

Context analysis and key considerations

- “Returnees” are understood here as IDPs who returned, permanently or not, to their place of habitual residence. It is essential to note that merely returning to one’s physical location does not necessarily indicate that displacement-related needs and vulnerabilities have been fully addressed. Returnees are therefore understood as ‘IDPs in location of return’ as opposed to ‘IDPs in location of displacement’ (i.e., not in their habitual place of residence) and are treated as the IDP population as long as durable solutions have not been achieved.
- An estimated 3,757,000 de facto IDPs and 4,137,000 returnees reside in Ukraine.
- The largest number of IDPs resided in Dnipropetrovsk (16%) and Kharkivska (12%) Oblasts. The highest proportion of IDPs originated from Donetsk Oblast (29%).
- Almost half the IDPs (43%) who had been displaced from their primary residences had remained within their oblasts of origin
- The median duration of displacement among IDPs is more than 2.5 years (988 days). Two-thirds (66%) of IDPs had been displaced for over two years, while 79 per cent had been displaced for over a year. This highlights the prolonged nature of displacement in Ukraine.
- 34% of IDPs are considering returning; however, 24% remained uncertain about their long-term intentions.
- Protracted displacement has contributed to a disproportionate lack of access to goods and services. IDPs were significantly more likely than the non-displaced to lack access to goods such as medicines (37%), accommodation (32%), hygiene items (30%), clothing or other NFIs (28%), and income-earning opportunities (35%).
- Lack of access to resources to meet needs was linked to re-displacement. IDPs who were considering leaving their current locations were more likely to lack access to sufficient income-earning opportunities (23%) than those who were not considering leaving (13%).
- IDP households relied heavily on shelter-based coping strategies, reflecting the difficulties they face in accessing adequate and affordable housing.
- Among returnees, those with low levels of trust in both local organisations and others in their communities were far more likely to be considering re-displacement.
- Employment level remains significantly lower in heavily conflict-affected or previously occupied areas, where economic activity remains severely disrupted by the war, such as Donetsk and Mykolaivska oblasts (O1,2).
- Gender imbalance in employment rates is significantly higher among IDPs compared to other groups, with the share of employed men being 71% compared to women, 48%.
- Employment remains one of the major drivers of displacement, playing a crucial role in influencing displacement within Ukraine for both IDPs and returnees. Notably, the lack of employment opportunities was the most common reason returnees left their previous place of residence (31%), as reported by those who returned to areas severely affected by the conflict.
- The most significant problems among IDP job seekers are the lack of jobs in their region (30%) and low salaries (29%). Women, especially those aged 36-45, face gender-related challenges such as balancing work and household chores, a lack of childcare benefits, and age discrimination. 39% of respondents in rural areas reported limited job availability, compared to 28% in large cities.
- About half of all returnees (48%) had returned from displacement in another oblast in Ukraine, with Kharkivska oblast being one of the main regions (15%) and Kyivska (14%) Oblasts.
- 37% of returnees have returned to frontline areas, including to Kharkivska (16%), Dnipropetrovsk (12%) and Mykolaivska (7%) oblasts accordingly. Returns to frontline areas consistently account for approximately 40% of all returnees over the past 9 to 11 months.
- Those planning to leave reported a low level of access to goods and services (90%) as the main reason influencing their decision-making. Overall, among returnees and non-displaced persons, the largest access gaps were reported in frontline areas.

Recommended durable solutions with regard to displacement

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) defines durable solutions as a state where “IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs linked to their displacement” and establishes eight criteria to determine the extent to which durable solutions have been achieved.

1. Long-term security.

IDPs enjoy physical safety and security, as well as freedom of movement, guaranteed by the protection of national and local authorities.

2. Adequate Standards of Living.

IDPs have sustainable access to essential food and potable water (food security), basic shelter and housing, sanitation, and essential public services (education and healthcare).

3. Access to Livelihood and Employment.

Employment and livelihood opportunities are available for IDPs, allowing them to fulfil at least their core socio-economic needs.

4. Effective and Accessible Mechanisms to Restore Housing, Land and Property (HLP).

IDPs have access to effective mechanisms for timely restitution or compensation of/for their HLP, regardless of their durable solutions preference, and have access to shelter during the interim period.

5. Access to Personal and Other Documentation.

IDPs have access to the personal and other documentation necessary to access public services, reclaim property and possessions, vote or pursue other purposes linked to durable solutions.

6. Family Reunification.

Families separated by displacement are reunited as quickly as possible, particularly when children, older persons or other vulnerable persons are involved.

7. Participation in Public Affairs.

IDPs exercise the right to participate in public affairs at all levels on the same basis as the resident population and without discrimination.

8. Access to Effective Remedies and Justice.

IDPs who have been victims of violations of international human rights or humanitarian law – including arbitrary displacement – have full and non-discriminatory access to equal and effective transitional justice and adequate reparation for harm suffered.

Project Concept Note

Title

Fostering the integration of internally displaced persons and preventing further displacement among residents of local communities in Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska, and Mykolaivska oblasts by providing comprehensive, multi-sectoral assistance.

Overall goal

The project aims to support the internally displaced population affected by the armed conflict, alleviating misery, ensuring dignity, and preserving human capital in Ukraine.

Project objective

Fostering smooth integration of internally displaced households into host communities by strengthening their coping capacity.

Target groups

Internally displaced persons residing in host communities along parts of the so-called “humanitarian crescent” (Kharkivska, Dnipropetrovska, and Mykolaivska oblasts)

Project duration

2 years (24 months) with a possible extension

Locations

Kharkivska Dnipropetrovska, and Mykolaivska oblasts.

Local communities will be selected based on an in-depth needs assessment against defined criteria, including IDP density, the capacity of local structures to respond, and security.

Activities

Activities within the Objective (Accommodation and income-earning opportunities¹).

- 1) Mapping of services in the frontline and central regions for effective redirection of beneficiaries through the call centre and by field specialists.
- 2) Provision of legal services for IDPs to ensure access to social benefits, compensation for damaged property, etc.
- 3) Vocational training and job search assistance programs for IDPs.
- 4) Rehabilitation/improvement of education facilities (kindergartens) and collective centres (CCs)

Call centers

The East SOS Call Centre is a key tool for monitoring the needs of internally displaced persons, collecting and analysing on-the-ground information, and providing access to essential services. It currently handles around 5,000 calls per month, with the capacity to manage up to 1,000 calls per day, demonstrating its ability to respond promptly to a high volume of IDP requests.

The call centre accepts requests for evacuation, resettlement, documentation of war crimes, psychosocial support and legal assistance. IDPs receive information about the services available in their region, including housing reconstruction, humanitarian aid, social benefits, compensation for destroyed or damaged property, and other legal and social issues. The call centre also monitors service availability across different regions, enabling it to respond quickly to changing IDP needs and ensure they have access to the necessary resources.

¹ Protracted displacement has contributed to a disproportionate lack of access to goods and services: IDPs were significantly more likely than the non-displaced to lack access to goods, with accommodation (32%) and income-earning opportunities (35%) being of the most priority. IOM Ukraine Internal Displacement Report, General Population Survey (GPS), Round 20, April 2025.

Since 2023, we have been actively disseminating information about the organisation's call centre, which has significantly increased the number of incoming calls. We disseminate information through leaflets, business cards, information stickers on evacuation vehicles and those of other East SOS field teams, TV appearances, interviews and media comments, and social network postings, as well as through the information channels of local authorities and state institutions responsible for social support of civilians.

Legal assistance

Qualified specialists provide legal assistance in communities across Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Kherson, and Mykolaiv regions. The list of communities is adjustable according to the security situation and the needs of local residents. Lawyers will provide primary and secondary legal assistance, support in preparing documents, and submitting them to the court to establish property ownership and seek compensation for destroyed or damaged property. Specialists assist with restoring personal documents. Additionally, legal support is provided for pension applications, IDP certificate issuance, and access to housing payments for internally displaced persons. All consultations are provided in accordance with the recommendations of the Protection Cluster. Moreover, our specialists are trained to identify gender-based violence and promote the rights of women and girls.

Vocational training and integration activities for IDPs

East-SOS supports the integration and development of internally displaced persons by offering access to training and professional growth opportunities. These activities are delivered through the organisation's network of safe spaces, Zatyshno Space, in Vinnytsya, Cherkasy, Kropyvnytskyi, Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, and Zaporizhzhya. To date, these centres have served as support, recovery, and learning platforms for over 14,000 people.

All programs are community-driven and adapted to the real needs of displaced populations, making them a powerful tool for social integration and future planning.

Over the past two years, nearly 600 educational events have been hosted across these spaces. Participants have completed training in social media marketing, graphic design, financial literacy, business management, and grant writing, acquiring essential skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The educational offer is further enriched by masterclasses in rhetoric, public speaking, and creativity, facilitated by respected Ukrainian public figures and professionals. These events inspire participants and strengthen their communication skills, self-expression, and confidence, which are essential for personal growth and professional success.

In addition to educational programs, safe spaces actively support IDPs' professional growth through vocational training, career guidance, and job fairs that connect participants with real employment opportunities. Specialists also facilitate meetings with local employment centres and provide personalised consultations on job searching and career planning.

East-SOS actively participates in national coordination platforms, including the Coordination Headquarters for Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of IDPs and working groups on employment strategies and social rights for displaced populations. This ensures that our work aligns with broader efforts and remains responsive to the evolving needs of displaced populations.

Rehabilitation/improvement of education facilities (kindergartens) and collective centres (CCs)

This activity will be conducted to facilitate the aforementioned support for IDPs. Given that such work is an important component of assistance to beneficiaries and of building the capacity of host communities, and that the partners have ample experience with projects in this area, these activities may be pursued more broadly in a separate or supplementary project. Such activities will, depending on needs, consist of improving WASH facilities (for example, toilets, bathrooms, laundry rooms), expanding the capacity for service provision, for example, by establishing new spaces or offering support with staff recruitment, creating energy-efficient solutions, such as solar panels, as well as light repairs, where required.