

Profiling the Population and Displacement Situation: Chuhuiivska hromada

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Content

- 1 Research objectives
- 2 Methodology
- 3 Key findings
- 4 Assessment results
- 5 Conclusion



1

Research objectives

Objectives

To profile displacement situations in the Chuhuivska hromada to inform the **strategic and programmatic direction** of local government entities, as well as international and national non-governmental organisations.



- To identify the IDPs' **displacement history** and their **preferred movement intentions**
- To understand **the socio-economic situation of IDPs**: access to employment and adequate housing
- To understand how IDPs perceive **access to public services**
- To understand IDPs' perceptions of **social cohesion** in the hromada
- To identify potential **pull factors** for households displaced from the hromada abroad and within Ukraine (non-returnees)



2 Methodology



Methodology

- **Data collection methods:**
 - 10 Key informant (KI) interviews with the representatives of local authorities and NGOs (4-11 March 2024)
 - 2 focus group discussions (FGDs) with IDPs in Chuhuiv and Velyka Babka and 1 FGD online with non-returnees (18-29 March 2024)
 - Joint analysis session online with local authorities and IDP Council (26 June 2024)
- **Assessment coverage:** Chuhuiv, Velyka Babka, and Kochetok
- Data is considered indicative rather than representative.

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3

Key findings

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Key Findings

- ✓ Many IDPs arriving from northeastern Kharkivska, Donetsk, and Luhanska oblasts reportedly aimed to settle long-term in Chuhuivska hromada due to the severe security situation in their areas of origin.
- ✓ Ongoing security instability had pushed local residents to safer areas; refugees abroad were unlikely to return soon.
- ✓ Major issues that IDPs reportedly faced included job losses, low income, inadequate housing, and reliance on pensions and humanitarian aid.
- ✓ Most public services were reportedly available; healthcare access was deemed poor in rural areas, and online instruction in schools reportedly lowered the quality of education for children.
- ✓ IDPs reported having positive relations with the host community, but low participation in public life due to security concerns was also observed.

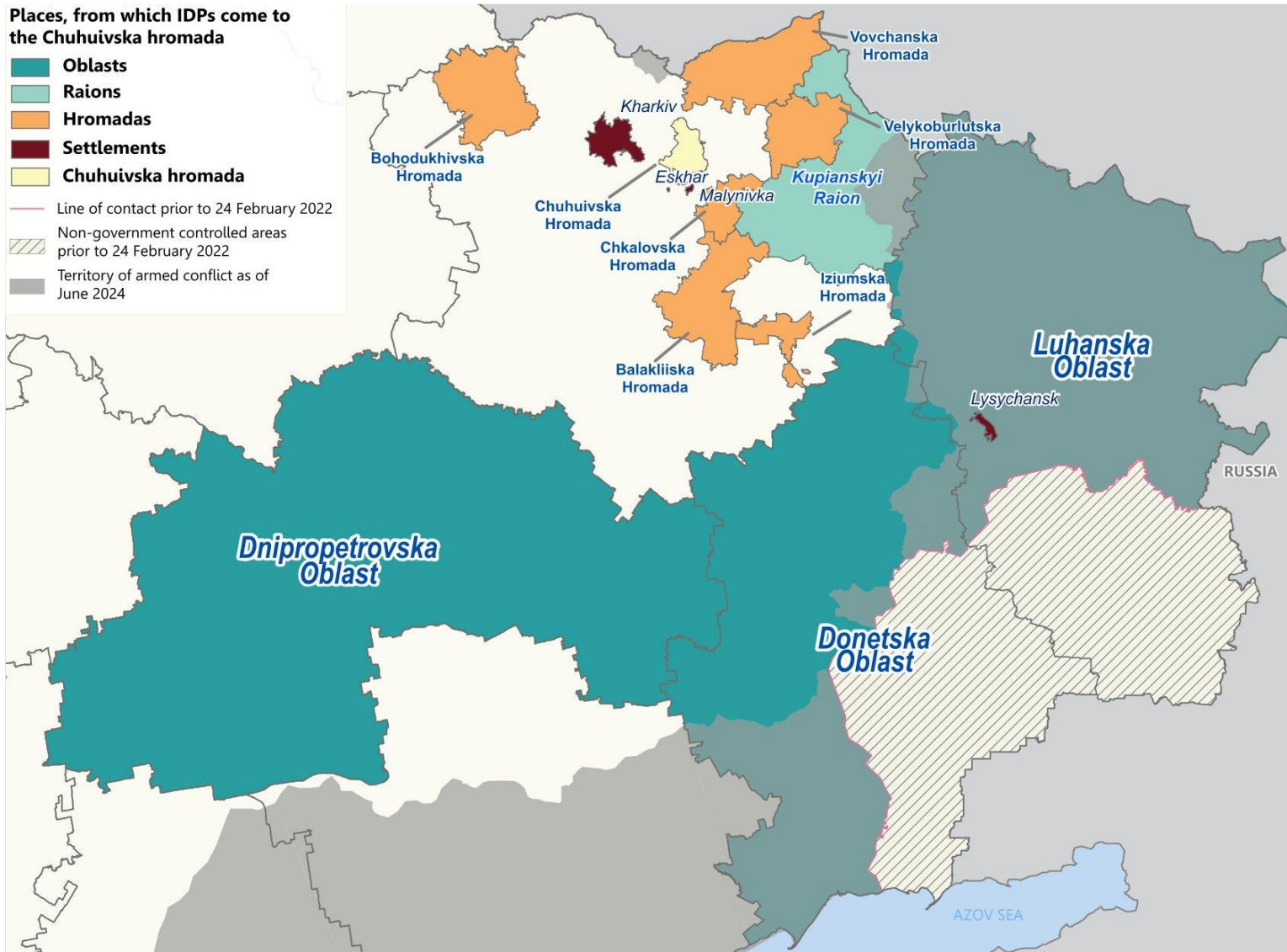
A decorative network graphic in the top-left corner, consisting of a series of interconnected nodes (dots) and lines. The nodes are colored in shades of red and grey, and the lines are thin and grey.

4

Assessment Results

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IDPs' Area of Origin



Pull factors for IDPs arriving to the hromada:

- Seeking safety from shelling
- Proximity to the area of origin
- Proximity to Kharkiv
- Access to essential items in the hromada

Push factors for IDPs leaving the hromada:

- Seeking better safety
- Reduction of IDP payments from 1 March 2024

IDPs' Movement Intentions

According to most KIs, IDPs preferred to stay long-term in the hromada, although a few KIs mentioned that IDPs' long-term stay was contingent on security situation in the hromada.



Half of KIs suggested that IDPs planned to eventually return home.



Most IDPs, especially those whose housing was destroyed, **did not have a viable prospect of return**. Yet the current place of residence of 12,000 IDPs registered in the hromada is not definitely known.



A bomb hit our apartment building, but we managed to escape... A lot of people had already left the city, and we were going down to the basement to replenish our food supplies. We had to leave when the electricity was cut off. I've been living here for a year and a half, and I can't imagine how people live in the settlement which I left. – A male IDP, Chuhuiv



Retaking of the area of origin by the Government of Ukraine and improvement of the security situation there were reportedly among the key conditions required for IDPs to return home.

Movement Intentions of the Local Residents



The majority of KIs reported that the local residents were more likely to stay long-term in the hromada.



Half of KIs observed circular migration of the hromada's local residents out of and back to their settlements due to unstable security situation.



Push factors for local residents leaving the hromada:

- Unstable security situation
- Online education for children in the hromada
- Seeking employment opportunities
- Destroyed housing
- Business relocation
- Provision of families with necessities in other areas



I think that there are people who come back, stay for a while, and want to leave again, to relocate outside the hromada... They might have already settled there and come here to collect their belongings, visit their extended family. They realise that the threat is still here, that's why they live like this, between two cities, or maybe between two regions. – Government representative

Destination Oblasts for Chuhuivska Hromada Local Residents



According to KIs, the local residents' choice of place of relocation depended on their financial capacities: longer distance required higher expenses.



Local residents under 40 were reportedly more adaptable to a change of residence in more remote and safer regions.



Sentimental ties with the home city and financial difficulties related to renting accommodation in the area of displacement are the main reported return drivers for the local residents.

State of the Local Labour Market Since February 2024

The majority of KIs identified proximity to the frontline as a negative factor influencing the hromada's economy, leading to business and large enterprise closure/relocation, as well as significant damages to production facilities.

The issues of the local labour market, reported by KIs:

- Limited employment opportunities, especially in the rural areas, since the beginning of the full-scale war
- Shortage of specialists on the labour market due to local population displacement and conscription policies
- Most open vacancies were in male-dominated occupations

Reported employment sectors with the highest demand for employees:

- Public utilities services
- Wholesale and retail
- Healthcare
- Public administration
- Construction
- Agriculture



We also had industrial sites where battery production facilities were located. There was also a high demand for workers. Now they don't operate either. Therefore, compared to the pre-war time, there are severe employment problems nowadays. – Government representative

Socio-Economic Situation of IDPs in Chuhuivska Hromada

IDPs reported substantial decrease in their income and decline in living standards in comparison with the times preceding the full-scale war. Pre-invasion they had access to more employment opportunities, received higher salaries and were more likely to find a job for all adult HH members.



Caring responsibilities for preschool and school-age children, studying online, hampered employment of female IDPs.



Before the war, my wife and I worked together, but now my wife needs to stay at home with our children due to schools teaching online. – A male IDP, Chuhuiv



IDP HHs with children or a member with disability were more likely to report experiencing a huge financial burden. According to FGD, such HHs relied on social benefits and humanitarian aid to meet basic needs.



It is very difficult for children, there is not enough money to buy diapers and food is expensive. I ask to pay special attention to children, it is very difficult for them, there is not enough money to provide for them. – A female IDP, Velyka Babka

Barriers to Employment of IDPs in Rural Areas



IDPs reported challenges finding a job in Velyka Babka since there were **no enterprises** and an employment centre is available only in Chuhuiv.



Due to the limited employment opportunities in rural areas, IDPs were looking for a job in Chuhuiv and Kharkiv.



Labour migration was constrained **by lack of transport routes** and care duties resulting from **lack of childcare services**.



It is difficult to find a job in our village of Velyka Babka, enterprises do not operate here. Some people go to work in Kharkiv and Chuhuiv. Currently there is a regular bus three times a day. Before that, there was a bus twice a week, and even before that there was no transport at all, there was no way to leave the village. – A female IDP, Velyka Babka



Even if we register at the Employment Center, we cannot find a job in our village, and we cannot go to work to the city because there is no one to leave the child with. – A female IDP, Velyka Babka

Access to Sustainable Housing

According to KIs, low-income families experienced the highest housing vulnerability due to rent and utility costs. Reduction of IDP payments in March 2024 had likely exacerbated such housing vulnerability.

IDPs in the hromada **predominantly rented accommodation**, and frequently they did so on simplified rental conditions. Rent for one-bedroom apartment varied from **2,000 to 4,000 UAH**.

Half of KIs reported that both IDPs and local population had equal access to the housing rental market with the same rent rate or rental agreements.

Local budget constraints due to the war prevented the hromada from scaling up at its own cost social housing projects for IDPs.

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I want to emphasise that in order to fully reintegrate IDPs, first of all, we need to provide housing that will be affordable, with only utility costs to be covered... People spend more money on rent than they receive as IDPs. And from March 1, many of them will stop receiving IDP payments at all... – Government representative

Difficulties in Maintaining Adequate Housing Conditions



The types of accommodations that IDPs accessed in the hromada reflected specifics of urban and rural housing markets: IDPs in Chuhuiv mentioned living predominantly in rented apartments, while those in Velyka Babka, situated in rural area, were renting private houses. Employed IDPs were more likely to report the affordability of their current housing.



After their displacement to the hromada, IDPs often had to cover additional housing costs (i.e. repairs, furniture, and household appliances). The joint analysis session with local actors revealed that some IDPs were most likely not informed that local charities and humanitarian hubs provided basic household appliances.



Now we have settled in a little, but at first, when we just arrived, we had nothing. We ate standing up. The boiler wasn't functioning, there was no hot water. The apartment is old, but now we've managed to get our life normalised. We have three children, we sleep on the floor on the mattresses.

– A female IDP, Chuhuiv



Some IDPs also highlighted deteriorated quality of housing and lack of living space for all household members.

Access to Public Services

IDPs in Chuhuiv positively reported on the availability of all types of services, while those in Velyka Babka emphasized the limited availability of the key services and necessity to commute to Chuhuiv to access them. Moreover, IDPs in the village identified the limited and damaged transport infrastructure as the main barrier to accessing public services.



Satisfactory perceived availability of **administrative and social services** in Chuhuiv and Velyka Babka.



No **healthcare** facilities and pharmacies in Velyka Babka, as well as hindered physical access to them due to damaged roads and only few buses running between Velyka Babka and Chuhuiv.



Dissatisfaction with the quality of online **education**. Lack of knowledge and low ability to maintain classroom discipline.



Limited availability of financial services in Velyka Babka.



There are no ATMs, and we can't withdraw cash from our pension cards. Last week, a terminal was installed in the store, while previously it was possible to pay only in cash. – A female IDP, Velyka Babka

Social Cohesion



The majority of KIs (6 out of 10) perceived the relations between IDPs and host community as **friendly and conflict-free**.



There are no conflicts between IDPs and non-displaced persons. The hromadas, from which people relocate to us, are close. Everyone has relatives and friends there. Local people hosted them at their homes... The locals were compassionate and understanding towards IDPs. – Government representative



IDP reported that they feel supported by the host hromada and comfortable due to **the absence of social division based on the displacement status**. During the FGD in Velyka Babka, IDPs shared that intergroup trust had built up gradually, **and the effective leadership of the starosta** (the head of the village) fostered social cohesion in this settlement.

Public Participation

The research findings suggest that IDPs' participation in public life was relatively low, mainly due to security concerns, low awareness of public activities, and lack of time due to employment obligations.

Political/organisational activism: IDPs engage in activities of the IDP Council, youth centre 'Campus,' and cultural centre 'Image.'

Community participation:

- Community cleanup events
- Volunteering aimed to support Ukrainian servicemen (i.e., weaving camouflage nets)
- Activities for children/school assemblies
- Events, trainings, and meetings in the territorial centre of the Chuhuivska hromada



If they ask for help, people attend the events. We had the lake cleaned of debris. Cleaning days to remove the garbage on the territory will begin soon. Few events are held during the war. Humanitarian organisations come to us to arrange psychotherapy clubs, and people attend them. We weave nets and make candles for the military. – A female IDP, Velyka Babka

Reasons for Non-Return of Residents Displaced from Chuhuivska hromada



The residents, who had't returned yet, described the prospects of return to the hromada as too risky and psychologically daunting due to the **proximity to the frontline**/border with the Russian Federation, possible escalation of the hostilities, mine contamination of the area, and regular shelling of the hromada's territory.



Refugees and IDPs from the hromada mentioned safety, quality of education, psychological well-being, and future prospects of **children** as important reasons for non-return to the area situated close to the zone of active hostilities.



Economic instability, rising costs, and limited employment opportunities in Ukraine since the beginning of the full-scale war further incited refugees from Chuhuivska hromada to remain abroad where they mentioned being provided with social and economic support.

Conditions for the Return of Residents Displaced from Chuhuivska Hromada

Improvement of Ukraine's security situation was reported as one of the key conditions necessary for their potential return to the hromada.

Non-returnees' perceptions on the necessary improvement of living conditions in the hromada beyond security situation:

- Comprehensive reconstruction of damaged educational and social institutions
- Increased amount of social assistance payments for single mothers with children
- Development of public and recreational spaces (sports grounds, public swimming pools, etc.)
- Support for small businesses
- Complete demining of the hromada's territories
- Development of communal and transport infrastructure
- Development of local cultural heritage



5

Conclusion



Conclusion

- ✓ The displacement situation in Chuhuivska hromada is shaped by ongoing hostilities near its borders and demographic shifts amidst **significant security uncertainty in the area** and the wider region.
- ✓ Chuhuivska hromada hosts many **IDPs** seeking safety and essential goods and services **from heavily affected areas**.
- ✓ **Local residents have also been displaced from Chuhuivska hromada** due to security threats, economic downturns, infrastructure deterioration, and disrupted public services (healthcare and education).
- ✓ The **sustainable settlement** of IDPs and the return of local populations to the hromada rely on safety, the restoration of essential services, infrastructure, and effective social welfare policies.
- ✓ **Balancing high humanitarian needs with economic stabilisation** in the area requires dialogue among humanitarian and governmental stakeholders to develop effective response strategies.

Thank you for your attention!



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