

# **Bridging the Gaps. Ensuring a Human- Centred Recovery for Internally Displaced People in Ukraine**



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**Written by:** Norwegian Refugee Council, CF Stabilisation Support Services, CARE Ukraine

**Date:** July 2025

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**Contact:** joachim.giaminardi@nrc.no

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**Cover photo:** Grzegorz Zukowski/NRC

*An NRC staff member is standing between the rubble of collapsed apartment buildings in Izyum. In the distance the church in Izyum. Izyum, Ukraine, 27 January 2025.*

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# Executive Summary

As global leaders, donors, and civil society gather in Rome for the 2025 Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC), Ukraine stands at a pivotal juncture. **The conference is a critical opportunity to ensure that recovery efforts do not leave behind the country's 3.75 million Internally Displaced People (IDPs).** Ukraine's long-term resilience and social cohesion depend on a recovery that is genuinely inclusive of those most affected by conflict and displacement.

Ukraine's recovery will fall short of its ambitions unless IDPs and other at-risk groups are placed at the heart of reconstruction and durable solutions. **Despite ambitious frameworks and significant international support, recovery efforts remain largely focused on infrastructure and economic growth. The needs, voices, and agency of displaced people are not sufficiently taken into consideration.** Without a meaningful inclusion of vulnerable groups, Ukraine risks deepening inequality, prolonging displacement, and undermining the sustainability of its recovery.

This briefing note analyses the architecture and implementation of Ukraine's recovery as it relates to internally displaced people. It examines national, local, and international strategies highlighting their operational focus and limitations. **Despite a proliferation of recovery plans and political commitments, several critical gaps persist.** Recovery governance is fragmented, with overlapping frameworks and ministries leading to duplication and lack of shared standards. The transformation of the Ministry of Reintegration into the Ministry of National Unity has left a vacuum in leadership and expertise for IDP reintegration. Inclusion efforts often lack binding mechanisms for the participation of displaced people, women, and marginalized groups. Local authorities are often under-resourced, with only a fraction submitting recovery plans that address displacement. More broadly, recovery planning is often hampered by incomplete or outdated data, and the transition from emergency humanitarian assistance to sustainable recovery remains poorly managed, due to limited coordination between humanitarian and development actors. Civil society, including IDP Councils and women's rights groups, is largely excluded from shaping and monitoring recovery efforts.

Displaced populations are not monolithic. Those in collective sites, working women, and youth each experience distinct vulnerabilities, from limited access to housing, income, healthcare, and education, to exposure to gender-based violence and digital exclusion. A critical gap exists between registered and de facto IDPs, with registration status often determining access to aid despite similar needs. Many IDPs remain in precarious situations due to structural barriers, underfunded support systems, and insufficient policy coordination.

Empowering these communities, through tailored livelihood support, gender-sensitive services, youth participation, is critical to build a recovery that leaves no one behind. **A human-centred recovery approach is essential for sustainable progress, requiring the meaningful inclusion of displaced people and marginalised communities, in all their diversity, in recovery planning and implementation.** Coordinated, transparent, and accountable mechanisms are needed to address intersectional vulnerabilities and foster self-reliance among IDPs.

## Key Recommendations:

Ahead of the Rome 2025 URC, **we are calling on the Government of Ukraine, states and international partners to prioritise a human-centred recovery and durable solutions for displaced persons in their commitments.** We urge the integration of displacement-sensitive indicators; inclusive participation requirements, engaging of civil society; and accountability mechanisms as a foundation for the future recovery of Ukraine.

### To the Government of Ukraine

- Support a **clear ministerial lead for internal displacement and durable solutions** within the Cabinet, ensuring coordination across ministries and alignment of national strategies with the realities of displacement through **appropriate resources and capacity**. This ministry should formally recognise and support the role of IDP Councils in recovery governance.
- Establish a **formal legal framework at national level for the Ukraine Plan to prioritise a human-centred recovery**. Embed specific, funded commitments to the inclusion and reintegration of IDPs and other vulnerable groups in relevant recovery policies and budgets.
- Strengthen funding mechanisms that guarantee **timely, needs-based allocations of recovery resources directly to local authorities and Hromada**, with a particular focus on rural and underserved areas hosting IDPs and Hromada with higher density of collective sites.
- Invest in human capital, age, gender and disability transformative policies and measures that will **protect and ensure equitable access of women of all ages, youth and other marginalised displaced groups in rural and urban areas to the services they need and opportunities** to rebuild their lives, including dignified economic and livelihood opportunities, formal and non-formal education, based on *10 Blocks of Gender Inclusive Recovery*.<sup>i</sup>

### To Local Authorities and Hromada:

- **Invest in the technical, administrative, and financial capacity to design and implement inclusive recovery plans.** This includes establishing Recovery Working Groups that reflect the diversity of the displaced community, including women of all ages, youth and other marginalised groups.
- **Facilitate regular community consultations, participatory assessments, and transparent reporting to build trust and accountability.** Systematically engage IDP Councils, local community-based organisations and other grassroots organisations in the development, implementation, and evaluation of local recovery plans.



## To Development and Humanitarian Donors:

- Increase support to the Government of Ukraine for an effective decentralisation agenda that provides increased financial resources to **local authorities for the provision of services to both displaced and conflict affected communities**.
- **Increase qualitative long-term, direct, and flexible funding to Ukrainian Civil Society Organisations** (CSOs), including women's rights organisations (WROs), Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), youth-led initiatives and organisations, and other grassroots groups, to enable context-specific and inclusive recovery interventions.
- **Strengthen accountability mechanisms in recovery instruments** by requiring the meaningful participation of displaced and marginalised groups and support capacity-building for local actors and community-based organizations to sustain recovery efforts.
- **Support the institutional development and participation of IDP Councils** in local and national recovery and re-integration processes and frameworks through increased funding and advocacy support.
- **Require the consultation and participation of diverse CSOs, including women-led, youth-led and others, in recovery planning and programming**. Ensure adequate resourcing to human capital-related components of national and sub-national recovery planning, in particular in the sphere of reforming social services and assistance.

## To Humanitarian and Development Organisations:

- Develop **joint transition strategies that link emergency assistance with long-term recovery, focusing on building the self-reliance of IDPs and host communities, and enhancing the role of the civil society**. Including by strengthening the coordination and information-sharing between humanitarian and development actors during the transition process and by ensuring that handover processes for caseloads are planned and resourced to avoid gaps in services and support. This should be reflected within all humanitarian sectors, including shelter, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and protection.
- Facilitate **inclusive and participatory approaches by promoting the structured involvement of IDP Councils and other grassroots organisations**, including women of all ages, youth and other marginalised displaced groups, in the development and implementation of recovery programmes.
- Encourage **consistent consultations with IDP Councils and other grassroots organisations as part of coordination efforts**, to ensure that humanitarian and development interventions respond to local displacement dynamics and evolving community priorities.

## Background

Recovery has been at the centre of discussions on Ukraine since the full-scale escalation of February 2022. Throughout the conflict, over 10 million people have been displaced and sought safety elsewhere, representing almost a quarter of Ukraine's population at the start of 2022. Most are now refugees in surrounding countries, but 3.75 million IDPs remain in Ukraine as of March 2025. Some of those displaced were forced from their homes long before the current conflict - as many as 2 million people had already been forced to move between 2014 and late 2021 due to consistent violence along the contact line.

Throughout 2025, violence and attacks both along the main frontlines and across the country's large urban areas continue to exacerbate basic needs, while putting an even larger pressure on the delivery of critical services. **As displacement and violence continue to deteriorate, Ukraine needs a recovery plan that not only focuses on infrastructure and reconstruction but also prioritises the provision of critical services that displaced respond to the specific needs of a diverse displaced population and increases their self-reliance.**<sup>ii</sup> This is a key challenge that can only be met through a human-centred recovery process.

The framework for Ukraine's recovery was set at the first URC in Lugano, in 2022, with the framing of the political principles and strategies that would drive the country's recovery. These principles were further developed with the creation of the four pillars, or dimensions, of recovery at the third URC in Berlin in 2024. The conference identified business, human, EU accession and local/regional dimensions, while also incentivising increased private sector participation. **The 2025 URC in Rome represents an opportunity to build on these foundations, recognise the need to re-integrate IDPs, and to ensure that Ukraine's recovery is inclusive and responds to the barriers and challenges faced by displaced people, both in Ukraine and abroad.**

## Local, National and International Frameworks for Recovery in Ukraine

Recovery and durable solutions in Ukraine have been institutionalised at multiple levels, as the Government of Ukraine and its international partners have looked to quickly scale up longer-term interventions throughout the country. As of June 2025, strategies and plans exist at local, national and international levels, each trying to address the wide range of needs, issues and reforms that have emerged. **As a whole, these frameworks have focused on the "hard" elements of recovery such as infrastructure reconstruction, large scale rehabilitation, and attracting investments to boost the broader economy.** Meanwhile, many internally displaced people, who are amongst those most affected by the conflict, remain on the sidelines, with no clear pathway to durable solutions to end their displacement.

## International recovery frameworks and instruments

Since 2022, the Ukraine Facility has emerged as one of the main international tools to support Ukraine's medium and long-term recovery.<sup>iii</sup> The Facility is the financial instrument through which the EU supports Ukraine's recovery, reconstruction, and modernization. Entering into force in March 2024 and running through 2027, the Facility provides up to €50 billion support, including €17 billion in grants and €33 billion in loans, to address Ukraine's urgent and long-term needs.

Formally, the Ukraine Facility is focused on rebuilding critical infrastructure, revitalising the economy, and enhancing societal resilience; supporting and incentivizing comprehensive reforms to align Ukraine with EU standards; ensuring the continuity of essential public services and macro-financial stability; mobilizing investments for rapid economic recovery and sustainable growth; and addressing the humanitarian impact of the war by promoting social cohesion and inclusivity.

## Overview of Key National Recovery Strategies and Plans

*For an in-depth analysis refer to Annex 2 at the bottom of the document*

Ukraine's national recovery framework is shaped by a combination of high-level strategic documents, sectoral policies, and operational guidelines, reflecting both the ambition and the limitations of the country's post-conflict recovery efforts. **Central to this architecture is the Ukraine Plan for 2024–2027, developed in alignment with the Ukraine Facility and presented at the 2022 URC.** The Plan outlines 69 reforms to advance a “build back better” agenda and support EU integration, including with a focus on halting human capital decline and facilitating the return and reintegration of IDPs through investments in social, educational, health, and housing infrastructure. However, **the Plan lacks operational detail on adapting recovery to diverse regional and displacement contexts and has not been formally adopted through legislation, limiting its ability to coordinate the wide range of recovery actors and address coherence, accountability, and prioritization gaps.**

**Rather than a single strategic document, recovery governance is currently represented by an [online platform](#), that compiles information on ongoing projects nationwide.** Several legal and policy instruments also underpin the national recovery landscape. The 2015 Law “On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons” establishes the legal status and rights of IDPs and is foundational for any meaningful recovery strategy. The Concept for Integrated Territorial Development (2022) and the State Strategy on Internal Displacement until 2025 (2023) provide frameworks for spatial planning and comprehensive support to IDPs, respectively, though their integration into broader recovery planning is limited. The Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 731 (2023) offers the only binding procedural framework for regional and community recovery plans, while the State Strategy for Regional Development (2021–2027) and the National Strategy for Demographic Development until 2040 set visions for reducing disparities and restoring human capital, but require further alignment with displacement realities.

## Role of Local Authorities and Hromada-Level Planning

At the local level, in terms of frameworks, municipalities rely on non-binding Methodological Recommendations (2023) for infrastructure recovery, which, while practical, lack provisions for institutional accountability and displaced populations' inclusion.

Local Hromada are the primary actors leading on-the-ground recovery efforts. Effectively, **they have been tasked by the Government of Ukraine to directly develop *Recovery and Development Plans* within their constituencies, addressing immediate infrastructure damage and laying the groundwork for holistic community recovery.** These plans often include the assessment of damage to housing, schools, medical facilities, and infrastructure; a priority list of projects, for example fixing heating, rebuilding classrooms; governance and consultation mechanisms such as working groups responsible for monitoring and coordination; and community engagement planning, for instance public hearings, surveys, SWOT analyses, “problem trees” and “priority trees” to better reflect local needs. Local plans will often result in the establishment of Recovery Working Groups to oversee implementation; the approval of Comprehensive Recovery & Development Plans, such as Beryslav's 2023–2027 Hromada plan; the integration of strategic projects, for example generators for shelters, and the restoration of key public spaces and services, such as youth and healthcare centres.<sup>iv</sup>

**Local recovery plans have proven to be critical instruments for post-conflict reconstruction.**

They are tailored, community-specific documents used for damage assessment, prioritisation, and official approval. They pave the way for sustainable recovery, though their success often hinges on external support, community buy-in, and the integration of displaced persons' needs and views.

**Many Hromada rely on support from national and international organisations to facilitate planning, provide technical assistance, or fund recovery priorities.** This is particularly important to ensure that processes are inclusive of the experiences and needs of displaced and marginalized populations, which in turn is critical to rebuild the self-reliance of local communities. Initiatives such as those supported by U-LEAD, VNG International, and Stabilization Support Services (SSS) have helped communities create inclusive recovery frameworks, including mechanisms to incorporate the voices of internally displaced persons.

## Existing gaps on displacement-related issues

Recovery planning in Ukraine lacks the human-centred inclusive approach that is necessary to practically address internal displacement, threatening to leave vulnerable and at-risk groups behind. Across all levels, a multitude of plans, issues, and social groups overlap constantly, requiring clear, transparent, coordinated, and accountable processes to ensure the achievement of durable solutions and IDP re-integration. **This is particularly urgent as the operationalisation of recovery is increasingly put on the agenda both in Ukraine and in international fora, emphasizing the need to deliver a sustainable recovery that is inclusive of the most vulnerable and at risk.**



While there is much that is being done around recovery and reconstruction, the issues and barriers impeding durable solutions to internal displacement are falling through the cracks. **Critical gaps in displacement-related issues at all levels are increasingly leaving IDPs in limbo, at risk of resorting to negative coping strategies to survive, while existing social protection systems remain overstretched and poorly resourced.**

## The importance of an inclusive recovery

Inclusion is a foundational principle for equitable recovery, yet in Ukraine's current recovery frameworks, it remains more at an aspirational rather than an operational level. While some national strategies reference vulnerable groups or participatory principles, most recovery documents and local plans fall short of meaningfully addressing the diverse needs of displaced persons, women, youths, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and other marginalised communities. **Participatory mechanisms are not institutionalised, and local actors often lack tools or incentives to make inclusion a structured priority.**

Accountability through dedicated tools and mechanisms for inclusion within strategies remains weak. The *State Strategy on Internal Displacement (2023–2025)* is one of the few policy documents that explicitly mentions the participation of displaced persons in shaping recovery priorities. **Still, the strategy has limited legal traction and has not been integrated across sectoral plans or funding mechanisms.** Other frameworks — such as the *Demographic Development Strategy* or the revised *Regional Development Strategy* — make only passing reference to inclusion, often without specifying concrete mechanisms or indicators.

**At the local level, recovery planning processes vary widely in terms of inclusivity.** Some municipalities, especially those supported by international partners or active civil society organisations, have taken steps to engage a broader cross-section of the population. These include participatory assessments, public consultations, and the inclusion of IDP Councils, OPDs, youth groups, and women's rights organisations and other community-based organizations in recovery working groups. However, such examples are still the exception, not the norm.

Yet, people with disabilities, Roma communities, LGBTQI+ communities, and other historically marginalised groups often remain invisible in both planning documents and implementation structures. Gender sensitivity, too, is inconsistently applied. While women and girls are disproportionately affected by displacement and women often take on leadership roles in community recovery efforts, their voices are not systematically included in decision-making at local or national level. Recovery strategies rarely reflect the specific burdens placed on women, such as increased caregiving, economic precarity, or exposure to gender-based violence. For example, creating and endorsing specific strategies on women economic empowerment and inclusive labour practices, as well as continuous support to the strengthening of capacities of social services providers and law enforcement should be included in the recovery planning.

Moreover, **intersectionality, the way in which multiple layers of vulnerability** (e.g., being a widow, displaced and disabled, or being a Roma woman survivor of GBV with caregiving

responsibilities) **compound exclusion, is almost entirely absent from current planning approaches.** Without intersectional gender analysis, disaggregated data on specific vulnerabilities (for instance, access of Roma children to education), inclusive consultations with diverse groups and organizations representing them at the local level, and binding obligations for representation and meaningful participation (such as gender quotas), local recovery plans risk reproducing existing inequalities rather than addressing them.

**Inclusion should not be viewed as an add-on to recovery, but as a precondition for its legitimacy, endorsement and sustainability.** Ensuring that displaced persons, women, minorities, persons with disabilities, and elderly people have a seat at the table is not only a matter of rights — it is a matter of building trust, accountability, and resilience in war-affected communities.

### IDP Councils – A model of inclusive recovery

IDP Councils are consultative and advisory bodies established at the local level across Ukraine to represent the interests of displaced persons and promote their integration into host communities. Councils aim to ensure that IDPs have a voice in local decision-making processes and are not excluded from community life.

By mid-2024, more than 1,000 IDP Councils had been created, covering two-thirds of all municipalities in Ukraine. Councils typically include displaced individuals themselves—often women—and work on a voluntary basis. Their key activities include advocating for the rights of IDPs, identifying community needs, contributing to local recovery planning, and facilitating communication between displaced persons, local authorities, humanitarian actors, and service providers.

IDP Councils do not deliver services directly. However, they are often the first to identify protection risks, barriers to accessing support, or gaps in local governance affecting displaced populations. In several regions, IDP Councils have successfully contributed to inclusive recovery planning, data collection on IDP needs, and the development of local strategies on housing, employment, and social protection.

**IDP Councils offer an example of the positive role that civil society can play in ensuring a positive and successful recovery.** Further integrating IDP Councils into national recovery and re-integration frameworks remains a key opportunity for strengthening participatory governance and ensuring that recovery in Ukraine reflects the perspectives of those most affected by displacement.

## Identified Gaps and Challenges in the implementation of recovery frameworks

Despite a growing body of national strategies, legal instruments, and local recovery plans, implementation across Ukraine remains inconsistent and uneven. Several critical gaps continue to undermine the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of recovery efforts.

## Fragmentation of recovery governance and lack of leadership:

The current architecture of recovery in Ukraine involves multiple overlapping frameworks, ministries, and coordination platforms. **This fragmentation often leads to duplication, competition for resources, and a lack of shared standards or monitoring mechanisms.** Local authorities are left navigating a complex and sometimes contradictory policy environment, with limited guidance on how to integrate national priorities into local plans.

Following the Government of Ukraine's cabinet reshuffle in September 2024, and the decision to transform the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories (MRTOT) into the Ministry of National Unity of Ukraine (MNU), internal displacement has lacked a clear and resourced leadership within the cabinet. While previously, the MRTOT was clearly tasked to ensure the re-integration of IDPs in Ukraine, the newly formed MNU has shifted its focus to the repatriation of Ukrainian refugees. Formally, the task of ensuring the re-integration of IDPs has since been assigned to the Ministry of Communities and Territories Development (MinRegion). However, with a heavy focus on infrastructure and “hard” development, more support and capacity are required to address “soft” recovery, such as service provision. **As a result, more investments are needed to ensure holistic durable solutions-driven policies aiming to foster the sustainable re-integration of IDPs.**

## Strategic and operational limitations in existing planning:

Plans and strategies require continued development and adaptation, inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. **The Ukraine Plan's assumptions about the cessation of hostilities by late 2024 and the absence of further destruction do not reflect the evolving realities on the ground.** While gender equality is highlighted as a cross-cutting priority, specific objectives and funding targets, particularly under the Human Capital chapter, remain underdeveloped.

**Many national recovery-related strategies remain without operational plans, approved budgets, or binding obligations.** At the same time, some local recovery plans are adopted without clear legal status or alignment with state budgeting procedures, which makes it difficult to attract and manage funding.

## Capacity constraints at the local level:

By the end of 2024, **only about 200 Hromada had submitted a local recovery plan in the system,** an increase from around 151 earlier in the year.<sup>v</sup> This is just a fraction of Ukraine's over 1,500 existing Hromada. Most Hromada — particularly small, rural or war-affected ones — have indicated that they lack the technical, administrative, and financial capacity to lead and implement recovery processes.

Even when recovery plans are adopted, their implementation is hampered by shortages of qualified staff, limited access to funding, and minimal strategic planning experience. External support is often necessary to sustain momentum. **While tasks and responsibilities have been**

**decentralised, funding is often lagging behind, leaving local authorities unable to rebuild and provide much needed services.**

Isolation can also create an additional barrier for Hromada who struggle to access and connect with humanitarian and developmental organisations and structures. External support by civil society can be a key contributing factor to more inclusive and effective local recovery but requires the development and maintenance of effective networks and channels of communication.

### Data deficits and lack of evidence-based planning:

**Recovery plans are frequently based on incomplete, outdated, or non-disaggregated data.** In many cases, local authorities lack information management capacities and do not have access to systematic needs assessments, damage mapping, or demographic trends that would allow them to target interventions effectively. This weakens prioritisation and undermines accountability.

In particular, **although IDPs are recognised as a vulnerable group, there is limited data on their specific needs relating to recovery, beyond housing.** This is critical as socio-economic re-integration is dependent on targeted reforms under the Ukraine Plan, supported by a more systematic and in-depth understanding of data and evidence around displacement.

### Insufficient linkages between emergency response and long-term recovery:

The humanitarian and development nexus should not be understood as a sequence over time, but rather as an approach rooted in complementarity, understanding that self-reliance is rooted in the emergency response. As such, recovery efforts often begin while humanitarian activities are still ongoing. However, **the transition from emergency assistance to sustainable recovery is still struggling to build the self-reliance of IDPs.** Many communities lack transition strategies, resulting in duplicated efforts, increased protection risks, premature withdrawal of services, or failure to capitalise on early investments.

Additionally, **there is limited space for exchange and coordination between humanitarian and development actors, including on the handover of caseloads in more stable areas.** This is essential to ensure that displaced populations are able to move towards durable solutions rather than drop back into the emergency phase due to lack of services and support or to prematurely return to their areas of origin, which may be situated in frontline and unsafe areas.

### A limited role for civil society

International and Ukrainian civil society, including humanitarian actors, community-based, women-led and women's rights organisations, had very limited involvement in shaping recovery plans. **This is particularly reflected in the lack of coordination and accountability mechanisms, which also results in decreased transparency and inclusivity,** particularly when it comes to engaging civil society actors and reporting on its achievements.

The *Methodological Recommendations* provide essential operational guidance for local authorities. However, they **fail to address inclusion mechanisms for displaced populations themselves, nor**

do they reference the role of IDP Councils, which is once again a missed opportunity for institutionalising bottom-up accountability.

## Displaced groups that are being left behind in recovery

Ukraine's recovery needs to take into account the unique needs and experiences of those who have been internally displaced by the conflict. The humanitarian response continues to highlight the risks and vulnerabilities that displaced communities face, and that can only be addressed through local, inclusive, and human-centred interventions. Currently, **IDPs as a whole continue to fall through the cracks and are being forced to make impossible choices to cope with their needs.** This includes returning to unsafe areas close to the frontlines, with an estimated 1.6 million people having done so since February 2022.<sup>vi</sup> Beyond emergency humanitarian assistance, IDPs must be able to transition into early recovery and durable solutions pathways.

### Specific needs of vulnerable IDPs

IDPs are not a homogenous group, they include people with diverse backgrounds and needs. While already vulnerable due to their displacement, **disaggregating reported challenges by households' characteristics can provide a further insight into the specific vulnerabilities that some groups of IDPs face.** It is equally important to recognise the strengths and coping capacities these groups possess as they navigate the challenges of displacement and work towards self-reliance. **A nuanced understanding of vulnerabilities and capacities is essential to inform an effective, equitable, and sustainable recovery.**

#### Registered vs de facto IDPs

The diversity of stakeholders and policies to support displaced people has led to different definitions of IDPs, impeding effective programmes for durable solutions for IDPs. For example, IOM DTM identified 3.287.567 registered IDP in February 2025, but 3.757.000 de facto IDP in March 2025 - a half million difference.

To address this issue, the Joint Analytical Framework (JAF) was developed and recommended that the primary criterion for statistically categorising individuals as IDPs be based on their de facto forced displacement, irrespective of their registration status.<sup>vii</sup>

However, **official registration remains a frequently used eligibility criteria to receive assistance or governmental IDP allowance, possibly making de facto IDP more vulnerable as they face similar challenges, but do not receive the same level of support.** Further research comparing the needs of de facto and registered IDP is therefore necessary to ensure they are not left behind; especially as other assessments indicate little barriers to registering for



IDP status, and not registering may therefore be an individual choice - sometimes reportedly motivated by fear of conscription for men.

## IDPs in collective sites

As of December 2024, an estimated 79,000 IDPs lived in collective sites in Ukraine. While their residents make up only a small fraction of Ukraine's displaced population, these sites are places of high, and often compounding, vulnerabilities. Older people, individuals with disabilities, chronic diseases, and mental health issues are more frequently represented among the residents of collective sites than among both other IDPs, and the general population of Ukraine. These trends are reflected in especially low employment rates: only 47% of working-age IDPs in collective sites are employed, compared to 64% of IDPs overall and 72% of the general population.<sup>viii</sup>

Nearly all residents (90%) are staying long term (over 1.5 years), with the most frequently reported barrier to leaving collective sites being the lack of money to afford rent (72% of residents). Yet, **most collective sites lack the necessary infrastructure and resources to meet basic standards for care and support**. For example, 49% are not sufficiently accessible to people with disabilities. They are also heavily reliant on dwindling humanitarian support to provide basic infrastructure and utilities, leaving residents in precarious living conditions.

"I cannot say we are living. We are surviving. At first, when we had just arrived, there was some humanitarian assistance arriving and we were happy because otherwise we wouldn't have made it. Serhii has been admitted three times for his diabetes. You can apply to get insulin for free. But the one for free is not helping him so we have to buy another version ourselves and this is very expensive. I have always been good at saving, but the medical cost is breaking us." Svitlana and Serhii - living in a collective centre near Kharkiv

Moving beyond frequently insufficient short-term assistance to longer-term solutions for people living in these sites poses substantial challenges. Livelihood support to empower people to take control of their lives will be one critical component. However, many unemployed residents of working age face significant challenges in securing employment due to either their caregiving responsibilities or disabilities. **This suggests a two-track approach will be required, balancing an emphasis on resilience programming where feasible, with continued and potentially complex social service support for the most vulnerable.**

"I feel like a fish in a bottle in this place. I want to do something, but I don't know what, as we have too few options here. Some days pass fast others are endless. I am used to working, being active, but here I am just sitting, being inactive. Like that fish trapped in a bottle." Stas - living in a collective centre near Kharkiv

In this respect, **alternative housing solutions that might allow people to leave collective sites and live with more dignity in host communities are currently minimally available.** The

government is in the early stages of social housing reform, while humanitarian actors can only cover a limited number of sites with consolidation support and transformation into housing. Cooperation between development actors, businesses, and local authorities will be critical to shifting this blockage.

## Displaced working women

Displacement has exacerbated the socio-economic vulnerability of women in Ukraine, including those of working age. **Internally displaced women, especially those who are single heads of households, face heightened barriers to employment, reduced income, and limited access to social services, as well as increased burden of care responsibilities.**

Displaced working women face a number of complex challenges. Economic insecurity is a critical issue which disproportionally affects women. In 2024, 38% of women reported not having enough money for food or clothing, compared to 31% of men. Women were also more likely to fall into the lowest income bracket (<3,000 UAH/month), with 9% compared to 7% of men.<sup>ix</sup> Livelihood needs are most acute among older women, single mothers, and those with disabilities. Women-only IDP households report some of the highest levels of need, particularly in livelihoods and access to essential services<sup>x</sup>.

After receiving psychosocial support and protection services in the shelter, Tetiana, an evacuee from Avdiivka living in a collective site, managed to find part-time work. “It’s not easy, but it helps me meet some of my needs. Most importantly, I feel stronger and more confident. I’m no longer just surviving - I’m living again.”

Similarly, **women face barriers to employment and the burden of unpaid care work.** While many women are willing to reskill or re-enter the workforce, access to vocational training and language courses remains limited.<sup>xi</sup> Informal employment and unstable job opportunities are common, making it difficult for women to achieve economic independence. Displacement has also increased the burden of unpaid care work, especially for single mothers and older women caring for dependents. This reduces their availability for paid work and increases dependency, further deepening their socio-economic vulnerability.

Women also face increased risks of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). **People with diverse vulnerabilities, including displaced women, are continuously exposed to various forms of GBV.** Domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence (IPV), remains prevalent in Ukraine and the problem has been significantly exacerbated by the war. Survivors may not seek assistance due to IPV being seen as a private matter or because they do not feel confident of receiving proper support.<sup>xii</sup>

**Women's voices, particularly those of displaced women, often remain underrepresented in local decision-making processes and recovery planning.** Women’s rights organizations (WROs), especially grassroots ones, have limited access to funding and coordination mechanisms, restricting their ability to advocate for inclusive policies.

## Internally Displaced Youth

Despite being among the most affected by displacement, **Internally Displaced Youth (IDY) are rarely included in recovery decision-making processes at local or national levels.** Youth-led organizations or informal youth initiatives, particularly those formed in displacement, have little access to coordination platforms or formal mechanisms to contribute to recovery planning. Strengthening youth participation and inclusion in recovery would not only respond to their needs more effectively but also build ownership, civic engagement, and accountability.

In Ukraine, IDY **face a number of challenges once they move to safety, which prevent them from continuing their education, developing their skills, and accessing employment opportunities.** Limited access to services and income in places of displacement is a critical barrier to participating in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes and accessing employment. This includes limited local job opportunities in rural and frontline areas, financial constraints that hinder participation in TVET and employment, and poor internet connectivity, which restricts access to online learning platforms. IDYs are also particularly affected by legal and documentation barriers relating to missing IDs, diplomas, or registration papers.

“The difference between urban and rural youth opportunities is striking. In the city, youth can attend a variety of programmes. In villages, there are almost no such opportunities.” Key informant – local NGO in Chern

Currently, youth access to TVET, education and employment opportunities highly depends on their proximity to central locations or the frontline. **Access varies significantly depending on whether youth have been displaced to urban or rural areas, with proximity to the frontline and access to available infrastructure also shaping their opportunities.** Inadequate transportation infrastructure, absence of nearby TVET institutions, along with financial constraints that made transportation unaffordable, particularly for those displaced in rural and remote Hromada, further decreased access.

Youth identify low wages in the formal sector as a major concern, with many highlighting that entry-level positions often offer minimal pay despite requiring significant training and effort. The wage disparity with informal roles contributes to a perception that TVET is not worth the investment, particularly when paired with exploitative labour practices. IDYs are particularly affected, as they often face urgent financial needs and are more likely to accept low-paid or informal work in the absence of stable options.

“The trauma of the invasion has left a lot of young people feeling hopeless. Why bother building a career when you don’t even know if you’ll survive tomorrow?” Youth - Focus Group Discussion in Kharkiv

**The conflict has had a profound impact on the mental, emotional, and psychosocial well-being of youth, with widespread consequences for their engagement in education and employment.**

Displaced youth are even more at risk, and report experiencing persistent feelings of emptiness, anxiety, and hopelessness. Particularly among IDYs, mental health challenges are further intensified by the emotional toll of relocation, social isolation, and the pressure to adapt to unfamiliar communities. They report heightened levels of stress, guilt, and disorientation, particularly when disconnected from peer networks or lacking access to stable housing, employment pathways, or support services.

# Annexes

## Annex 1: Profiles of need for IDPs in Ukraine

IDPs face acute livelihoods and protection challenges compared to non-displaced people. When asked about the main challenge they face, the most frequently reported challenge is lack of income and financial resources first, and in larger proportions than non-displaced people. Similarly, around one third of IDPs also reported protection challenges as the main challenge they face, compared to 6% of non-displaced. 18% of IDPs faced extreme livelihoods needs compared to 11% of non-displaced people, and 22% of IDPs faced extreme protection needs compared to 8% of non-displaced people.<sup>xiii</sup> For other sectors, the difference in percentage was minimal.

In terms of livelihoods needs, employment rates are significantly lower among the IDP population than for non-displaced people, particularly for women, older individuals of working age, and those residing in rural areas and collective sites.<sup>xiv</sup> Qualitative assessments highlight that IDPs are less likely to report being officially employed compared to host community members, with most IDP households reporting relying on government social assistance as a primary source of income.<sup>xv</sup>

Livelihood challenges faced by IDPs are exacerbated by changes to IDP allowance payment introduced in March 2024.<sup>xvi</sup> While IDP benefits from the government were reported as a primary source of income by 52% of IDP households in 2024, the same proportion (52%) reported experiencing cuts to their IDP allowance.<sup>xvii</sup> The changes were meant to increase the employment of IDPs able to work. However, a comparison of the main reported sources of incomes by IDPs between July 2024 and January 2025 shows no increase in the percentage of IDP households reporting salaried work as their main source of income. This could indicate that willingness to work or reliance on benefits were not a barrier to employment and highlights the risk of IDP households relying on IDP payment losing their main source of income and leading to acute needs.<sup>xviii</sup>

Lower employment rates for IDPs are likely related to a shortage of jobs that match IDPs' sector-specific qualifications, low salaries for available jobs that fail to meet IDPs' expectations or cover the substantial expenses they incur through spending on rent, and fears of conscription for men, possibly discouraging them from registering with the employment centre or be hired in the formal labour market.

Beyond livelihoods, **IDP households much more frequently reported renting their current housing (67%), compared to non-displaced people (6%).** This leads to a significantly higher proportion of income being used for rent as an expense, with a **reported median monthly rent of 5500 UAH - an unsustainable expense for most compared to the reported median income per capita of 6750 UAH for IDP households.**<sup>xix</sup> **The unaffordability of rents for IDPs is particularly the case in Kyiv City and the Western Oblasts, and is sometimes a reason for returns to unsafe areas.**<sup>xx</sup> IDPs are also more likely to report needing legal assistance (30%) than non-displaced people (11%), most often to access compensation for damaged property (14%) and proper documentation (6%).



## Annex 2: Overview of Key National and Local Recovery Strategies and Plans

In alignment with the Ukraine Facility, the government of Ukraine has developed a Ukraine Plan for 2024–2027.<sup>xxi</sup> Presented at the first URC in July 2022, it promotes a "build back better" approach through 69 dedicated reforms for the whole of Ukraine while at the same time bringing forth the necessary reforms for greater EU integration. One of the Plan's priorities is to halt the decline in human capital including by creating the conditions necessary for IDPs and those under temporary protection to return and reintegrate, through investment in social, educational and health infrastructure as well as housing. However, absence of an officially endorsed strategic document undermines the diverse range of actors needed to participate in recovery. Rather than facilitate coordination, this plan widens gaps in coherence, accountability, and prioritisation, particularly in terms of how recovery efforts address regional disparities and displacement-related needs.

At the national level, recovery is regulated by a number of different resolutions, concepts and strategies that have been approved over the past decade. The most relevant documents are the following:

- The *Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons"* was adopted in 2015.<sup>xxii</sup> While not regulating recovery, it is a foundational legal instrument in Ukraine that defines the status and rights of IDPs, sets the framework for their registration and access to services.<sup>y</sup> Any meaningful recovery strategy — whether at national or local level — must be grounded in this legal recognition of displacement and the obligations it creates for public authorities.
- The *Concept for Integrated Territorial Development* was approved by the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development (Order No. 172) on September 22, 2022.<sup>xxiii</sup> The document introduces a tool for municipalities to plan spatial development in line with sustainability principles.
- The *State Strategy on Internal Displacement until 2025* was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on April 7, 2023 (Resolution No. 312-p).<sup>xxiv</sup> The Strategy outlines a comprehensive framework for supporting internally displaced persons across all phases of displacement—from evacuation and temporary accommodation to integration and durable solutions. It is accompanied by an operational action plan for 2023–2025. While the Strategy provides a solid normative basis, its integration into broader national recovery planning and resource allocation remains limited.
- The *Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 731 "On the Approval of Procedures Related to the Recovery and Development of Regions and Territorial Communities."* Approved on July 18, 2023, it is the only legally binding national act currently regulating how local recovery plans should be developed.<sup>xxv</sup> It provides a procedural framework for regional and community-level recovery planning.

- The *State Strategy for Regional Development (2021–2027)* was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 940 on August 13, 2024. This strategy provides the national vision for reducing regional disparities and promoting sustainable development. While the strategy was recently updated to reflect new realities, its revised Operational Plan has not yet been formally approved. Moreover, the strategy still requires further alignment with the current context of displacement and the specific recovery challenges faced by war-affected regions.
- The *National Strategy for Demographic Development until 2040* was approved in September 2024.<sup>xxvi</sup> This document focuses on the restoration of human capital in Ukraine, including through the re-integration of IDPs. The role of IDP Councils is not referenced. An Operational Plan was adopted in November 2024.

Local authorities such as municipalities are also under pressure to deliver concrete recovery results amid this fragmented national architecture. Published in 2023, the *Methodological Recommendations on the Planning and Organisation of Municipal Infrastructure Recovery*, developed with support from the EU and its Member States, provide essential operational guidance for local authorities.<sup>xxvii</sup> These recommendations consolidate recent legal frameworks and break down the complex tasks of damage assessment, risk mitigation, and infrastructure restoration into actionable steps. While not legally binding the document functions as a de-facto technical manual for municipalities navigating early recovery. In the guidance, local governments are encouraged to immediately start developing their recovery plans, even amid ongoing risks.

# Endnotes

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- <sup>i</sup> <https://uwf.org.ua/en/build-back-with-women-better-for-all-10-blocks-of-gender-inclusive-recovery/>
- <sup>ii</sup> Self-reliance refers to the ability of individuals, households or communities to meet their essential needs and enjoy their human rights in a sustainable manner and to live with dignity. (UNHCR) In other words, self-reliance is about helping people help themselves, so they can live with dignity and independence, even after losing everything.
- <sup>iii</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-solidarity-ukraine/eu-assistance-ukraine/ukraine-facility\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/eu-solidarity-ukraine/eu-assistance-ukraine/ukraine-facility_en)
- <sup>iv</sup> <https://berislav-mr.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Plan-vidnovlennya-ta-rozvytku-Beryslavskoyi-miskoyi-terytorialnoyi-gromady.pdf>
- <sup>v</sup> [https://spilnohub.org/rik-vidnovlennya-yak-gromady-ukrayiny-ruhayutsya-do-stalogo-rozvytku-v-umovah-vyklykiv/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://spilnohub.org/rik-vidnovlennya-yak-gromady-ukrayiny-ruhayutsya-do-stalogo-rozvytku-v-umovah-vyklykiv/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)
- <sup>vi</sup> [REACH, December 2024](#)
- <sup>vii</sup> <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-measuring-progress-towards-durable-solutions-internal-displacement-ukraine-synthesis-report-joint-analytical-framework-january-2025-enuk>
- <sup>viii</sup> [REACH, December 2024](#)
- <sup>ix</sup> Gendered socio-economic challenges in Ukraine: Analysis of gendered disparities and insecurities among men and women using data from reSCORE Ukraine 2024.
- <sup>x</sup> [REACH, January 2024](#)
- <sup>xi</sup> Working refugee women also face additional barriers when entering the job market, such as the recognition of diplomas and certifications.
- <sup>xii</sup> [Rapid Gender Analysis Ukraine 2024](#)
- <sup>xiii</sup> REACH CCIA, a composite framework designed to understand vulnerability to sectoral needs. For more information, see: [REACH, December 2024](#).
- <sup>xiv</sup> [REACH, September 2024](#)
- <sup>xv</sup> [REACH, March 2024](#)
- <sup>xvi</sup> IDP allowance update: The Impact of the March 2024 Law Amendment on Ukraine's Internally Displaced Population, IOM, September 2024.
- <sup>xvii</sup> [REACH, September 2024](#)
- <sup>xviii</sup> [REACH, February 2025](#)
- <sup>xix</sup> [REACH, September 2024](#)
- <sup>xx</sup> [IOM GPS, April 2025](#)
- <sup>xxi</sup> <https://www.unc-international.com/past-conferences/urc22/urc2022-recovery-plan>
- <sup>xxii</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1706-18#Text>
- <sup>xxiii</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z1421-22#Text>
- <sup>xxiv</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/312-2023-%D1%80#Text>
- <sup>xxv</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/731-2023-%D0%BF#Text>
- <sup>xxvi</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/922-2024-%D1%80#n225>
- <sup>xxvii</sup> [https://decentralization.ua/uploads/library/file/850/vidnovlennya\\_2023.pdf](https://decentralization.ua/uploads/library/file/850/vidnovlennya_2023.pdf)