities have agency in shaping their futures, it is essential to empower them to actively participate in decisions that impact both themselves and their future prospects. By recognising and supporting individual and community

agency and dignity, it is possible to foster more resilient and stable futures for all members of displacement-affected communities.

This section aims to identify the actors that IDPs and host communities perceive as responsible for creating supportive conditions and providing opportunities for progress towards durable solutions and how they view their respective roles in this progress.

3.4.1. Looking outward: Identifying responsibilities and roles

Government as duty bearer: Acknowledging constraints and expectations

In FGDs, both IDPs and members of host communities perceive the Ukrainian government as the primary duty bearer, yet they also acknowledge its limitations, particularly regarding funding availability. Some IDPs voiced disappointment over the recent reduction of IDP allowances, considering it a shortfall in government assistance.

“We have come to terms with the loss of property, but it is difficult to come to terms with the lack of support.”¹²⁷

IDPs and host community members had varied interpretations of government roles, sometimes struggling to identify responsible

bodies and occasionally assigning responsibilities incorrectly. Both groups attributed responsibility for reconstruction and recovery efforts to the national government. Local governments were generally seen as accountable for social housing, subsidised housing, and overseeing reconstruction and rebuilding processes. Social protection and local safety measures, such as the provision of bomb shelters, were also perceived to fall under the jurisdiction of local authorities.

The role and expectations for international actors beyond funding remained unclear, particularly when external assistance was limited.

3.4.2. Individual Contributions: IDPs and Host Communities

IDPs Varied roles: Destined to wait or ready to act

The roles that IDPs perceive themselves playing in their displacement vary significantly. Some demonstrate a clear sense of agency, expressing a responsibility to engage with local actors to inform and influence activities and recovery plans. In contrast, others, particularly older IDPs, adopt a more passive response, deferring full responsibility to others, most commonly government actors, and assuming a waiting role, anticipating an opportunity to return.

Being a good citizen and paying taxes was widely embraced across most research locations, echoed by both IDPs and host community members. It was viewed as a fundamental responsibility, with some considering it the most active way they could contribute to the current context.

“Reasonable taxes and everyone will pay. And if the taxes are reasonable and you don’t pay, there should be a punishment.”¹²⁸

In some cases, IDPs exhibited a spirit of initiative, engaging in various activities, but commonly without a defined strategy. While mainly older IDPs identified their roles in efforts such as knitting socks or making camouflage nets, framed as supporting the military and contributing to the path to victory, younger IDPs focused on development-oriented activities like grant writing, leveraging their skills and demonstrating an awareness and willingness to influence and inform local authorities.

In considering the role of IDPs in local governance, IDP participants outlined their aspirational vision for their meaningful participation and representation,

“[We need] to be active citizens with our own positions. To express our opinion, go to all meetings, be active, express our point of view, prove, show that we are really worthy, and be heard.”¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Brookings Institute and University of Bern, April 2009, Inter-Agency Standing Committee on Durable Solutions, Framework: Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons

¹²⁷ FGD IDP Validation in Pavlohradaska

¹²⁸ FGD IDP (40+) in Mykolaivska

¹²⁹ FGD IDP (40+) in Pavlohradaska

IDP councils and participation were mentioned in passing but did not attract significant attention from IDPs or host community members. Facilitators did, however, link the strategic vision

and capacity of older IDPs from Mykolaivska to some of them participating in the council.¹³⁰

Collaboration and initiative: Host community insights.

Overall, host community members emphasised the importance of unity and proactive engagement among IDPs and community members, highlighting the need for collective action rather than relying solely on local authorities or external support.

They also underscored that positive change begins with individual initiative and self-reliance, echoing the sentiment expressed by some younger IDPs, who suggested a necessary mind shift from entitlement to empowerment.

“We need to unite somehow so that we don't shift our problems onto the local authorities. We should also be active, participate, submit petitions, and talk about our problems. To be active. Don't wait for someone to help us or them. But still, come together and move towards a common goal.”¹³¹

“There should be state support and social support, but if we don't stop thinking that everyone owes us everything, nothing will change.”¹³²

3.4.3. Which roles, whose responsibility?: Conclusions

The active involvement of various stakeholders, including IDPs, is essential for progressing towards durable solutions. There are varying levels of engagement and understanding among IDPs and host community members regarding their perceptions of responsibility, their roles in shaping displacement conditions, and their pathways forward. These findings suggest untapped opportunities for increased engagement and underscore the

importance of establishing conditions that enable informed decision-making, legitimate participation, and the preservation of dignity during displacement. It is imperative to ensure that IDPs and the communities hosting them do not simply endure displacement, but instead, it is viewed as a process in which individuals can exercise agency, actively influencing and shaping their futures and pathways towards durable solutions.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reflecting on the findings of this research, which prioritises the voices of IDPs and host community members, provides valuable insights into their displacement experiences, aspirations for the future, and the steps they prioritise for a sustainable end to their displacement.

As discussions around durable solutions frameworks increasingly emerge in early recovery and transition strategies, stakeholders and policymakers, including the Government as the primary duty bearer, must consider how to engage displacement-affected communities best. It is paramount to create supportive conditions that empower these communities to co-create responses with actions that are within reach and respond to their immediate needs and priorities while laying the groundwork for advancing towards achieving their preferred solutions - whether in the near or distant future.

Active participation from displacement-affected communities in shaping their responses, rather than mere consultation, is critical. How they are supported to navigate the conflict's devastating impact and ongoing uncertainties and the opportunities they are provided to feel safe, access secure housing, and stable economic opportunities will significantly influence their present circumstances and future outcomes.

These recommendations recognise the progress made and offer guidance on how stakeholders working towards durable solutions can impact the experiences of IDPs and host communities, supporting their chosen pathways towards sustainable futures.

1. **Stakeholders, including the Government, should aim to establish consensus on key terms and definitions for policymaking and programming to ensure accurate data and access to services, while remaining cognisant of the implications of labels when engaging with displacement-affected communities.** Flexible data collection methodologies like the IOM decision tree¹³³ can ensure accurate categorisation of key populations, respecting their diverse experiences. This balanced approach promotes the generation of consistent, robust data, acknowledges the unique perspectives of those affected by displacement and safeguards their dignity. Additionally, stakeholders should utilise agreed-upon terminology to minimise extractive data collection exercises and, when possible, involve communities, fostering improved data collection and sharing practices.
2. **In response to the heightened tensions and challenges to community cohesion, stakeholders should prioritise conflict sensitivity in programming and policy-making efforts.** This involves recognising and addressing existing and emerging fractures within host communities – between displaced and non-displaced individuals, and as IDPs return to their places of origin, between those who stayed and those who left. Utilising community-driven tools like complaints and feedback mechanisms, alternative dispute resolution, and peer mediation can empower

¹³⁰ For more details on IDP councils see: Protection Cluster, UNHCR, February 2024, Recommendations on cooperation between humanitarian organizations and IDP Councils

¹³¹ FGD HC in Pavlohradska

¹³² FGD HC in Vysheve

¹³³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), Mar 2024, DTM Ukraine - General Population Survey - [Methodological Note](#)

community members to effectively manage and prevent conflicts within their communities.

3. **Stakeholders must ensure that programming initiatives prioritise a durable solution lens to address IDPs' diverse needs, vulnerabilities, and aspirations.** Support must be flexible and responsive to the evolving nature of decision-making processes, recognising that IDPs may alter their preferences in response to changing contextual factors and emerging opportunities. Durable solution programming must include ongoing analysis to prioritise and reinforce the rights and protections for IDPs and, for example, avoid inadvertently incentivising premature return.
4. **Active participation from the displacement-affected community is essential in early recovery and transition efforts to ensure the relevance and sustainability of programming to support durable solutions.** Stakeholders must consistently seek out and monitor trends in the visions and priorities articulated by IDPs and host communities for both their short and longer-term futures. These voices, priorities, and visions should shape future policies and frameworks aimed at progressing towards durable solutions. Additionally, stakeholders should support existing forums for community engagement and, where necessary, collaborate with communities to design participatory forums that facilitate meaningful input and decision-making.




GLOBAL DATA INSTITUTE
DISPLACEMENT
TRACKING MATRIX

IOM UKRAINE

