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ЛОГО "Громадська ініціатива Луганщини"

# **PUBLIC MONITORING ON REALIZATION OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION FOR IDP SCHOOLCHILDREN FROM EASTERN UKRAINE IN GENERAL EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS**

**THE COMPREHENSIVE STUDY REPORT**

**AUGUST-NOVEMBER 2015**

## INTRODUCTION

According to the data provided by Ruslan Kovbasa, the Director of the State Department of Protection of Children's Rights and Adoption of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, as of June 1, 2015, more than 167,000 children moved from Donbas and Crimea to other regions of Ukraine.

The largest groups of IDPs and their children were hosted by the closest to the conflict-affected area oblasts, including Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Zaporizhzhia and Poltava oblasts, as well as the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts controlled by Ukraine and the city of Kyiv. The official records indicate that the approximate number of IDPs currently living in Kharkiv oblast equals 173,000 and 24,000 IDPs in Dnipropetrovsk oblast, whereas the unofficial figures are much higher: 300,000 and 50,000 persons, respectively. Such a data mismatch demonstrates that there are some IDP families with children that have not registered with regional authorities for social assistance and, as the result, their children do not attend general education or vocational schools. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MON) has made efforts to ensure that all children of school age were enrolled in schools at the new places of residence, but still, the officials cannot confidently state that all IDP children are able to attend schools. Moreover, the parents themselves do not always resolve this issue in accordance with the child's best interests.

The information provided by public observers and journalists proves that the majority of host community members welcomed the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and showed readiness to help them. General education and vocational schools accepted new schoolchildren, even when they had to increase the number of pupils in the class and to proceed through the educational process without any additional state funding. However, there are also reports on certain issues and conflicts that give rise to new situations in general education/vocational schools in the cities/oblasts hosting IDPs.

The relevance of this project is determined by the life itself – the need to constantly collect information about the number of IDPs and their living conditions in host communities; to perceive the changes in the mood, attitudes and behavior of both sides; and in the present case, to monitor the process and level of implementation of the right to education for the citizens of Ukraine of school age who were forced to leave their homes and schools due to difficult circumstances.

## PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

**The purpose of this study** is to conduct the monitoring on implementation of the right to education for IDP children of school age in four oblasts of Ukraine.

**The objectives** of the monitoring are aimed at solving some of the existing problems:

1. To determine the general level of implementation of the right to education for temporary displaced persons.
2. To assess the learning conditions for temporary IDPs in general education/vocational schools and to measure the compliance of the educational environment with the right to education guaranteed by the state.

- To identify the major problems faced by temporary displaced children of school age (in particular, language adaptation, positive discrimination, psychological issues, access to the EIT (external independent testing) and other).

## STUDY METHODOLOGY

The study assumes the use of several data collection methods focused on presentation of the positions and views at the existing problem from the perspectives of diverse social groups – the educational process participants: administrations of general education/vocational schools, teachers and psychologists, parents of both IDP and local schoolchildren (or vocational school students).

Target Group	Study Method
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The officials of the Ministry of Social Policy (MSP) and the Ministry of Education and Science (MON), the Departments of Social Protection and the Departments of Education of the regional state administration offices and local government bodies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3 in-depth interviews with the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science (2) and the Ministry of Social Policy (1)</li> <li>Information requests to the Departments of Education of the regional state administration offices</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents of IDP schoolchildren from Donbas and parents of local schoolchildren</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>8 focus group discussions</li> <li>2000 questionnaires (150 questionnaires to each general education/vocational school, in total - 500 questionnaires in each oblast)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teachers/school psychologists working at schools IDP children attend</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12 in-depth interviews</li> </ul>

### Geography of the Project:

- Kharkiv oblast: Kharkiv, Chuguyiv, Iziurm and Zmiiv
- Donetsk oblast: Kramatorsk, Slovyansk, Krasnoarmijsk and Artemivsk
- Luhansk oblast: Svatove, Sievierodonetsk, Starobilsk and Rubizhne
- Dnipropetrovsk oblast: Dnipropetrovsk, Pavlohrad, Novomoskovsk and Kryvyj Rih

**Project implementing entities:** Implementation of the project was carried out by The European Research Association (Kyiv) in cooperation with the following NGOs: Donetsk press club (Kramatorsk), Hromadska Initsiatyva Luhanshchyny (Luhansk Public Initiative, Sievierodonetsk), Chuguyivska pravozahysna grupa (Chuguyiv Human Rights Group, Chuguyiv) and Krymska pravozahysna initsiatyva (Crimean Human Rights Initiative, Dnipropetrovsk).

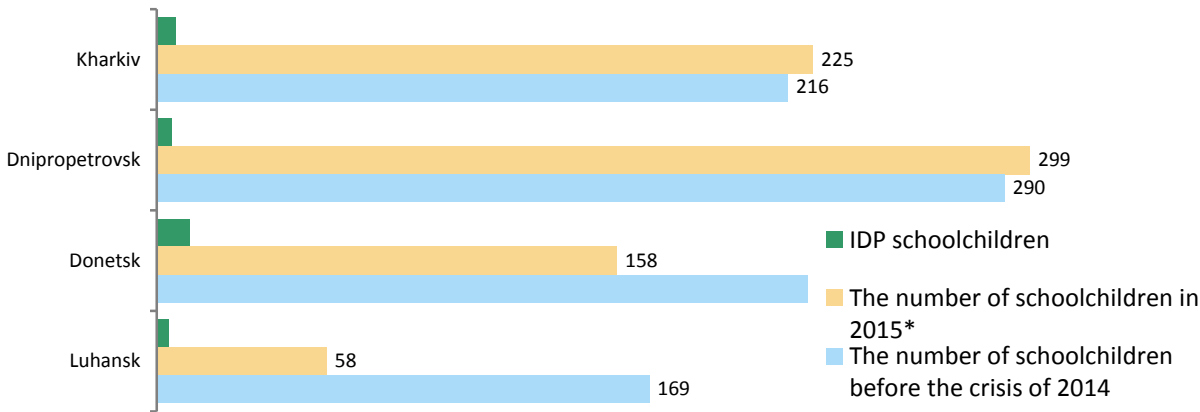
**The project was made possible by the support of the International Renaissance Foundation.**

# CONCLUSIONS

## IDP Profile

1. The official records demonstrate that as of July 2015 the number of children among the registered IDPs reached **177.057 thousand** persons. According to the information provided by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, as of May 29, 2015, **60.023 thousand** IDP schoolchildren were enrolled in general education institutions of Ukraine. More than half of IDP children were resettled to the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that remain under control of Ukraine and to the closest to the ATO zone Kharkiv and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. However, taking into consideration only the official data available makes it extremely **difficult to estimate the number of schoolchildren who were not able to attend school** following the resettlement to new places of residence.

**The number of schoolchildren in the regions (Jan. 2014 – Jan. 2015, thousand persons)**



Source: The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine  
\* in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts that remain under control of Ukraine.

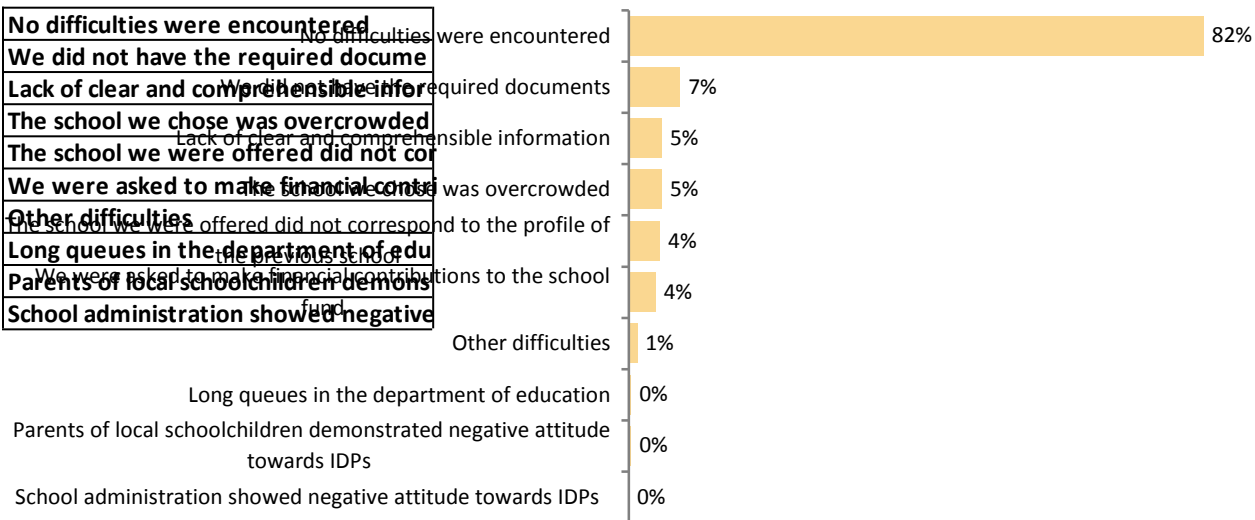
2. For the majority of IDPs fleeing from the conflict-affected area was an unplanned move, often perceived as spontaneous and temporary. In most cases, the whole families of the interviewed IDPs moved with them to new places of residence (64% of respondents). However, almost **every third** IDP respondent still **has relatives staying** in the temporary occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts.
3. Selection of the destination for resettlement was mostly conditioned by: **having relatives currently living in certain communities (40% of respondents)** who could provide temporary/permanent housing, as well as **close location of the new place of residence to the native one (36%)** – the choice associated with hopes that the displacement is only temporary, possibilities to go home from time to time or insufficient financial means for long-distance move.
4. The overwhelming **majority of respondents (82%) have already registered as IDPs** in a new place of residence. 67% of them were registered immediately after the resettlement in 2014. The major **difficulty** IDPs encountered during registration process was standing in the **long queues in the social care centers**. The other most mentioned issue is the need to re-register each time IDP moves, even when the person relocates within the same community.

5. The major problems faced by IDPs after resettlement: **household issues** (search for housing), **financial problems** (money shortages) and difficulty **finding a job**, **psychological issues** (depression, fears for own life and the lives of the loved ones) and negative attitude towards IDPs spread among permanent community members here and there.

**School Experience Before and After Resettlement**

1. Respondents assessed the studying experience in general education schools prior to resettlement as extremely high. They *emphasize very often* that the schools their children attended before resettlement were **better furnished and technically supplied**.
2. Most respondents still keep contact with schools in the conflict-affected area, but they do it without much hope to go back. According to interviewees, the vast **majority of schools** left in the ATO zone **continue to work** (72%), even though **the number of schoolchildren there decreased considerably** (50%). IDP parents report their children **often thinking of** the previous schools (88%) with **the predominant melancholic feelings** (88%).
3. The majority of the interviewed IDPs **placed their children in new local schools almost immediately** after (75%) or one month after resettlement – 20% of respondents. Only a small number of parents got their children enrolled in schools six months after resettlement – 3%, or a year later – 2%. The major obstacles for sending IDP children to new local schools usually include **expectations to be able to return home soon** (55%), the need to adapt to the host community (15%) and absence of the required documents (15%).
4. **Finding a new school** for a child after resettlement **was not that problematic**. 93% of respondents noted that finding a school to place a child in was a very or rather easy process. 82% reported encountering **no difficulties getting a child enrolled in a new school**. The lack of documents or information, as well as overcrowding in schools were listed as the major problems faced when registering a child for a new school.

**Difficulties with placing children in schools**

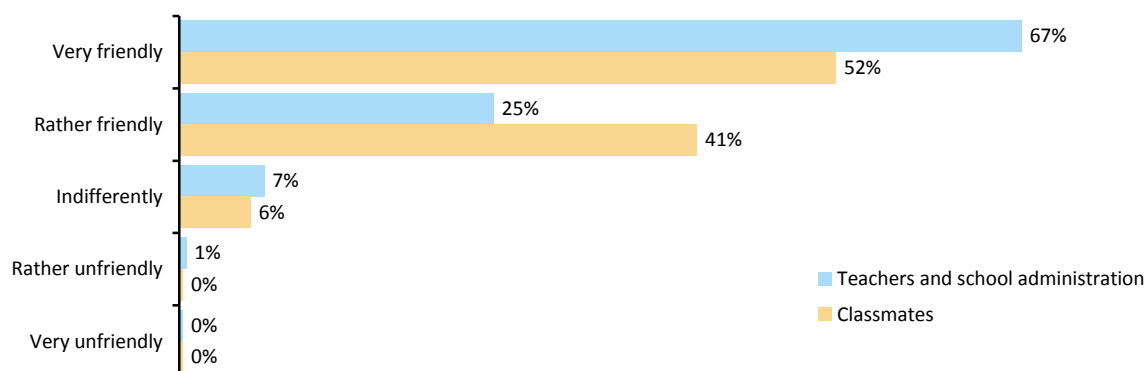


N=343

Question: Did you encounter any difficulties placing your child in school?

- Parents of IDP schoolchildren confirmed that their kids were **welcomed with a friendly attitude** in the new schools by all – school administration, teachers and classmates. 77% of respondents stated that their children **did not have to pass any knowledge testing or interviews** to be accepted in a host community school.

#### The attitudes of school administration and classmates towards IDP schoolchildren



N=351

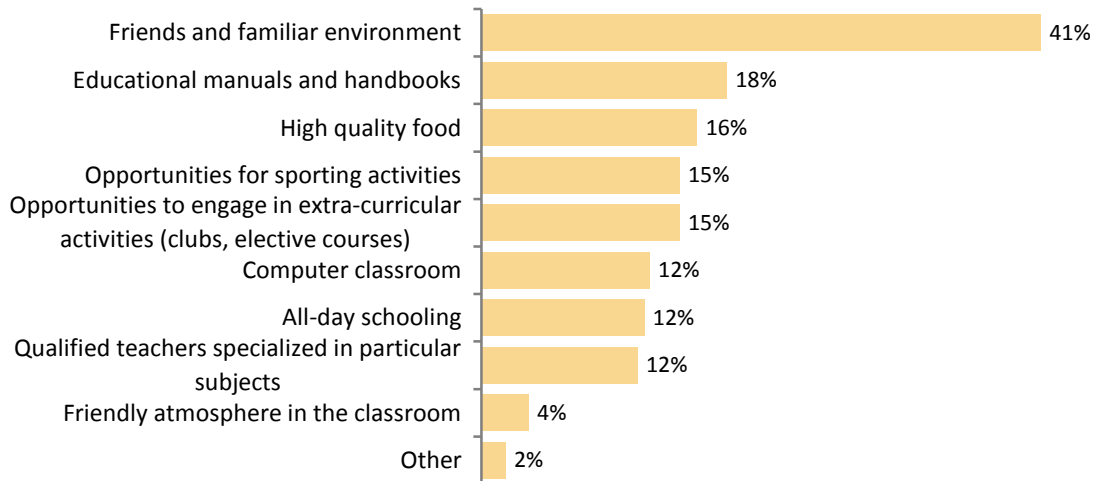
*Question: How was your child greeted in the new host community school?*

- According to IDP parents, **the adaptation process** to new schools **was quite successful** for the children. 94% of interviewees noted that their children encountered no difficulties going through the adaptation process. 92% of the interviewed IDP parents stated that they are **satisfied or rather satisfied with the quality of educational services provided** in new schools.

#### Respect for the Rights to Education of IDP Schoolchildren

- The study participants – parents of both IDP and local schoolchildren – **demonstrate high awareness of the children’s rights in schools, the most important of which is the right to free education and minimum medical care in general education institutions.** At the same time, respondents raise their concern over constant violations of these rights and their further transformation into simple declarative statements.
- The results of the questionnaire survey confirmed that the declared rights to free education are regularly violated as, in response to the question about the main causes of dissatisfaction with the educational services provided, the interviewed parents of schoolchildren put emphasis on "the need to pay for everything (repair works, textbooks etc.)". It is that particular issue 50% of parents of IDP schoolchildren and 51% of parents of local kids criticized the most.
- Although the quality of educational services provided is assessed by most parents as very high (62% of the interviewed IDPs), it still demonstrates significant gaps. IDP parents explain that their children usually miss friends and familiar environment. At the same time, they point out some examples of non-fulfilment of certain children rights in general education and vocational schools, such as lack of extra-curricular activities or elective courses, shortages of qualified teachers specialized in particular subjects, as well as shortages of textbooks and learning materials, computer technologies and equipment.

## What do IDP schoolchildren miss/lack?



N=226

*Question: What does your child miss/lack in the new school?*

### Problems Faced by IDP Schoolchildren and Potential Conflicts as Perceived by their Parents

1. Despite the relatively high evaluation of education quality, parents of IDP schoolchildren still complain about certain problems. Most IDPs express their concern over the far **worse financial situation in schools** their children have to attend after resettlement. IDP schoolchildren often need to **change the language of learning** – to switch from Ukrainian to Russian or v.v. – as school selection is mainly conditioned by its proximity to the current home. For most parents, **material costs** constitute the major problem related to schooling of their kids. This issue – the lack of financial support of the teaching and learning process – **may lead to development of local conflicts** with parents of host community schoolchildren.
2. Parents try to do everything they can to ensure that **IDP schoolchild would not have the feeling of otherness** in the school community. But their understanding of the situation generally comes down to **material and financial support** of the educational process, generally provided at the request of the school action groups. Therefore, parents pay much **less attention to psychological and linguistic adaptation of IDP schoolchildren**.
3. **Ignorance of these psychological problems may have negative consequences in the future** related to child's adaptation to school community or affect the school performance results. With the view to provide psychological assistance to IDP children who have witnessed the hostilities, **the psychologists' attention should be increased** even when parents deny the child's need for such help.

### Problems Faced by IDP Schoolchildren from the Perspective of Professional Groups

1. The school psychologists state that, in general, the **level of confidence** parents have in the **professionals** of their field is rather **low**. People are not willingly coming or bringing their children to consultations because of fears that this may result in worsening of discrimination against them who are already in a difficult situation. There is a certain type of a **barrier**

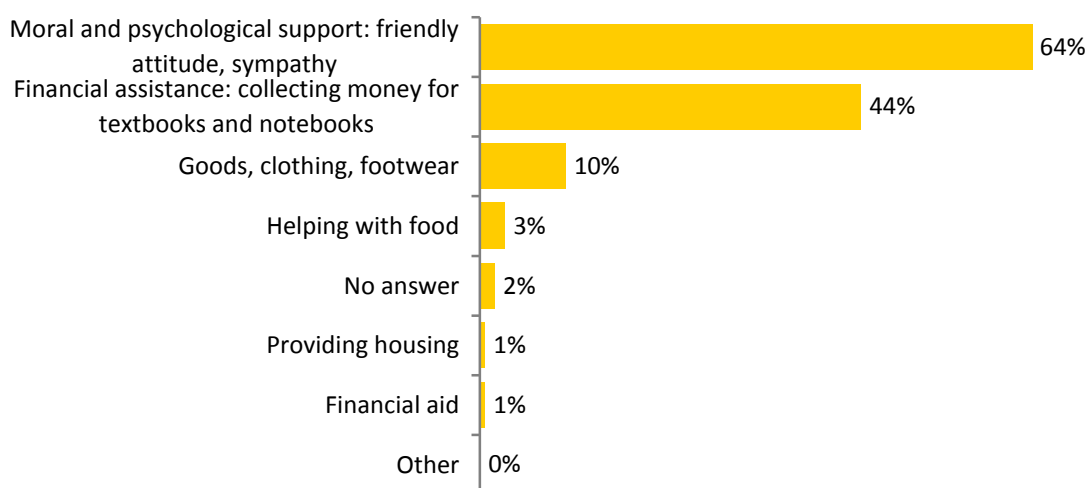
**between parents and psychologists** that is generally associated with **the low cultural level and low degree of psychological-help seeking** among the population of Ukraine. That is why many parents believe they are able to deal with the existing psychological problems on their own.

2. The appearance of IDP children in schools **was not a surprise for school administrations and teachers**. Special **teachers' meetings and meetings with the representatives of departments of education** were organized to disseminate the information on regulations ensuring school enrolment of IDP children. There were meetings held with healthcare specialists, psychologists and psychiatrists as well. At the same time, teachers and psychologists, in particular, those from the areas with high IDP numbers, express their concern over the **moral and psychological pressure of the situation they were placed in** when accepted IDP children in schools.

### IDP Schoolchildren and Local Community

1. The situation of the school enrolment of the new children displaced from the conflict-affected areas **was discussed at the parents' meetings**. The local residents' attitudes towards IDP schoolchildren are **mostly friendly**, they show sympathy and readiness to help kids adapt to the new community. The majority of the interviewed local parents have never heard about any problems related to placing IDP children in schools (84% of respondents). In addition, parents of local schoolchildren stated that **IDP kids had no difficulties with the learning process** (85%).
2. Many schools **organize**, in active cooperation with permanent community members, **activities designed to assist** IDPs. In addition, the obligatory parental contributions to class or school funds were made voluntary for IDPs. **42%** of the interviewed parents of local schoolchildren **confirmed having personally assisted IDP kids** and their parents, while 58% of the interviewees confessed providing no assistance. **Moral and psychological support (64%), as well as financial aid (44%)** are the most common types of assistance mentioned by those who help.

**Assistance provided to IDPs**



N=664

*Question: What kind of assistance did you provide to IDP children?*



3. Respondents emphasize the fact that **no serious conflict situations between IDP schoolchildren and their local peers have ever occurred**. Most respondents (98%) confirm that their children have no problems or conflicts with IDP kids in schools. Parents understand that the absence of such conflict situations is mainly attributable to the teachers' efforts, who have managed to connect with these children and find a common ground.
4. Both the IDP schoolchildren and permanent community members **hope for a rapid ceasefire and peace in the region** and usually look to the future with optimism. 57% of the interviewed IDPs and 54% of the surveyed local residents expressed their expectations for the situation improvement and peace establishment in the region.
5. Approximately half of the interviewed IDPs **plan to return to their previous places of residence (47% of respondents)**, whereas 31% of interviewees associate their future life with the new community. 22% of the interviewed parents of IDP schoolchildren have not considered this question yet. Those with expectations to stay in host community explain such intention by greater **employment and educational opportunities** provided to them and their children after resettlement (30%). The availability of well-paid jobs and being accustomed to the new place of residence are often listed as the push factors for staying in host communities.