



## IDPs: life before and during the coronavirus

### External online research of the needs of Internally Displaced Persons during COVID-19 full quarantine and easing process

#### SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

This external online research of the needs of Internally Displaced Persons during the COVID-19 full quarantine and easing process was conducted by the CF Stabilization Support Services in cooperation with InMind Analytics in May-June 2020 in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv and Zaporizhia oblasts.

The methodology consisted of a qualitative stage (4 online focus group discussions with experts) and a quantitative stage (148 expert interviews). 51% of respondents are Internally Displaced Persons. Respondents had to retrospectively describe the situation before the quarantine and pandemic, and outline what has changed since then.

The research is part of the project «Strengthening the participation of Internally Displaced Persons in democratic processes of local government». It is implemented by the Stabilization Support Services CO with the support of the Democracy Grants Program of the U.S. Embassy to Ukraine. Its aim is to facilitate the search for durable solutions to improve the living conditions of IDPs, to expand the capacity of local authorities to integrate IDPs through the establishment and support of four pilot IDP Councils as advisory bodies for IDPs.

#### TASKS OF THE RESEARCH:

- identify the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic situation, adaptation and integration of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs);
- identify community resources to support IDPs;
- identify problems and conflicts that may hinder long-term solutions for the integration of IDPs;
- identify potential solutions to identified problems;
- prepare recommendations for local and national programs.

#### MAIN CONCLUSIONS OF THE RESEARCH:

- The support measures introduced by the Cabinet of Ministers since the beginning of the pandemic have partially reduced the burden on IDPs, but have not been able to fully compensate for the effects of national quarantine, the corresponding economic downturn and unemployment.
- The most successful support measures were the extension of social benefits and the abolition of the requirements for physical identification during quarantine.
- Due to the loss of work or forced leave during quarantine, the economic situation in many families deteriorated, as evidenced by 59% of respondents. According to 49% of experts, IDPs have experienced difficulties in paying rent and utilities due to the pandemic.
- 47% of respondents noted the deterioration of emotional and psychological state – increased anxiety and pessimism.
- Since the beginning of quarantine, IDPs **have suffered most** from the closure of Entry-Exit Checkpoints (EECP) on the contact line and from unemployment and limited access to social benefits. The greatest impact of this issue on the lives of IDPs was stated by 61% of experts.
- Closed EECP have not only deprived IDPs of free movement between government-controlled and non-government-controlled areas, but also exacerbated the problem of separated families, care for the elderly and immobile persons, and access to health care and livelihoods.
- **Prior to quarantine**, the key problems were the purchase of housing (53% of expert respondents), rent (32% of expert respondents), proper living conditions (27% of expert respondents), the economic situation of families (45% of expert respondents), employment (34% of expert respondents). These issues became even more problematic during the quarantine.
- IDPs know little about existing support programs during the quarantine period.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

(according to the respondents and finalized by the experts of the CF Stabilization Support Services)

### HOUSING PROBLEMS

- increase funding for “Affordable Housing” programs;
- expand the list of housing that can be purchased under the program «Affordable Housing».

### EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

- programs to support small businesses and individual entrepreneurs affected by the quarantine;
- additional social protection for families with children for the period of quarantine in preschool and school educational institutions;
- provide local authorities with subventions for the implementation of public and other temporary work programs for the unemployed.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL BURDEN

- create additional local psychological assistance programs for IDPs;
- increase the hours of work and methodological support of school psychologists (after the start of the educational process);
- approve the procedure for psychological rehabilitation of civilians affected by the armed conflict, including IDPs and their families.

### CLOSURE OF EECP

- ensure the operation of all points of access on the EECP;
- ensure proper conditions for the transportation of people from the EECP to the contact line and back;
- equip all EECP with first aid posts;
- ensure the provision of observation conditions of normal quality for persons who need it;
- create an electronic system for tracking the load on the EECP (it will allow IDPs to plan trips more carefully and estimate the time it will take to pass the EECP).

### ACCESS TO SOCIAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

- conduct an explanatory campaign for Oschadbank and Pension Fund of Ukraine on the terms of physical identification;
- a 3 months extension from the date of termination of quarantine or restrictive measures related to the spread of coronavirus disease, of all positive measures provided by the Law of Ukraine «On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine aimed at preventing the emergence and spread of coronavirus disease (COVID -19)», and Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No.264 and 266 of 08.04.2020;
- recommend to the social protection bodies, pension fund and JSC Oschadbank to determine certain days and hours for work with IDPs and persons living in the temporarily occupied territories and inform the local population about it;
- legislate the responsibilities of local governments to adopt programs and / or take measures aimed at social adaptation and integration of IDPs;
- separate the payment of pensions to persons living in the occupied territories from the need to obtain an IDP certificate.