

# DATA-DRIVEN MIGRATION GOVERNANCE: HOW IDP COUNCILS IN UKRAINE ENHANCE THE RULE OF LAW FOR DISPLACED POPULATIONS

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*The IDP Councils in Ukraine are an example of a successful representation of IDPs' interests that should be used in other countries with large-scale and protracted internal displacement crises.*

*The Humanitarian Policy Group and The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)<sup>3</sup>*

*We also believe it is critical to better utilize community-based planning. To assist in this, we recommend the establishment of consultative bodies that systematically engage IDPs and local communities in the development of laws and policies on internal displacement, solutions strategies and plans, as well as peace processes.*

*The UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Independent Review of the Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement Report, March 2024. URL: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/independent-review-humanitarian-response-internal-displacement>.

<sup>4</sup> Report. Shining a Light on Internal Displacement: A Vision for the Future. September 2021. URL: <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/91144>.

## **ABSTRACT**

The issue of internally displaced persons (IDPs) remains one of the most pressing challenges in migration governance worldwide, particularly in conflict-affected countries such as Ukraine. IDPs typically face immense legal, social, and economic integration barriers in the host communities. This article discusses the critical intermediary role of IDP Councils plays in Ukraine between displaced communities, local authorities, the national government, and international organizations.

Although IDP Councils neither provide services nor collect data themselves, they are crucial for ensuring that the rule of law is upheld by the effective use of needs assessments and available data to inform local policymaking for the better integration of displaced persons. In this way, the IDP Councils help bridge the gap between legislative frameworks and the realities of displaced persons' lives, ensuring that local and state policy is aligned with human rights and rule of law principles. By working with local governments and civil society institutions, IDP Councils help develop evidence-based strategies that address the needs of displaced individuals and their children. These strategies emphasize the importance of legal protections, equitable resource allocation, and long-term integration.

This article places the function of IDP Councils as key to promoting the rule of law in their evidence-based (data-driven) approach to migration governance. These bodies play a major role in advocating for the legal protection of internally displaced persons, so that their interests are considered when formulating local policies. The examples from Ukraine demonstrate that when legislative frameworks are informed by credible evidence and the real needs of displaced populations, the result is more effective, inclusive, and sustainable migration management

systems. However, challenges remain, particularly around legal uncertainty and gaps in the enforcement of migration laws at the local and regional level.

**Keywords:** IDP Councils, Migration, The Rule of Law, Ukraine, IDP, Host Communities, Public Governance, Local Policies, Evidence-based (data-driven) Approach, Russian Invasion.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Russian invasion of Ukraine, which began in 2014 with the illegal annexation of Crimea and the initiation of hostilities in Eastern regions of Ukraine, has resulted in the displacement of millions of people. The full-scale invasion in 2022 escalated the migration crisis, leading to one of the largest displacements in Europe since World War II. The total number of displaced people in Ukraine because of Russia's military aggression has increased from 1.7 million in 2014<sup>5</sup> to almost 5 million in 2024<sup>6</sup>. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), more than 5.4 million people are internally displaced, with 63% of IDPs being women and 37% men<sup>7</sup>. As of today, these internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes, creating an urgent need for comprehensive policies that support their socioeconomic integration into host communities.

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<sup>5</sup> The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC). Ukraine Country Profile. 2023 Overview dated 26-08-2024. URL: <https://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/ukraine/>.

<sup>6</sup> International Organization for Migration (IOM). Ukraine Internal Displacement Report. General Population Survey. Round 17, August 2024. URL: [https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/reports/IOM\\_GPS\\_R17\\_IDP\\_August%202024.pdf](https://dtm.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd11461/files/reports/IOM_GPS_R17_IDP_August%202024.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group Time. 02 October 2024. URL: <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/ukraine/gender-humanitarian-action-working-group-time-0200-0330-pm-date-october-02-2024-meeting-minutes-enuk>

These displaced populations face numerous challenges, including access to housing, employment, healthcare, and education. The local governments of host communities, often already strained by the impacts of the war, must adapt quickly to meet these needs. In response to these challenges, IDP Councils were established across Ukraine to represent displaced persons' voices, providing a platform for advocacy and collaboration. IDP Councils serve as advisory, representative, and mediating bodies. They contribute to creating and implementing regional and local policies and actively participate in local self-government.

IDP Councils facilitate dialogue between IDPs, local authorities, civil society, international organizations, and other stakeholders. While the Councils do not provide direct services or collect data themselves, they play a crucial role in using existing data and needs assessments to inform local policy development. Their involvement ensures that local policies are grounded in a clear understanding of the needs of displaced persons and their children, ultimately contributing to more sustainable integration government's efforts. IDP Councils operate according to principles of legality, transparency, collegiality, election, democracy, accountability, and responsibility to communities<sup>8</sup>.

As of August 2024, a comprehensive mapping of IDP Councils across Ukraine revealed the significant role these Councils play in local governance structures. The mapping covered all active IDP Councils, categorized by their presence across municipal, regional, district, and rural administrative levels. The data highlights that a total of 889 IDP Councils are currently operating in Ukraine, with 264 councils at the municipal level, 226 at the settlement level, and 262 at the

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<sup>8</sup> United Voices in Action. IREX. URL: <https://yednanniazaradyii.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/A4-rady-VPO-web-en.pdf>

rural level. Additionally, 112 councils' function at the district level, while 25 are established at the regional level, including Kyiv city as the capital of Ukraine<sup>9</sup>.

Out of 889 IDP Councils, 775 have officially approved their composition, and 722 have held founding meetings. Additionally, 344 Councils have approved their activity plans, while 96 have submitted annual reports<sup>10</sup>. These figures highlight the substantial progress made in establishing and organizing IDP Councils all over Ukraine, although further efforts are needed in the areas of planning and reporting to ensure their continued effectiveness.

IDP Councils were launched as consultative and advisory bodies to advocate for the rights and needs of internally displaced persons. These Councils operate at the intersection of displaced communities, local governments, and civil society organizations. Their role in local governance is to ensure that the interests of IDPs are heard and considered when formulating policies and implementing programs that affect their integration and well-being. IDP Councils have a unique position in the governance structure as they are not formal government entities but act as crucial intermediaries. This positioning allows them to operate with flexibility and focus on advocacy, ensuring that the needs of IDPs are consistently brought to the attention of local authorities. Their advisory nature enables them to participate in discussions about local budgets, housing allocations, healthcare access, and other key areas that directly impact displaced populations. While IDP Councils do not collect primary data or offer services themselves, their engagement with data is critical to their advocacy work. They utilize data produced by various actors, including governmental agencies, international organizations, and local NGOs, to assess the needs of IDPs.

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<sup>9</sup> [IDP Council Map over Ukraine](#)

<sup>10</sup> IDP Councils Portal. URL: <https://radyvpo.org.ua/en/>.

These needs assessments, often conducted by third parties, provide the foundational data that IDP Councils use to advocate for targeted interventions and resource allocations. This process ensures that local policies and programs are informed by accurate, up-to-date information on displaced populations' challenges.

The ability to work closely with both data and policymakers gives IDP Councils a strategic advantage. They interpret data to advocate for the most pressing needs related to housing shortages, employment opportunities, or healthcare access. This advocacy often leads to the formulation of local policies and programs that are responsive to the socioeconomic realities of displaced persons, thereby strengthening their integration into host communities.

Additionally, IDP Councils facilitate a two-way flow of information: they bring the needs and perspectives of IDPs to local governments and, conversely, they communicate governmental plans and policies back to the displaced peoples<sup>11</sup>. This role is crucial in building trust between IDPs and local institutions, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion for displaced individuals in their new environments. The unique position of IDP Councils within the local governance framework not only empowers them to represent displaced populations but also makes them instrumental in ensuring that local policies are grounded in data-driven insights. By bridging the gap between data and policymaking, they play a key role in shaping a more inclusive and resilient approach to migration management at the local level.

This paper explores how IDP Councils in Ukraine utilize data from needs assessments and existing resources to shape local policies that support the socioeconomic integration of IDPs and their

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<sup>11</sup> IDP Councils: From Adaptation to Impact An educational series on the creation and development of IDP Councils as an effective tool for protecting the rights and interests of displaced persons. <https://osvita.diiia.gov.ua/courses/idp-councils-from-adaptation-to-impact>

families. It examines how these Councils bridge the gap between data and policy, ensuring that the specific challenges faced by IDPs are accurately reflected in local governance strategies.

## **2. CONTEXT: THE SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES OF IDPS IN UKRAINE**

The displacement crisis in Ukraine, resulting from the Russian annexation of the Crimean Peninsula with the further occupation of Ukrainian municipalities on the mainland, as well as intensified military aggression by the full-scale invasion in 2022, has led to profound socioeconomic challenges for millions of internally displaced persons in Ukraine. These populations face ongoing difficulties in accessing housing, employment, healthcare, and education. The local governments of host communities, already under significant strain due to the impacts of the war, adapt quickly to meet the needs of IDPs.

### **2.1 Housing**

One of the most urgent issues for IDPs is housing. As of early 2024, direct damage to Ukraine's housing sector from war has reached approximately \$58.9 billion, representing over a third of all direct infrastructure losses. The destruction of homes and infrastructure has left millions without permanent shelter; about 250,000 buildings have been damaged or destroyed, including 222,600 private homes and 27,000 apartment buildings. Since the onset of Russia's aggression in Ukraine, large-scale destruction of residential buildings has displaced millions, with entire neighbourhoods in cities like Mariupol, Bakhmut, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro and Severodonetsk heavily affected. According to recent estimates, over 50% of residential buildings in many frontline cities have been damaged or destroyed.

Many IDPs rely on temporary accommodations provided by host communities, shelters, or collective centres. However, suitable long-term housing is limited, especially in regions heavily impacted by displacement. High rents, limited housing stock, and financial constraints exacerbate this scarcity. Consequently, around 3.4 million people across 1.4 million households live in damaged or destroyed homes, often in overcrowded or informal settlements lacking basic services. Many displaced families live in overcrowded conditions or in informal settlements, lacking basic services. These conditions highlight the urgency of creating sustainable housing solutions for displaced populations, focusing on both immediate repairs and long-term reconstruction in affected regions.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.2 Employment**

Employment is another significant challenge for IDPs. The scale of displacement and mobilization has significantly impacted the Ukrainian labour market. According to estimates by the National Bank of Ukraine, the labour force in the 15-70 age group had decreased by more than a quarter by early 2024 compared to 2021, largely due to the outflow of women abroad and mass mobilization efforts. Additionally, up to 20% of employees previously held civilian positions currently serve in the Armed Forces<sup>13</sup>.

For many IDPs, relocating to safer regions with limited job availability has only exacerbated employment challenges. Host communities often struggle to integrate the influx of displaced workers, leading to high unemployment rates among IDPs. This lack of employment drives

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<sup>12</sup> Kyiv School of Economics (KSE). Report on damages to infrastructure from the destruction caused by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine as of January 2024. April 2024. URL: [https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Eng\\_01.01.24\\_Damages\\_Report.pdf](https://kse.ua/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Eng_01.01.24_Damages_Report.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Olena Kutsokon. The impact of mobilization on the labor market in Ukraine: challenges, adaptation and forecasts for 2025. URL: <https://happy monday.ua/vplyv-mobilizatsiyi-prognozy-na-2025>.

poverty and hinders the social and economic integration of displaced individuals. Mismatches between employer demand and the skillsets of displaced jobseekers are common, prompting both workers and employers to expand their search geographically. Furthermore, barriers such as the lack of recognition for qualifications, discrimination in hiring, and limited access to job training further complicate the employment landscape for IDPs.

Many displaced individuals have lost their jobs due to the destruction of local economies in war-affected regions. IDPs face high unemployment rates, which contributes to poverty and hinders their integration into local communities. Barriers such as a lack of recognition for their qualifications, discrimination in hiring, and limited access to job training further compound this issue.

### **2.3 Healthcare**

Access to healthcare is critical for IDPs, particularly those with chronic conditions or mental health needs. The war has disrupted healthcare services in many regions, leading to overcrowded facilities and a shortage of specialists. Although there are legal guarantees for free healthcare services, IDPs frequently encounter barriers such as limited awareness of their rights, bureaucratic challenges, and gaps in service provision. This is especially difficult for IDPs with chronic illnesses or disabilities, who often struggle to obtain essential medications and specialized care. These barriers are particularly problematic for those with chronic illnesses or disabilities, who often struggle to obtain essential medications and specialized care. The report highlights cases where IDPs were unable to access necessary medications under government reimbursement programs or had to pay

out-of-pocket for critical services, underscoring systemic issues in healthcare accessibility for displaced populations<sup>14</sup>.

Logistical challenges in new locations also impact access, as IDPs are often resettled in areas with limited healthcare infrastructure. Additionally, the psychological impact of displacement is severe, with many IDPs suffering from trauma, anxiety, and depression, which frequently go untreated. Addressing these healthcare gaps is essential for supporting the well-being of displaced persons and requires targeted measures to reduce these barriers.

## **2.4 Education**

Education for displaced children and young people has been severely disrupted by the war. Schools in war-affected regions have been destroyed, repurposed, or are overcrowded due to the influx of displaced students. Even when education is available, IDP children face difficulties integrating into new schools, adapting to different curricula, or catching up on missed education. Lack of resources, overcrowded classrooms, and the trauma of displacement further impede the learning process.

Data-driven policies are essential to address these complex challenges. Comprehensive data collection and analysis provide an accurate understanding of the needs of displaced persons and are crucial for effective resource allocation and program development. Without reliable data, efforts to assist IDPs risk being inefficient or misdirected, leaving critical gaps in service provision. Data on housing availability, employment rates, healthcare access, and education outcomes is essential for ensuring that interventions are targeted where they are most needed. Policymakers

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<sup>14</sup> Ukrainian Helsinki Human Rights Union (UHHRU). Research on the rights of internally displaced persons to free medical care. URL: <https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Dotrymannia-prav-okremykh-katehoriy-vnutrishno-peremishchenykh-osib-na-bezoplatnu-medychnu-dopomohu.pdf>.

can use data not only to design policies but also to monitor their effectiveness and make necessary adjustments. This iterative approach, driven by data, allows for a more adaptive and responsive policy framework to meet displaced populations' evolving needs.

In this challenging context, IDP Councils have emerged as key actors advocating for the rights and needs of displaced persons. These Councils do not collect primary data, but they use existing data from various sources, such as needs assessments conducted by government agencies, NGOs, and international organizations, to influence local policymaking. Their ability to interpret and apply this data allows them to advocate effectively for policies that address the specific challenges faced by IDPs.

IDP Councils act as intermediaries between displaced persons and local governments, ensuring that data on IDP needs is reflected in policy decisions. By working closely with local authorities and using data to inform decisions, IDP Councils help shape policies on housing, employment, healthcare, and education that are more responsive to displaced populations' conditions. This data-driven approach leads to more targeted interventions and more sustainable integration efforts.

### **3. ROLE OF IDP COUNCILS IN NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND DATA UTILIZATION**

Rather than collecting primary data, IDP Councils specialize in utilizing existing data from a wide range of local, national, and international sources. These include comprehensive needs assessments conducted by local governments, national agencies, and international organizations, providing valuable insights into displaced populations' needs. The Council's focus on interpreting this data to identify the most critical areas where intervention is necessary, such as housing, employment, healthcare, and education.

By collaborating with data producers - ranging from local social service departments to international NGOs - the Councils ensure they have access to the most up-to-date information. This engagement allows them to present well-informed proposals to local governments grounded in real-time data, making their advocacy efforts more effective and aligned with the current realities of the IDP situation in each locality. Through collaboration with various stakeholders, IDP Councils ensure that local policymakers are well-informed about the conditions and needs of IDPs, contributing to more accurate and relevant policy decisions.

IDP Councils play an essential advocacy role by ensuring that data from needs assessments and other sources is actively included in local policy discussions. This process begins with reviewing available data and identifying key areas where the needs of IDPs are not being adequately addressed by existing policies or programs. Once these gaps are identified, the Councils present evidence-based recommendations to local authorities.

The Councils often participate in local working groups, committees, and advisory boards, where they present data-driven proposals on issues such as housing allocations, employment support programs, and healthcare services for displaced populations. Their advocacy efforts focus on ensuring that policies are tailored to the specific needs of IDPs in each locality rather than relying on generic or one-size-fits-all approaches. This targeted advocacy is particularly important in regions with high concentrations of IDPs, where the demand for services is acute and local governments must allocate resources efficiently.

IDP Councils help create more responsive and effective policies that better serve displaced populations by promoting the inclusion of needs assessment data in local governance processes. Across various regions of Ukraine, IDP Councils have demonstrated the effectiveness of using data to influence local policies, ensuring that the real needs of internally displaced persons are

reflected in governance decisions. Below are several case studies examples that highlight how IDP Councils have successfully utilized data to advocate for and implement targeted policies that improve the socioeconomic integration of displaced populations.

### **3.1 Bilotserkivska City Council (Kyiv Region)<sup>15</sup>**

In 2023, the Bilotserkivska City Council conducted a comprehensive need assessment of the community's IDP population which led to a significant revision of the local integration program for 2024-2026. The survey identified a critical need for professional retraining among the displaced. This data-driven approach allowed the Council to increase funding for social programs, including psychological and professional adaptation services, as well as support for children and individuals with disabilities. Following this analysis, the Council advocated for local authorities to allocate funding for job training programs, allowing IDPs to acquire new skills and facilitating their subsequent employment. Based on real-time data, this initiative is an example of how targeted interventions can directly address local needs and promote socioeconomic integration.

### **3.2 Chervonohrad City Territorial Community Advisory Council (Lviv Region)**

In Chervonohrad, the local IDP Council<sup>16</sup> successfully advocated for amendments to local regulatory acts, enabling IDPs to access municipal benefits and assistance on par with other vulnerable populations. By leveraging data from needs assessments and surveys, the Council highlighted the economic and social disparities IDPs experienced and pushed for legislative changes that addressed these inequities. This example demonstrates the power of data-driven

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<sup>15</sup> Programme for the integration of internally displaced persons for 2024-2026. Bila Tserkva City Council. [https://new.bc-rada.gov.ua/zhyteliam/putivnyk\\_dlia\\_vpo/sotsialna\\_pidtrymka.html](https://new.bc-rada.gov.ua/zhyteliam/putivnyk_dlia_vpo/sotsialna_pidtrymka.html)

<sup>16</sup> An advisory council for internally displaced persons has been established. Chervonohrad City Council. <https://sheptytska-rada.gov.ua/proyekty-rishen-sesiii/CHG-3777>

advocacy in influencing local legislative frameworks, ensuring that IDPs receive the support they need to integrate fully into host communities.

### **3.3 Ternopil Regional Military Administration**

The IDP Council in Ternopil worked with local authorities to establish an information platform<sup>17</sup> that coordinates the needs of IDPs with available services in the region. This platform provides up-to-date information on housing, employment opportunities, and social services, making accessing the support IDPs need easier. This initiative shows how digital tools, underpinned by accurate data, can streamline service delivery and improve communication between displaced populations and service providers, ultimately enhancing the integration process.

### **3.4 Sartan Military-Civilian Administration (Mariupol District, Donetsk Region)**

Despite the complete occupation of their original community, the IDP Council from Sartan<sup>18</sup> played a critical role in supporting residents who had relocated to government-controlled areas of Ukraine. By analysing data on the needs of displaced families, the Council helped develop new social programs specifically designed for IDPs fleeing occupied territories. This case highlights the importance of data in crisis situations and demonstrates how IDP Councils can adapt and respond to rapidly changing circumstances, ensuring that displaced persons receive the support they need even in the most challenging environments.

### **3.5 Kropyvnytskyi City Council (Kirovohrad Region)<sup>19</sup>**

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<sup>17</sup> The information and coordination platform for IDPs in Ternopil and the Ternopil region is available at: <https://vpote.info/>

<sup>18</sup> Free radio. In the Sartana community, about a third of the budget has been allocated to support displaced persons: how to get help. <https://freeradio.com.ua/u-sartanskii-hromadi-blyzko-tretyny-biudzhetu-vydilyly-na-pidtrymku-svoikh-pereselentsiv-iaak-otrymaty-dopomohu/>

<sup>19</sup> Kropyvnytskyi community. Research on local policies and programmes: How are IDPs involved in community life? <https://sss-ua.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Kropyvnytska-hromada.pdf>

The Kropyvnytskyi IDP Council successfully lobbied for the revival of a children's wellness program for IDPs, which had been defunded since 2022. By analyzing data on the psychological and physical health needs of displaced children, the Council presented compelling evidence to local authorities, leading to the reinstatement of the program. This example underscores the role of data in advocating for the continuation or restoration of essential social services, ensuring that the specific needs of IDP children are met.

In the end, these cases demonstrate the critical role that data plays in informing local policies aimed at supporting the socioeconomic integration of IDPs. Whether advocating for changes to social programs, leveraging digital tools for service delivery, or responding to crises, IDP Councils have shown that data-driven advocacy can lead to more effective and responsive policies that address the real needs of displaced populations.

#### **4. BRIDGING THE GAP: FROM DATA TO LOCAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

One of the key strengths of IDP Councils is their ability to collaborate with a wide range of stakeholders, including local governments, civil society and international organizations. These partnerships are essential for translating data into actionable policies that address the specific needs of internally displaced persons.

IDP Councils work closely with local governments to ensure that the data collected from needs assessments, surveys, and other sources is effectively used to inform policy development. In many cases, IDP Councils serve as intermediaries, facilitating communication between displaced peoples, institutions, and local authorities. This ensures that local governments are aware of the most pressing challenges faced by IDPs.

At the same time, IDP Councils collaborate with CSOs and international organizations, such as the UN, IOM, NRC, DRC, and local humanitarian organizations<sup>20</sup>, to collect and analyze data. These partners often provide valuable resources, including technical expertise and funding, to help IDP Councils advocate for the development of data-driven policies. For example, international organizations may conduct large-scale needs assessments or provide administrative data, which the Councils then use to support their policy proposals.

This collaborative approach not only ensures that the latest data inform local policies but also helps align the efforts of various stakeholders, creating a more coordinated response to the challenges faced by IDPs.

#### **4.1 Ensuring Local Policies Reflect the Real Needs of IDPs**

One of the core responsibilities of IDP Councils is to ensure that local policies reflect the real and evolving needs of displaced populations<sup>21</sup>. To achieve this, IDP Councils rely on a data-driven approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data to advocate for tailored solutions. For instance, when addressing housing needs, IDP Councils review data on housing stock availability, rental prices, and the demographics of displaced populations. They use this information to argue for policies that prioritize vulnerable groups, such as single-parent families, the elderly, or people with disabilities. This ensures that local housing programs are designed to meet the specific needs of these groups rather than applying a one-size-fits-all solution. For example, the Khmelnytskyi

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<sup>20</sup> Best Practices: Councils on Internally Displaced Persons. April 2024.  
[https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/idp\\_best\\_practices\\_ukr\\_1.pdf](https://globalprotectioncluster.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/idp_best_practices_ukr_1.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> IDP Councils. <https://yednanniazaradyii.org.ua/vpo/>

IDP Council<sup>22</sup>, based on the results of a study on housing programs for IDPs, initiated the development and approval of regulations for the formation and allocation of housing funds for temporary accommodation of IDPs.

In addition to housing, IDP Councils advocate for employment programs that are aligned with the skills and qualifications of displaced persons. By analysing data on local labour market demands, IDP Councils can propose job training initiatives or employment subsidies that target sectors where there is a shortage of workers. This helps to integrate IDPs into the local economy while addressing unemployment among displaced populations. For example, the Bila Tserkva IDP Council <sup>23</sup>, based on a sociological survey conducted among IDPs in 2023, identified a need for professional retraining. They encouraged local authorities to allocate funding for IDPs to acquire new skills and facilitate their subsequent employment. The Rivne Regional IDP Council<sup>24</sup>, in collaboration with the Regional Employment Centre, conducts informational campaigns and engages psychologists to work with IDPs who are hesitant to change professions and aim to reduce their dependency on state social assistance. The IDP Council in Voznesensk<sup>25</sup> partners with community organizations to provide grants for IDPs and carries out educational and informational outreach to promote entrepreneurial activities among displaced persons.

Healthcare is another area where IDP Councils ensure that data is used to inform policy. By reviewing data on healthcare access and the prevalence of chronic illnesses or mental health needs

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<sup>22</sup> Coordination Council on Internally Displaced Persons. Khmelnytsky City Council. <https://www.khm.gov.ua/uk/content/koordynaciyna-rada-z-pytan-vnutrishno-peremishchenyh-osib>

<sup>23</sup> Official opening of the IDP Centre in the Bilotserkivska urban community. <https://bc-rada.gov.ua/node/15824>

<sup>24</sup> Rivne. Barrier-free. <https://rivnerada.gov.ua/bf/vpo>

<sup>25</sup> A forum for displaced persons, 'Housing for IDPs,' was held in the Voznesensk community. <https://voznescensk.rayon.in.ua/news/809386-u-voznescenskiy-gromadi-vidbuvsya-forum-dlya-pereselentsiv-zhitlo-dlya-vpo>

among IDPs, the Councils advocate for expanded healthcare services, such as mobile clinics or mental health support programs, that directly address the challenges faced by displaced persons. For instance, in Bila Tserkva, based on the proposal of the IDP Council, funding was allocated in 2023-2024 for the provision of psychological services<sup>26</sup>, rehabilitation services for IDPs, and reimbursement for orthopaedic and ophthalmological services for children of IDPs. In Chernivtsi, the IDP Council's initiative led to the expansion of a program that provides financial assistance to community members, including IDPs, who suffer from severe illnesses. Through data-driven advocacy, IDP Councils play a crucial role in ensuring that local policies are not only responsive but also equitable, addressing the specific needs of the most vulnerable groups within displaced communities.

Despite the successes of IDP Councils in advocating for data-driven policies, several challenges remain in aligning data with local priorities. One of the main issues is the inconsistency or lack of reliable data. In some cases, data collected by international organizations or government agencies may not be updated regularly, leading to gaps in information. Additionally, some local governments may lack the capacity to analyse and interpret the data, which can result in delayed or inadequate policy responses.

Another challenge is the tension between the priorities of local governments and the needs of IDPs. Local governments are often constrained by limited budgets and resources, which can make it difficult to implement policies that fully address the needs of displaced populations. In some cases, local authorities may prioritize infrastructure projects or other initiatives that do not directly benefit IDPs, even when data indicates that urgent action is needed to support these communities.

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<sup>26</sup> The project 'Psychological Assistance in Wartime' has been running in Bila Tserkva for three months now. <https://bc-rada.gov.ua/node/14246>

IDP Councils navigate these challenges by engaging in continuous dialogue with local authorities and presenting data clearly and actionably. They work to build trust and foster a collaborative approach, emphasizing the long-term benefits of policies that support the integration of IDPs<sup>27</sup>. Additionally, IDP Councils often seek to align their policy proposals with broader local development goals, such as economic growth or social cohesion, to increase the likelihood of their recommendations being adopted. By maintaining a focus on data and advocating for policies that are grounded in the real needs of displaced populations, IDP Councils play a crucial role in bridging the gap between data and policy development despite the challenges they face.

## **5. CHALLENGES**

Despite their important role in advocating for the rights and needs of displaced persons, IDP Councils face several challenges in effectively using data. These challenges stem from a range of factors, including access to data, capacity building, and political context<sup>28</sup>.

A persistent challenge for IDP Councils is the lack of consistent access to reliable data. Although needs assessments and administrative data are frequently collected by international organizations, government agencies, and NGOs, this information is not always readily available to IDP Councils. In many cases, the data is either outdated or incomplete, complicating the Councils' efforts to advocate for policies that effectively address the current needs of displaced populations. Additionally, concerns over data privacy often restrict access to sensitive information about vulnerable groups, such as children or individuals with disabilities.

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<sup>27</sup> How personal displacement experience helps IDP council leaders advocate for rights and long-term solutions for all internally displaced Ukrainians. <https://www.unhcr.org/ua/news/displaced-themselves-and-now-advocating-rights-and-durable-solutions-all-internally-displaced>.

<sup>28</sup> How to establish the IDP Council in community: [https://yednanniazaradydii.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/new\\_YAk-stvoryty-radu-VPO-web.pdf](https://yednanniazaradydii.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/new_YAk-stvoryty-radu-VPO-web.pdf).

Another issue IDP Councils face is the difficulty of comparing data across different sources<sup>29</sup>. For example, a community leader may receive various detailed reports from villages within their jurisdiction, but if these reports are produced using different methodologies, it becomes challenging to analyse the information comprehensively. Additionally, discrepancies often exist between real-time data gathered through community assessments and the official data relied upon by authorities. This inconsistency can complicate efforts to develop well-informed policies and allocate resources effectively.

Data collection methods themselves can also be a barrier to inclusivity. Many assessments are conducted through online surveys, often failing to capture the voices of older adults, those with limited digital skills, and other vulnerable groups. As a result, the needs of these populations may be overlooked, leaving critical gaps in the data used to shape local and national policies.

Another challenge is the limited capacity of some IDP Councils to interpret and utilize data effectively. Councils are often composed of volunteers or individuals with limited technical expertise in data analysis, which can hinder their ability to fully leverage available data for policy advocacy. While some Councils have received training and support from international organizations, there is still a need for ongoing capacity building to ensure that Councils can effectively analyse and present data to local authorities.

In some cases, the ability of IDP Councils to influence policy is constrained by regional context and a lack of political will among local authorities<sup>30</sup>. Local governments, particularly in

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<sup>29</sup> Evacuation, resettlement and opportunities for IDPs in the Kirovohrad region in 2022–2024. Regional analysis of the human rights situation. [https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Kropyvnytskyi\\_zvit.pdf](https://www.helsinki.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Kropyvnytskyi_zvit.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> How to establish IDP Council in your community: <https://rokada.org.ua/iak-stvoryty-diievu-radu-vpo-utvovii-hromadi/>

areas with strained resources, may be reluctant to prioritize the needs of displaced persons over other pressing concerns. This can lead to resistance to policy proposals, even when they are backed by solid data. Additionally, political considerations, such as upcoming elections or shifts in leadership, can influence the willingness of local authorities to adopt policies that benefit IDPs.

Despite these challenges, IDP Councils have developed several effective strategies for working with data to influence local migration policies. For example, the IDP Council at the Kyiv City State Administration seeks to influence authorities by engaging the community through tools of local democracy. They have created an electronic petition and are collecting signatures in support of a proposal to adopt an integration program for IDPs in Kyiv city. Additionally, they actively engage with the media, organize public events, and appeal to central government bodies.

One key lesson learned is the importance of building strong partnerships with local governments, NGOs, and international organizations<sup>31</sup>. By working collaboratively with these stakeholders, IDP Councils can gain access to data, technical expertise, and resources critical for effective policy advocacy. Partnerships also help Councils align their policy recommendations with broader local development goals, increasing the likelihood of adoption.

Another important lesson is the need to present data clearly and actionably. IDP Councils have found that local authorities are more likely to adopt policy recommendations when the data is presented in a way that is easy to understand and directly linked to concrete actions. By providing clear, evidence-based recommendations, Councils can help local governments make informed decisions that benefit displaced populations.

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<sup>31</sup> IDP Councils. Status and opportunities: <https://intent.press/expert/localgovernment/2024/radi-vpo-yakij-status-ta-mozhlivosti/>

IDP Councils<sup>32</sup> have also learned the value of continuous engagement with local policymakers. Rather than presenting data as a one-time effort, Councils maintain ongoing dialogue with local authorities, providing regular updates on the needs of displaced persons and the effectiveness of existing policies. This sustained engagement helps build trust and ensures that the needs of IDPs remain a priority in local governance.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Despite challenges such as limited access to data, capacity gaps, and political constraints, IDP Councils in Ukraine have demonstrated that effective collaboration with local governments, NGOs, and international organizations can lead to significant policy changes that benefit displaced persons<sup>33</sup>. These Councils' experiences provide valuable lessons for other regions experiencing similar displacement crises.

Recommendations from the experience of IDP Councils in Ukraine can be applied to other contexts facing similar migration challenges. Whether dealing with internal displacement due to war, natural disasters, or economic instability, the following strategies can help other regions develop more effective, data-driven policies:

- It is crucial to provide better access to reliable and up-to-date data to enhance the ability of IDP councils to shape policies effectively. International organizations, government agencies, and local authorities should establish transparent and efficient systems for sharing data with

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<sup>32</sup> IDP Council Portal. <https://radyvpo.org.ua/>

<sup>33</sup> Temporary Special Commission of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on the Protection of Property and Non-Property Rights of Internally Displaced Persons and Other Persons Affected by the Armed Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine Analytical Report “Activities of Councils on Internally Displaced Persons”. <https://www.rada.gov.ua/uploads/documents/75353.pdf>.

IDP Councils. This would empower Councils with the necessary information to make informed and impactful advocacy efforts.

- Building the capacity of local organizations and expert communities to interpret and use data is essential for effective policy advocacy. Continuous training and technical support are essential to strengthen the capacity of IDP Councils in areas such as data analysis, policy advocacy, and stakeholder communication. By equipping Councils with the skills to interpret and leverage data, they can craft evidence-based policy proposals that are more likely to be implemented and to yield tangible benefits for IDPs.
- Encouraging greater commitment from local governments to address the needs of IDPs is crucial. IDP Councils should focus on building strategic relationships with key policymakers, framing their advocacy in ways that align with broader local development goals, such as economic growth and social cohesion. This alignment increases the likelihood of their proposals being integrated into local development plans.
- To overcome political (local) contextual barriers, local actors must work to align their policy recommendations with the broader priorities of local governments. By framing policies as solutions that benefit not only displaced persons but also the wider community, local actors can increase the likelihood of gaining political support for their proposals.
- The implementation of digital tools can also streamline data collection, improve service coordination, and facilitate communication between displaced populations, IDP Councils, and service providers. These platforms should be designed to provide real-time information and feedback, making it easier to address the needs of IDPs efficiently and effectively.
- Enhancing the formal recognition of IDP Councils within the governance framework would enable them to have a more structured and influential role in policy development. By

institutionalizing their advisory function at municipal and regional levels, the Councils' contributions can be systematically included in decision-making processes, ensuring that the voices of displaced persons are consistently heard and considered

- Finally, maintaining an ongoing dialogue between local actors, policymakers, and international organizations is key to ensuring that policies remain responsive to the changing needs of displaced populations. Regular communication and data-sharing can help build trust and foster more collaborative policy development processes.

Regions facing displacement challenges can enhance their responses by establishing advisory bodies modelled after Ukraine's IDP Councils, which can effectively influence policy decisions through data-driven insights. Prioritizing comprehensive data collection and analysis in collaboration with international organizations is essential for developing responsive and well-informed policies. Successful data-driven approaches rely on strong partnerships between local authorities, civil society, and international partners, ensuring a coordinated and efficient response to displacement issues. Furthermore, integration policies must prioritize long-term socioeconomic stability, facilitating the full integration of displaced persons into local economies and societies and fostering a more resilient and inclusive future.

Importantly, IDP Councils focus on individuals who may be driven by hopelessness but are in the process of rebuilding their lives in new municipalities. Rather than viewing IDPs as a social burden, they should be recognized as valuable assets and resources for host communities, contributing to their growth and resilience. This perspective is crucial for addressing the broader legal and development challenges related to global migration, with an emphasis on the rule of law and fostering inclusive societies. This contribution aims to inform and advance understanding within the academic, legal, and development communities, offering insights and practical

suggestions from the Ukrainian experience to address the current challenges of global displacement in alignment with the rule of law.