UKRAINE

Capacities and Challenges of IDP Councils

Findings from a Nationwide Assessment

May 2025

Cover photo: group discussion on issues related to the functioning of IDP Councils.
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About Stabilization Support Services

The Charitable Organisation "Charitable Foundation Stabilization Support Services" was established in response to the challenges arising from the occupation of parts of Ukraine's territory, the large-scale forced displacement of people, and the broader social consequences of the armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The Foundation began its work in March 2015 as an informal initiative group and was officially registered as an independent Ukrainian charitable organisation in June 2016.

In 2019, the Foundation launched a number of innovative projects, including the pilot initiative of Councils on Issues Related to Internally Displaced Persons (IDP Councils), which was scaled nationwide in 2021. The Foundation's team co-authored the Model Regulation on IDP Councils, which was approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine on 4 August 2023 (Resolution No. 812) and directly contributed to the widespread establishment of such Councils across the country throughout 2023. The Foundation has become a key platform for the development of the legal framework and institutional support for IDP Councils, helping hromadas to promote the inclusion and integration of displaced populations.

As of today, the Foundation's team includes over 200 professionals working across 23 oblasts of Ukraine. It has built a strong and influential network capable of identifying the needs of affected populations and translating them into systemic changes at both local and national levels. Key areas of focus include the integration of internally displaced persons into host communities, support for the national social protection system, and the continued development of the IDP Council network. More information is available at: https://sss-ua.org/.

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Key findings and recommendations

IDP Councils, established as advisory bodies under local authorities, remain a relatively new and under-researched phenomenon. Their official mandate, defined by the government's Model Regulation, is to represent the interests of internally displaced persons in local decision-making. In practice, however, their work is far from uniform: some Councils take on an active advocacy role in their hromadas, others focus mainly on operational tasks, while some remain inactive altogether. The absence of centralised records, regular monitoring, or in-depth research has left even basic questions about how IDP Councils function and what they need unanswered. **This assessment was initiated in response to the growing need to better understand how IDP Councils actually operate at the local level and what kind of support they require.**

The research combined both qualitative and quantitative data collection with geographic stratification, making it possible to obtain representative findings at both macro-regional and national levels. Expert interviews and focus group discussions helped uncover the internal dynamics that influence how Councils work in practice.

Conclusions and recommendations

Since the Model Regulation that governs the establishment and functioning of IDP Councils is advisory rather than mandatory, local authorities have considerable discretion in how — or whether — to implement its provisions. As a result, the organisation and operations of IDP Councils vary significantly across hromadas, both in terms of task implementation and overall engagement. Among IDP members themselves, this inconsistency is often driven by a lack of prior experience in the public or NGO sectors, limited understanding of budgeting processes, or unclear expectations of the Councils' role.

Despite a limited mandate and scarce resources, the findings confirm that many IDP Councils have become meaningful platforms for displaced people and authorities to jointly seek localised, practical solutions that help IDPs integrate into the community and exercise their rights. When supported by local governments and driven by active civic participation, IDP Councils can serve as effective vehicles for advancing the rights of displaced persons. In Ukraine, IDP Councils play an important role in supporting IDPs' participation in local democracy and civic initiatives. While they do not hold legal entity status or provide direct services, their advisory role contributes significantly to shaping local policy and community-based strategies.

To further strengthen the institutional capacity of IDP Councils, it is essential to identify the barriers they face in implementing the Model Regulation and provide tailored support. The following issues emerged as priority areas for reform or targeted assistance:

1. Representation and engagement of members

- **The composition of most IDP Councils reveals a strong gender imbalance — on average, 76% of members are women. Membership also includes veterans, persons with disabilities, and older people. However, only 48% of members are internally displaced persons, which is below the 50% minimum threshold set by the Model Regulation.** This shortfall is particularly pronounced in western oblasts, where IDP representation averages just 41%. Many of these Councils were established before the Model Regulation was adopted (40%), and according to informants some hromadas may have misunderstood it as a mandatory requirement, leading to the formation of inactive or poorly motivated Councils. The problem of representativeness is further compounded by limited engagement. At least one in five (22%) Councils reported relying on only one or two active individuals, usually the head or deputy. Qualitative findings confirm that many Councils struggle to attract motivated

members, especially among displaced persons. In some cases, the Council became inactive shortly after formation due to a lack of sustained interest or purpose.

Recommendations.

To the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, in cooperation with NGOs and IDP Councils: develop criteria for forming Councils that reflect both community needs and the intent of the Model Regulation.

To local authorities:
 - Review the composition of their IDP Councils and consider re-establishing them where necessary, ensuring that members are motivated and capable of fulfilling their duties on a voluntary basis.
 - Work to communicate the purpose, role and responsibilities of Councils to potential members and to raise awareness among the IDP population.
 - In hromadas where Councils are inactive and all attempts to engage IDP participants have failed, it may be appropriate to consider suspending or formally dissolving them. Alternative models — such as participation in other advisory bodies, creating a designated IDP focal point within local government, or establishing working groups — should be explored. In frontline areas, mixed Councils representing a wider range of conflict-affected groups may be particularly relevant.

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2. Organisation of work and resource provision

- **IDP Council meetings are not always held regularly, once per quarter, as stipulated in the Model Regulation. In 2024, 22% of IDP Councils met less than once per quarter.** Furthermore, a significant proportion of the meetings conducted in 2024 focused on establishing internal processes rather than engaging in advocacy or discussing current challenges related to IDP support. Specifically, 63% of IDP Councils reported that they discussed only or mostly general coordination issues rather than thematic ones. A commonly cited reason for the irregularity of meetings was the limited number of active members within the IDP Council. This issue was particularly acute in rural and settlement hromadas, where 28% and 24% of IDP Councils, respectively, met only once every six months or less frequently, compared to 14% in urban areas. Such irregularity was largely attributed to logistical difficulties and unstable Internet access.

Recommendations.

To IDP Councils:
 -To ensure systematic and sustained work of the IDP Council, activity planning should be guaranteed. To improve understanding of organisational aspects, members of IDP Councils are encouraged to complete the educational course "IDP Councils: From Adaptation to Influence".[1]
 - Meetings of the IDP Council should be conducted in various formats — online, offline, or hybrid (with some members attending in person and others joining remotely) — depending on logistical conditions and access to the Internet.

To local authorities: to ensure the provision of necessary logistical and technical resources for holding meetings, including premises, technical equipment, and transport — where available and required.

- **IDP Councils are not legal entities. They operate on a voluntary and unpaid basis, without dedicated budgets or permanent staff, limiting their ability to conduct regular monitoring, produce timely analysis, or organise information and training events.** In practice, their work often depends heavily on the political will, support, and resources of the authorities under which

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[1] [English translation] Educational Portal "IDP Councils: from adaptation to impact".

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they were established. Even basic resources — such as office supplies, a laptop, or access to a meeting space — are often lacking. In many cases, Council members purchase office supplies and equipment using their own funds, which compromises the sustainability of their engagement. This resource gap restricts the ability of Councils to meet regularly, plan their work, or implement activities in a consistent and coordinated way. Nearly all Councils that receive any form of material support (94%) rely on the authority under which they were created. Most often, this support comes in the form of access to a meeting room (58%) or provision of basic equipment (44%). All administrative positions within the Councils remain unpaid.

Recommendations.

To the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development: *as the lead government body responsible for state policy on the protection of internally displaced persons, should ensure structural support for IDP Councils at the local level. One approach could be the creation of one dedicated staff position in hromada, responsible for supporting Council operations — including documentation, correspondence, and preparation of legal paperwork — through a nationwide network of IDP Advisors or Assistants, similar to the state-funded veteran assistant model.*

To local authorities: *to assess and respond to the material and logistical needs of IDP Councils to enable their full functionality.*

To NGOs: *to support this by launching small-grant competitions for Council-led initiatives that can scale successful solutions, with visibility and recognition at the national level.*

To international donors: *to prioritise support for IDP Councils' efforts to monitor local policy and drive sustainable, long-term change.*

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3. Institutional role and influence on policy making

- **The effectiveness of an IDP Council's work is contingent upon the presence of motivated and active members, as well as established links and interest on the part of the institution under which it operates.** When local authorities show no interest in cooperation, IDP Councils lose their capacity to influence local policymaking. In such cases, they often take on part of the responsibilities of government agencies in the area of social protection, or they shift their focus entirely to civic engagement. Due to their advisory status, decisions made by IDP Councils are not binding. According to the Model Regulation, recommendations and proposals adopted by a Council are to be reviewed by the head of the institution under which it is formed, but in practice, this requirement is often ignored, offering no guarantee of implementation. This significantly undermines motivation, erodes trust in institutions, and reduces the Council's ability to attract new members.

Recommendations.

To the government: *to amend the Model Regulation on IDP Councils to make it mandatory for local normative legal acts affecting or concerning the lives of IDPs to be reviewed in consultation with the relevant IDP Council.*

To the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development:
 - Regularly monitor local authorities regarding the review and implementation of recommendations and proposals adopted by IDP Councils.
 - To establish sustainable communication between the leadership of the institution under which the Council operates and the Council's members.

To local authorities:
 - Should seek to identify and engage active IDPs to participate in the work of the Council.

- To treat IDP Councils not only as data-gathering mechanisms, but as participants in the local budget cycle. This requires ensuring access to up-to-date information and involving them in the planning and coordination of local programmes for IDPs.

To NGOs, together with IDP Councils*: to foster the leadership capacities of IDPs, raise awareness among hromada residents about the role and activities of IDP Councils, and actively participate in Councils' work by becoming members themselves.*

- **Councils do not always have access to statistical and other data required to fulfil their responsibilities, nor do they consistently possess the expertise to analyse such data.** The situation is especially challenging when it comes to oblast- or national-level data: for instance, information on housing stock under the balance sheet of central authorities or other territorial hromadas is often inaccessible not only to IDP Councils but, in some cases, even to local authorities. The absence of proper data management and exchange between different levels of government can result in inaccurate planning of services and local budget expenditures. Furthermore, a lack of transparency regarding statistical data and budgets at local, oblast, and national levels may contribute to increased corruption risks.

Recommendations.

To the government: *to ensure the existence of the well-organised and up-to-date data and statistics related to IDPs and housing stocks on national level and create standard procedures for obtaining, storing and sharing such data on the local level.*

To local authorities: *to ensure access to public information and facilitate access to statistical data necessary for the Council's functioning.*

To NGOs: *to support IDP Councils in obtaining the data they require — including by submitting formal requests — as well as provide expertise for data analysis, and deliver training on how to use public platforms, access open information, and understand accountability mechanisms related to non-disclosure.*

- **While 92% of IDP Councils consider themselves to be on the right track, many are not fulfilling their core functions — namely, monitoring local policies and providing recommendations to the authorities under which they operate.** In 2024, over half (55%) did not submit any recommendations, and nearly three-quarters (74%) made no proposals. Moreover, 73% of respondents could not identify a single type of activity that an IDP Council should not be carrying out in the hromada. In practice, most of the Council members' time is spent on activities not foreseen in the Model Regulation, such as delivering direct assistance to IDPs, providing consultations, and collecting information on their needs. This often reflects the reality that active Council members are also engaged in wider civic work and respond to a range of urgent needs, making it difficult to separate short-term emergency aid from longer-term structural change. In many cases, Council efforts are driven by personal requests from displaced families living in the same hromada. The lack of national-level solutions, passive engagement from local authorities, and a limited understanding among IDPs themselves about the Council's actual mandate all contribute to unrealistic expectations. In such an environment, prioritising long-term advocacy over immediate support can place an emotional burden on Council members.

Recommendations.

To the government: *to ensure the development of the systemic national responses, which could be realistically implemented on the local level in key areas such as housing, employment, education, and IDP integration.*

The Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, in collaboration with NGOs and IDP Councils: to design a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of local programmes for IDPs, aligned with the State Policy Strategy[2] and national legal standards.

Local authorities and IDP Councils on the raion and oblast levels: to assess the performance of local Councils, provide guidance to clarify their roles, and help share successful practices that demonstrate the Council's value in improving the lives of displaced people. Councils should maintain a clear focus on the responsibilities outlined in the Model Regulation. Cultural or sports events and community clean-up initiatives — while often visible outcomes of Council members' engagement — should be recognised as supportive rather than core activities.

IDP Councils:
 - To develop strategic and operational work plans either independently using available methodologies[3] or with NGO support.
 - To maintain and regularly update a partnership database, including information on NGOs working in the hromada. To support this, IDP Councils should engage in relevant coordination meetings with clusters[4] and use the Services Advisor platform[5].

Donors and NGOs: to consider developing a joint methodology to assess hromadas' infrastructure and capacity to support IDPs, including both municipal and NGO-funded efforts aimed at long-term integration.

4. Capacity building and cooperation with partners

- **Support from NGOs can both enhance and undermine the effectiveness of IDP Councils.** The lack of legal entity status forces IDP Councils to rely on NGOs for receiving direct financial support and managing funds, which creates an imbalance of influence and conflicting priorities. NGO representatives who are members of IDP Councils may shift the focus of activities in accordance with the objectives of the projects they implement. The aspiration for financial independence encourages active members of the Councils to establish separate civil society organisations, which eventually leads to a reorientation towards other activities.

Recommendations.

To NGOs: to adhere to the Protection Cluster's recommendations on cooperation with IDP Councils.[6] Material support can be provided through a tripartite memorandum of cooperation between the NGO, the IDP Council, and the authority under which it was established. It is essential that the goals and areas of cooperation outlined in the memorandum align with the Council's mandate and work plan. Support from civil society and charitable organisations should be viewed as a temporary tool to support the development and sustainability of the IDP Council.

- **The vast majority of IDP Council members (83%), according to their representatives, lack the knowledge and experience necessary to plan and implement the tasks assigned to them.** Notably, there are gaps in communication and management skills, as well as in understanding legal, bureaucratic, and budgetary processes, advocacy, and the development and evaluation of local targeted programmes. Council members often lack the expertise and/or the network of contacts in

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[2] [English translation] Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Resolution No. 312-r dated 7 April 2023 "On the Endorsement of the State Policy Strategy on Internal Displacement until 2025 and the Approval of the Operational Action Plan for its Implementation for 2023–2025".

[3] [English translation] Stabilization Support Services and IREX, Methodology for Conducting a Strategic Planning Session for an IDP Council.

[4] Contact list for coordination in Ukraine.

[5] **Website:** https://ukraine.servicesadvisor.net/uk.

[6] Recommendations on Cooperation between Humanitarian Organisations and IDP Councils, Protection Cluster Ukraine, 2024.

the civic and public sectors necessary to effectively escalate IDP-related requests, strengthen advocacy efforts, or initiate new proposals.

Recommendations.

To NGOs:
 - To prioritise long-term expert support for IDP Councils rather than short-term training. This support should include the possibility to receive consultations on matters arising in the process of organising the Council's activities and fulfilling its mandate.
 - When designing training programmes, it is crucial to consider the limited experience of IDP Council members and to avoid excessively theoretical content that is difficult to apply in practice. Training materials should be clear, include examples from the experience of other Councils, and be written in accessible language with practical guidance. Trainers should tailor their delivery based on the participants' level of preparation.
 - together with **IDP Councils on raion and oblast levels** *to develop document templates and checklists for typical procedures (requests to local authorities, advocacy letters, reports).*

To local authorities: ensure legal support by assigning relevant responsibilities to a designated staff member within the legal department.

- IDP Councils have highlighted the need for structured platforms that facilitate communication and collaboration with other Councils — both nationally, to exchange tools, share successes, and build peer support networks, and regionally, at the oblast level, to foster joint efforts, mentoring, and coordination on evolving needs and data. Among Councils that have participated in peer exchange activities, 67% identified these opportunities as one of the most valuable forms of support. However, only 39% reported having regular contact with other Councils — whether to solve operational issues or engage in deeper collaboration. Alongside the need for horizontal coordination, IDP Councils also lack structured engagement with national authorities. None of the respondents were able to cite any examples of sustained collaboration with central government bodies. The Coordination Hub under the former Ministry for Reintegration was mentioned as a rare exception. To function effectively and consistently, IDP Councils require the support of a national-level coordinating body — one that can facilitate their work, set common standards, and represent the collective interests of Councils at times of crisis or transition.

Recommendations.

To the government:
- To reinstate the Coordination Hub on Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons.[7]
- To amend the Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 812 (dated 04.08.2023) to introduce a mechanism for registering active IDP Councils at the national level with regular updates. The Resolution should also define the coordinating role of **the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development** *nationally and of oblast-level Councils in relation to those operating at raion and hromada levels. This structure would ensure that IDP Councils have access to national policy discussions — and that the government, in turn, has access to accurate, ground-level information.*
 - A national network of IDP Councils to be established based on the existing **NGO "IDP Councils' Congress"** *to standardise practices and provide strategic guidance across all levels. Capacity-building efforts should be embedded in a mentorship model, enabling peer learning and support among more and less experienced Councils.*

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[7] [English translation] Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine Resolution No. 330 dated 18 April 2023 "On the Approval of the Procedure for Interaction between Executive Authorities and Local Self-Government Bodies in the Development and Implementation of State Policy on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons".

Content

Context

> *Councils on Issues Related to Internally Displaced Persons (hereinafter – IDP Councils) are consultative-advisory bodies created to ensure the participation of internally displaced persons in local governance. Established based on the Model Regulation on IDP Councils[8] approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, these Councils are intended to serve as formal platforms through which IDPs can influence local policy, articulate their priorities, and contribute to the design and evaluation of programmes affecting them.*
>
> *According to the Model Regulation, their core mandate includes:*
> *- representing the interests and rights of IDPs before local authorities;*
> *- participating in the development and monitoring of local policies and programmes that impact displaced populations;*
> *- initiating proposals, providing recommendations, and engaging in dialogue with authorities and other relevant stakeholders;*
> *- promoting the integration and inclusion of IDPs in social, economic, and political life at the local level.*
>
> *The Councils are composed of IDPs who permanently or temporarily reside in the respective territory, local authority employees, NGO representatives and other motivated people. Members are selected through procedures established by local authorities and serve on a voluntary basis. While they do not hold decision-making powers, their role is explicitly designed to shape and influence policy through advocacy, consultation, and collaboration.*
>
> *The Model Regulation allows IDP Councils to be established at different administrative levels (hromada, raion and/or oblast), depending on the local context. While it does not define a formal hierarchy or division of responsibilities between these levels, this structure enables Councils to engage with different tiers of government and potentially complement one another in their functions.*

As of April 2025, more than 800 IDP Councils[9] operate across various levels (oblast, raion, and hromada) in Ukraine. Today, IDP Councils function not only within all oblast and raion administrations, but also in most territorial hromadas. They gained widespread traction in 2023, following the approval of the Model Regulation.

The establishment of IDP Councils emerged as a response to large-scale internal displacement and aimed to address the discrimination and vulnerability of the affected population, while also ensuring the search for durable solutions for internally displaced Ukrainians, in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.[10] IDP Council members are empowered to influence decisions related to their rights and interests, as well as to contribute to improving living conditions within host communities. This is a significant step towards the integration of IDPs and the strengthening of their social resilience, a development that has also been recognised internationally.[11]

The Model Regulation provides IDP Councils with a wide-ranging and integrated set of responsibilities. These include monitoring and analysing public policy, engaging with local authorities, advocating for changes that benefit both internally displaced persons and broader hromada communities, liaising with stakeholders, and voicing the interests of displaced populations. Nonetheless, expectations placed on IDP Councils are often inflated, frequently due to a limited understanding of their intended role and tools for engagement. In the absence of formal mechanisms

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[8] English translation] Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 812, dated 4 August 2023, "On the Approval of the Model Regulation on the Council on Internally Displaced Persons".

[9] According to data from the IDP Councils Mapping Dashboard, as of August 2024.

[10] UN Document E/CN.4/1998/53/Add.2 (Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement), ratified by Ukraine on 17 April 1998.

[11] "Independent Review of the Humanitarian Response to Internal Displacement", Humanitarian Policy Group (HPG), March 2024.

for performance review or standardised reporting, discussions around their success or shortcomings remain largely impressionistic.

Civil society and charitable actors have played a key role in strengthening IDP Councils. In January 2024, the Protection Cluster, in partnership with the charitable foundation "Stabilization Support Services", published practical guidance for humanitarian organisations on how to collaborate effectively with IDP Councils.[12] Through grant-funded initiatives, NGOs continue to offer technical support and expert advice, facilitate training to build member capacities, and provide strategic planning sessions, as well as organise local and regional forums. It was during one of these forums that participants agreed to form a unified platform, leading to the establishment of the NGO "Congress of IDP Councils".[13] To support new and prospective members, an online training course was launched via the Diia.Education platform,[14] and a national IDP Councils Portal[15] was created to enable ongoing exchange and coordination.

Despite growing recognition and numerous supporting efforts, the lack of a central registry, regular monitoring, or in-depth research has created a gap in understanding even the most basic aspects of IDP Councils — their operations, capacities, and needs. **This assessment was launched in response to the increasing demand for clearer insights into how IDP Councils function at the local level and what types of support they genuinely require from involved stakeholders.**

The methodology combined qualitative and quantitative data collection, underpinned by geographic stratification. This enabled both macro-regional and national-level representativeness, while also providing a more nuanced understanding of internal dynamics shaping the Councils' effectiveness — through expert interviews and focus group discussions. The quantitative approach was carefully adapted to field conditions, including limited communication infrastructure in some hromadas, the absence of a unified and up-to-date registry of Councils, and the considerable variation in how Councils are structured and how their networks evolve. Particular emphasis was placed on methodological transparency — from defining the target population, applying weighting to ensure accurate analysis, to identifying potential sampling biases.

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[12] Recommendations on Cooperation between Humanitarian Organisations and IDP Councils, Protection Cluster Ukraine, 2024.

[13] [English translation] Stabilization Support Services, the article on the Ukraine NGO "Congress of IDP Councils" launch.

[14] [English translation] Educational Portal "IDP Councils: from adaptation to impact".

[15] Website: https://radyvpo.org.ua/

Methodology

The focus of this study is on IDP Councils established under local authorities at the hromada level and represented by one member of their leadership — either the Head or Deputy Head of the Council. The study explores how these Councils operate, how they perceive their own role, the conditions under which they function, and the key factors that either enable or hinder their effectiveness. **Its objective was to assess how closely the Councils' activities align with their formally defined mandates, to identify key institutional and operational challenges, and to develop recommendations for strengthening their capacity and improving the frameworks through which they are supported and regulated by coordinating actors.**

At the time of planning, no regularly updated government registry of IDP Councils existed in Ukraine. The most comprehensive and structured source available was a mapping exercise[16] conducted by Stabilization Support Services in partnership with the Ministry for Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of Ukraine, which recorded 804 IDP Councils as of August 2024. Of these, 654 were established at the level of hromadas (either urban or rural types of hromadas) and had a confirmed membership structure — this group formed the study's target population. Although estimates circulated publicly after the mapping suggested that more than 1,000[17] Councils might exist, the lack of a central verification mechanism meant that these figures could not be relied upon for sampling purposes. Therefore, the August 2024 mapping was used as the primary basis for the sample.

A stratified sampling approach was applied, taking into account three macro-regions:[18] West, North-Centre, and South-East. The proportion of IDP Councils sampled from each macro-region reflected their share within the total population. Sample sizes were calculated as follows: 136 for the West, 139 for North-Centre, and 143 for South-East — ensuring representativeness across all strata. The total sample target was 418 IDP Councils. The contact database was built from the mapping and supplemented with additional sources. Over 600 contact entries were randomly shuffled and assigned to a team of seven enumerators.

Data collection was conducted via phone interviews between 12 and 28 February 2025 using a standardised questionnaire. Once the quota for a given macro-region was reached, further interviews in that stratum were halted. The response rate among reachable contacts was approximately 88%, and nearly all hromadas on the list were contacted by enumerators. In total, 431 surveys were completed (140 in the West, 144 in the North-Centre, 147 in the South-East), representing 66% of the identified population and providing sufficient coverage for reliable analysis — even under limited conditions for full randomisation.

Following the completion of fieldwork, the dataset was cleaned of technical errors, checked for logical consistency, and consolidated into a final version. Manual checks were conducted to identify duplicates, along with selective verification of potentially inaccurate values. The dataset was prepared in both weighted and unweighted formats. **Weighted data are used exclusively for national-level indicators and are considered representative of IDP Councils across Ukraine. Unweighted data are applied in all other cases — they are representative at the macro-regional level or indicative when disaggregated by other criteria (e.g. by settlement type).** A comparison with the 2024

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[16] Stabilization Support Services and former Ministry of Reintegration, IDP Councils Mapping, August 2024.

[17] UNHCR Ukraine, article "Displaced themselves, and now advocating for the rights and durable solutions for all internally displaced in communities across Ukraine", August 2024.

[18] For analytical purposes, this report uses a macro-regional division that includes the following oblasts: **Western macro-region**: *Lvivska, Volynska, Ivano-Frankivska, Rivnenska, Ternopilska, Khmelnytska, Zakarpatska, and Chernivetska oblasts*; **North-Central macro-region**: *Kyivska, Zhytomyrska, Chernihivska, Poltavska, Vinnytska, Cherkaska, and Kirovohradska oblasts*; **South-Eastern macro-region**: *Dnipropetrovska, Kharkivska, Sumska, Zaporizka, Donetska, Odeska, Mykolaivska, and Khersonska oblasts*.

Mapping confirmed a high structural alignment by oblast, and thus, weighting coefficients were very close to 1.[19]

At the same time, we acknowledge potential sources of sampling bias, based on comparisons with the Mapping as well as general considerations. The sample may be skewed towards more active Councils and urban hromadas, while smaller or more remote hromadas may have been underrepresented due to technical barriers or lower engagement levels. Reaching the target quota in the Western macro-region required additional time, potentially reflecting lower activity levels or contact challenges. Nevertheless, the target coverage was achieved. Some sample-level differences from the Mapping were observed, including the average share of IDPs per Council, median Council size, and year of establishment. These are dynamic characteristics that may have changed over the six months since the Mapping, as many Councils underwent restructuring or were newly established. It should also be noted that respondents answered as individuals, not collectively on behalf of their Councils — which may influence the objectivity of some responses and reflect more the leadership perspective. In some cases, respondents lacked full or precise information (e.g. on the number of members, composition, or establishment date) and answered based on estimates. This limitation should be taken into account when interpreting the results. **The main structural limitation remains the absence of a current national registry of IDP Councils, which prevents a precise assessment of the survey's overall coverage.**

The qualitative component consisted of two focus group discussions (with representatives of IDP Councils at both hromada and oblast levels) and eight in-depth interviews with key informants. These included four representatives of local authorities from different macro-regions (Centre, East, West), including one relocated hromada, two national-level officials, and two civil society representatives working with IDP Councils. Focus groups helped uncover a wide range of practices, challenges, and experiences in how Councils operate, as well as regional and administrative differences. Interviews with key informants added an external perspective — from local authorities, government actors, and civil society partners — and helped to assess systemic factors, identify cooperation barriers, and map points of convergence between stakeholders. Together, these sources provided depth behind the quantitative trends and laid the foundation for evidence-based findings and recommendations. **However, the qualitative insights remain indicative** and may be biased towards the perspectives of more active or experienced Council members and local authorities.

As such, the dataset provides the first representative picture of how IDP Councils actually function across hromadas: what roles they perform, how they perceive themselves, what obstacles they face, and what they believe is needed to ensure their work becomes sustainable, meaningful, and embedded within local policy processes.

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[19] Weighting coefficients: West (w = 0.988532), North-Centre (w = 0.997685), South-East (w = 1.013189).

1. IDP Councils Profile

1.1 Socio-demographic characteristics

Among all surveyed Heads and Deputy Heads of IDP Councils, the highest number of Councils represented were from Rivnenska (9%), Poltavska (8%), Kirovohradska (8%), and Vinnytska (7%) oblasts — most of which belong to the North-Central macro-region. Only 5% of surveyed IDP Councils were relocated Councils, primarily originating from Luhanska and Donetska oblasts, along with one Council each from Sumska, Kharkivska, and Khersonska oblasts.
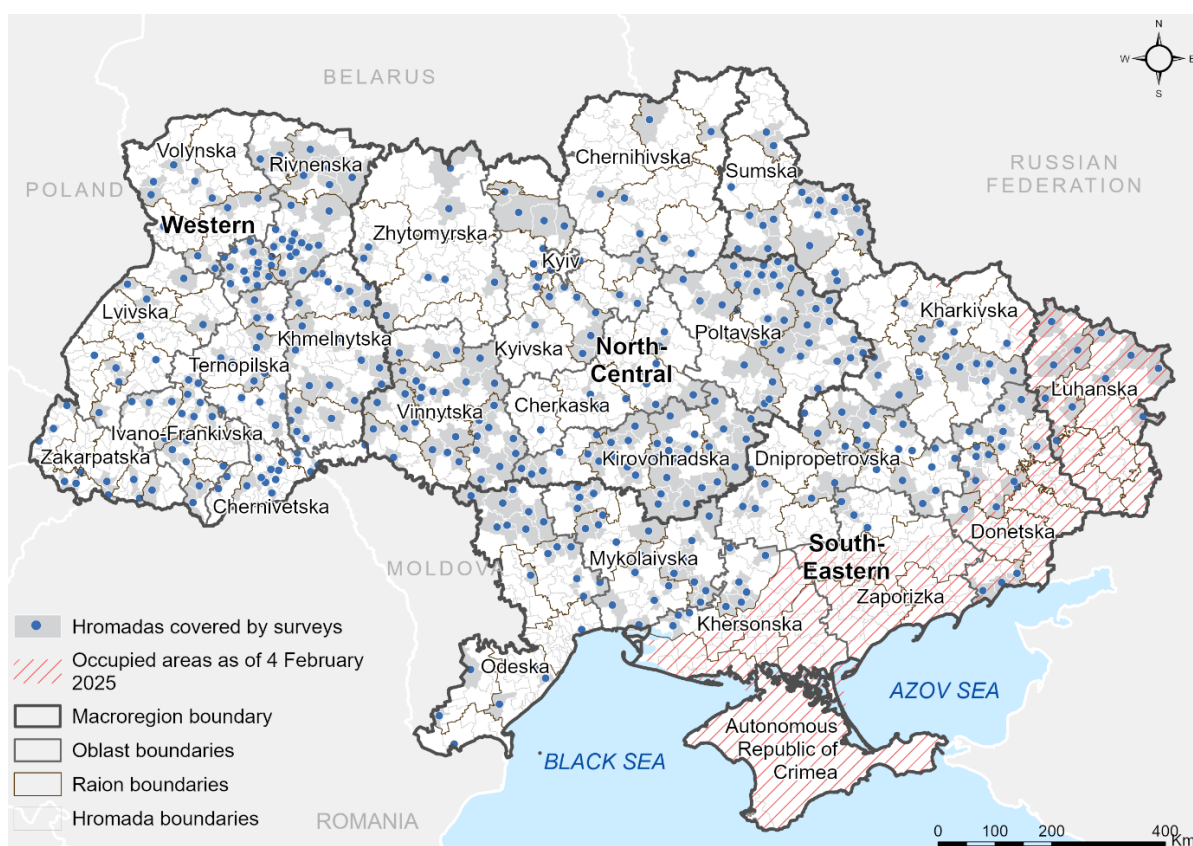
3% of IDP Councils included in the sample were established prior to the full-scale invasion, while another 27% were created before the adoption of the Model Regulation (i.e., before August 2023). The remaining 71% were formed afterwards, most commonly between August and December 2023, highlighting the role of the Model Regulation in scaling up the phenomenon. The Western macro-region accounted for the highest share of IDP Councils formed prior to the Model Regulation (40%), while the South-Eastern region had the lowest share (18%). This discrepancy may reflect the fact that western oblasts hosted large numbers of displaced people during 2022 and were more ready to adopt new integration mechanisms. In contrast, the South-Eastern regions were primarily areas of origin for displacement, where the focus remained on urgent and humanitarian assistance.

The average and median number of members per IDP Council is 14, indicating a consistent pattern and the absence of significant outliers in Council size. On average, 76% of Council members are women, underscoring their leading role in representing IDPs and engaging in community life at the local level. Women also dominate in leadership: 69% of Heads and 80% of Deputy Heads of the surveyed IDP Councils are female.

These findings align with earlier research by Stabilization Support Services on gender aspects in the work of IDP Councils[20], which highlighted that despite women's high levels of community engagement, only 30% of paid leadership positions are held by women. This points to persistent gender inequality in access to formal leadership and salaried management roles.

According to the findings, the majority of Heads (74%) and Deputy Heads (76%) fall within the 36–59 age bracket. This suggests a stable leadership core, while also highlighting opportunities to engage younger participants and improve age diversity within IDP Councils.

Head of the Council

65% - Internally displaced persons
32% - Representatives of local authorities
3% - Representatives of non-governmental organisations
2% - Temporarily absent

In the Western macro-region, the share of IDP Council leaders who are themselves internally displaced persons is considerably lower (50%), while the proportion of local authority representatives is higher (46%), as is the proportion of male respondents (36%).

Figure 1: Gender and Age Distribution of Surveyed IDP Council Heads

M   F

4% 60+ p 6%
14% 46 - 59 p 24%
9% 36 - 45 p 27%
3% 0-35 p 12%

Deputy head of the Councils

45% - Internally displaced persons
43% - Representatives of local authorities C
8% - Representatives of non-governmental organisations
10% - Temporarily absent

In the Western macro-region, only 33% of Deputy Heads of IDP Councils are internally displaced persons. In contrast, there is a higher share of NGO representatives (12%), local authority officials (48%), and male respondents (30%).

Figure 2: Gender and Age Distribution of Surveyed IDP Council Deputy Heads
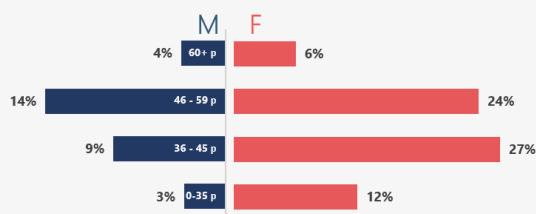
M   F

2% 60+ p 6%
9% 46 - 59 p 25%
7% 36 - 45 p 35%
3% 0-35 p 14%

Figure 3: Average Share of Council Members with Selected Socio-demographic Characteristics (as a Percentage of Total IDP Council Membership).

76% Women
48% IDPs
9% Veterans or relatives of military personnel
6% People aged 65 and above
3% Persons with disabilities

On average, internally displaced persons made up only 48% of IDP Council membership, despite the Model Regulation's requirement that at least 50% of Council members must be displaced persons.

Findings from the qualitative component confirm that having IDPs as active members contributes significantly to the Council's effectiveness by ensuring direct representation of displaced persons' interests and a deeper understanding of their needs. Still, many participants highlighted that, regardless displacement status, motivation and willingness to work for the benefit of the community is the most important feature IDP Council member should have. In situations where engaging a sufficient number of active IDPs is difficult, priority is frequently given to highly engaged individuals, even if they are not displaced.

Additional barriers to IDP inclusion were also raised by key informants, such as overall exhaustion, lack of time and resources due to personal hardships linked to war and displacement. These challenges

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[20] [English translation] Stabilization Support Services, "Empowering Displaced Women: The Role of IDP Councils in Local Democracy and Community Support", 2024

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can limit opportunities for active civic participation, especially in the first months after arrival in a new hromada.

Regional differences further illustrate this dynamic. The Western macro-region had the lowest average share of IDPs in Council membership (41%), while the South-Eastern macro-region had the highest (54%). This may reflect a longer and more complex integration process in regions located farther from IDPs' areas of origin, where access to housing, differences in labour markets, and the absence of social networks present additional challenges.

Though in some frontline hromadas, IDP Councils do not include IDPs at all. According to some respondents, the concept of "IDP" becomes blurred in such settings, where the local population may also be directly affected by conflict, including through destruction of housing or forced evacuations. Under conditions of ongoing insecurity, the needs of the entire population often take precedence, and IDPs may not be treated as a distinct group for targeted support.
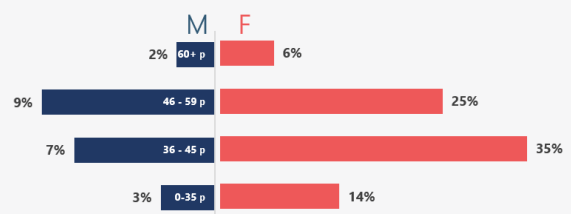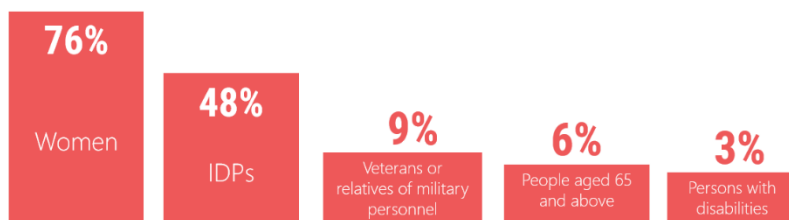
Figure 4. Average Share of Council Members with Selected Professional Characteristics (as a Percentage of Total IDP Council Membership)

35%
Representatives of local authorities

17%
People with relevant experience and knowledgeas assessed by the respondent

11%
Representatives of non-governmental organisations

The composition of IDP Councils also includes representatives of local authorities and civil society organisations, which is often a prerequisite for the Council's basic functionality. In many cases, it was local authority representatives who supported the Council's activities by performing core organisational tasks. This contributed to the operational viability of the Councils, but at times may have undermined their independence and advisory nature. Such involvement is frequently linked to a lack of active community members or a general shortage of human resources. The presence of NGO representatives within the Council structure often enables access to fundraising opportunities and project implementation for IDPs. However, during focus group discussions, some participants raised concerns about competition between organisations within a single Council, reluctance to take responsibility for projects on behalf of the Council, and instances where the creation of an NGO based on the Council led to a gradual decline in the Council's own activity.

At the same time, only 17% of Council members were reported by leadership to have relevant knowledge or expertise. While many participants are highly motivated, they are often ordinary citizens without specialised backgrounds in areas such as law, advocacy, social policy, or governance. Interviewees also pointed out that many Councils lack stable partnerships with local NGOs or grassroots initiatives, do not always sufficiently understand the local context, and have limited communication and organisational skills — all of which are crucial for effectively representing the interests of IDPs within their hromadas.

> *"We understand that the architecture doesn't work. Ordinary people, who yesterday were plumbers, for instance, even if they're smart and active, can't be expected to develop a local programme or draft formal letters. I have a PhD in law, I hold a public position, I worked in civil service for over a decade, and I know how to 'wear down' a local authority with correspondence — and even I struggle to get results. Now, imagine someone without that experience. No matter how many trainings we provide, we won't turn them into a lawyer. There needs to be a professional in the team, someone on a permanent basis, who can support the IDP Council."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a representative of the national-level governmental institution*

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1.2. Regularity of Activities and Member Engagement in the Council

IDP Councils Meetings

Most IDP Councils have been operating for over a year, creating the foundation for a more stable institutional presence. One key indicator of such stability is the regularity of meetings: 78% of Councils meet at least once per quarter (58% meet quarterly, 20% monthly, and just 1% weekly). This level of activity aligns with the minimum frequency specified in the Model Regulation. The South-Eastern macro-region had the highest rate (84%), while the Western macro-region had the lowest (74%).

Yet regular meetings do not always translate into thematic depth. Some 63% of Councils reported discussing only, or mostly, general coordination issues, rather than specific topics. This suggests that many meetings focus on internal functioning, rather than advocacy or tackling current issues faced by IDPs. Nevertheless, 85% of IDP Councils consider their meetings very or somewhat effective. That perception varies by settlement type (see Figure 5), with lower satisfaction reported in rural hromadas. Focus group participants attributed this to practical barriers in rural areas — such as geographic dispersion and the lack of public transport — which make it difficult to bring the full Council together:

Figure 5. Self-assessed Effectiveness of Council Meetings, by Settlement Type
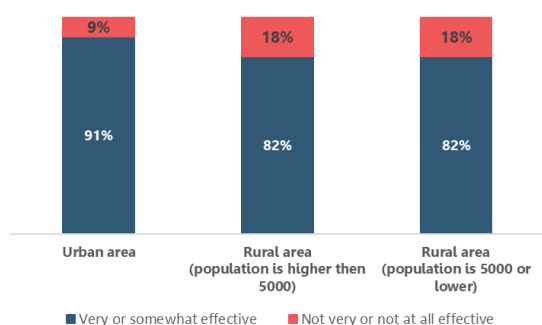
"Our council's [hromada name] is almost entirely a sector with private housing. There are 12 villages, and each has a representative in the IDP Council — they track needs in their village and inform about them in the meetings. It takes us a lot of effort to just get together, when there are no buses… And because it's hard to get people to meetings, we almost always have to reappoint [as a head] someone new each time."

From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives[21]

Not only rural Councils, but also others, have had to adapt their operations to online or hybrid formats. This is particularly common among relocated IDP Councils, whose members live in different regions, as well as Councils in frontline hromadas, where security risks are ongoing. Such arrangements increase reliance on stable internet access and electricity.

Member Engagement in IDP Council Activities

Across focus group discussions and key informant interviews, participants consistently noted that the regularity and effectiveness of Council operations depend primarily on two factors:

1. the presence of motivated and active individuals within the Council, and
2. established cooperation with local authorities, who often provide basic resources such as venues, stationery, and — in some cases — administrative staff support as part of their formal duties.

On average, 79% of Council members attend meetings, but the level of active involvement varies. On average, just over half (55%) of members are regularly engaged in Council activities, while the remainder is nominally included. Nearly one-quarter of Councils reported that the main workload falls on just one or two people (see infographic: *Engagement in Council Activities*).

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[21] This participant also noted that meetings are sometimes held online, although she did not comment in detail on their quality. At the same time, other respondents from IDP Councils in rural areas mentioned the lack of stable internet coverage as a challenge for both internal and external communication.

Engagement in Council Activities

22% - of Councils reported that the majority of work is carried out by only 1–2 members.

Figure 6. Who is most likely to have the greatest workload, according to respondents.

Council leadership	Local authority representatives	IDP members	People with relevant experience and knowledge	People from NGO	Other
79%	35%	10%	9%	7%	3%

55% average share of actively involved Council members, according to leadership assessments.

12 hours per month - median time actively involved members spend on Council work

20 hours per month - median time that Council heads expect from active members

Government and NGO representatives noted that these active Council members represent a valuable human resource at the local level. They should be considered potential candidates for local government roles or as future implementers of community-level projects and initiatives.

At the same time, a significant number of IDP Councils remain inactive or only partially active. Some expert interviews suggested that such Councils require either internal renewal or full dissolution.

> *"I would like to respond right away to the question of whether IDP Councils will still exist over the next two years, or whether everything will disappear. It all depends on two things: 1 – the team leader, 2 – motivated people. If you see that people in your Council are no longer motivated to continue – replace them. Find those who are motivated."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

…

> *"At one of our Council meetings, we raised the question: if we cannot activate the residents of a particular hromada, maybe it does not make sense to create an IDP Council there. After all, there are already IDP Councils at the raion and oblast levels, where people can seek assistance, ask their questions, and receive reasonably competent referrals."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with oblast-level IDP Council representatives*

One oblast-level IDP Council representative noted that in some hromadas, the Model Regulation was interpreted as a mandatory requirement to establish a Council — even when such a structure did not meet the real needs of the hromada. As a result, some Councils were created only formally, without meaningful operational content or sustained activity. According to her, although more than 20 Councils were officially reported in the oblast, only a portion of them remained active. Currently, a further decline in activity is being observed, prompting the oblast-level IDP Council to focus its efforts on supporting the existing Councils and preventing their collapse.

It was also emphasised that **an IDP Council should not be seen as a universal tool for every hromada hosting IDPs**. In some contexts, individual representation — such as appointing one or two people within the local authority — may be sufficient, particularly in rural hromadas. In frontline areas, it may be more appropriate to form mixed Councils representing different groups affected by the conflict. In hromadas located farther from the frontlines, it can sometimes make sense to expand the Council's mandate to also represent other vulnerable groups, such as veterans or persons with disabilities.

Motivation of IDP Council Members

Regardless of format, a Council's effectiveness largely depends on the motivation of its members. Most respondents cited the desire to support IDPs (84%) and contribute to the community (47%) as their key motivations for joining. Additionally, 34% of Council Heads said that seeing tangible results and positive changes in their hromadas helps sustain motivation among members.

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Qualitative data supported these observations: focus group participants repeatedly mentioned that the personal experience of displacement was a major motivation for joining the Council, while internal success stories remained the most effective way to maintain long-term engagement. However, this motivation often comes up against a range of challenges. The most commonly cited barriers included: lack of financial compensation (54%), other obligations such as work or family (45%), and a perceived lack of influence over decision-making (21%).

> *"I'm a two-time displaced person. Why do I do this? Because I know for sure – if not us, then who? No one cares about my problems. If I want to change something in the hromada I live in, I have to not just show initiative, but be ready to follow through, to push it forward, to work for it. (…) It's also crucial to have financial stability. I'm thankful to my husband who supports me and our child. I don't have to worry about where our next meal will come from – I can give my time to this work. I see participating in the IDP Council today as charity work. And I'm lucky to have the chance to improve people's lives. That's important – having enough income so you're not stuck in survival mode. I understand IDPs who don't even come to meetings because they're working. Survival always comes first."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

In both focus groups and key informant interviews, the lack of financial incentives was consistently cited as a key obstacle to participation — particularly for those in leadership roles such as Heads, Deputy Heads, or Secretaries. **For IDPs, the issue carries additional weight: personal experiences of forced displacement, efforts to adapt to new communities, and supporting others simultaneously create emotional pressure and exhaustion.** While Council participation may serve as a form of mutual aid, the absence of any compensation can lead to rapid burnout.

This also applies to others — including local government staff and people balancing paid work or caregiving responsibilities (for children, elderly relatives, etc.). For them, involvement in Council activities means a significant additional workload. In such cases, it becomes difficult to maintain consistent and meaningful engagement, as personal, professional, and care duties often leave limited time and energy for civic involvement.

In one oblast, the response to declining motivation among Council members due to the lack of financial compensation was to expand the Council to include more NGO representatives already working with IDPs. This helped reactivate Council operations and "breathe new life" into earlier memoranda of cooperation.

Interviewees also pointed out that motivation can drop when there is a lack of tangible outcomes — particularly in communities where local authorities are uninterested in working with the Council or fail to respond to its initiatives. Another major source of burnout is constant exposure to vulnerable people: having to listen to difficult stories, respond to multiple requests, and not having the tools to offer help can lead to emotional fatigue and a loss of confidence in one's ability to create change.

1.3 Visibility of IDP Councils in Hromadas

The majority of IDP Councils seek to maintain a public presence: 75% reported that information about the Council is published on the official local authority (hromada) website. Social media remains the main channel for informing displaced persons about Council activities, used by 91% of Councils. Information is also disseminated through local authorities (41%) and via hotlines or contact numbers (23%). Reception hours and public hearings are used much less frequently — 8% and 4% respectively.

Accordingly, 58% of Councils consider IDP awareness of their activities to be sufficient, meaning they believe a significant share of displaced persons know about the Council. Another 23% believe that almost every IDP is aware of the Council, while 16% said only a small share is aware, and 1% reported that almost no one knows about the Council.

The most commonly cited barrier to raising IDP awareness is a lack of financial or material resources, mentioned by 25% of respondents. Other obstacles included insufficient activity among Council members (21%), lack of experience or expertise (11%), and low motivation among members (10%). Respondents also cited time constraints, limited support from local authorities or state institutions, and a lack of clearly articulated needs from IDPs themselves. However, almost half (47%) of respondents reported no barriers in communicating with IDPs.

Respondents from rural hromadas additionally emphasised challenges such as unstable internet coverage and logistical difficulties, which complicate external communications for the Councils.

Conclusions on the Profile of IDP Councils:

- **Model Regulation accurately reflects the necessary characteristics of Council membership, as Councils are perceived to be the most functional when they combine displaced persons, representatives of local authorities, and representatives of NGOs.** This configuration enables Councils to balance the lived experience of displacement, access to resources, and organisational support. The presence of IDPs themselves remains critical — they are the main target group and the driving force for change.

- **IDP Councils rely heavily on the availability of expertise to perform even basic functions. Only 17% of members are assessed by leadership to have sufficient knowledge and experience.** Councils most often lack legal competencies needed for drafting decisions or communicating with authorities. Without proper expertise or ongoing external support, even highly motivated Councils struggle to realise their full potential.

- **Some Councils operate only nominally or rely on a few highly active individuals.** In certain hromadas, Councils are largely inactive, while in others, most members participate only formally. This complicates assessments of Council effectiveness, diverts attention and support from partners, and increases burnout among those carrying the main workload.

- **The lack of funding for key leadership roles threatens the sustainability of Councils. Participation in IDP Councils is entirely unpaid, placing a heavy burden on the most active members, particularly Heads, Deputy Heads, and Secretaries.** These roles demand significant engagement but are often combined with regular jobs or caregiving responsibilities. As a result, the risks of burnout, turnover, and loss of institutional memory are high. It is important to note that most leadership roles are held by women, further highlighting the structural gender inequality inherent in unpaid leadership roles at the local level.

2. IDP Councils Mandate

2.1 Key Tasks of IDP Councils in 2024 and Perceptions of Their Mandate

Despite the fact that the official mandate of IDP Councils is primarily analytical and advisory — including monitoring policies, collecting information, and preparing recommendations for local authorities — **in practice, most Councils in 2024 focused their work on direct assistance to displaced persons** (see Figure 6). Activities such as consulting IDPs and gathering information on their needs also ranked among the top three focus areas, aligning with the requirements of the Model Regulation. However, only 10% of Councils reported engaging directly in policy monitoring.

Although Councils clearly maintained a focus on IDP needs, more than half (54%) also extended their activities to support other vulnerable groups (see Figure 7).

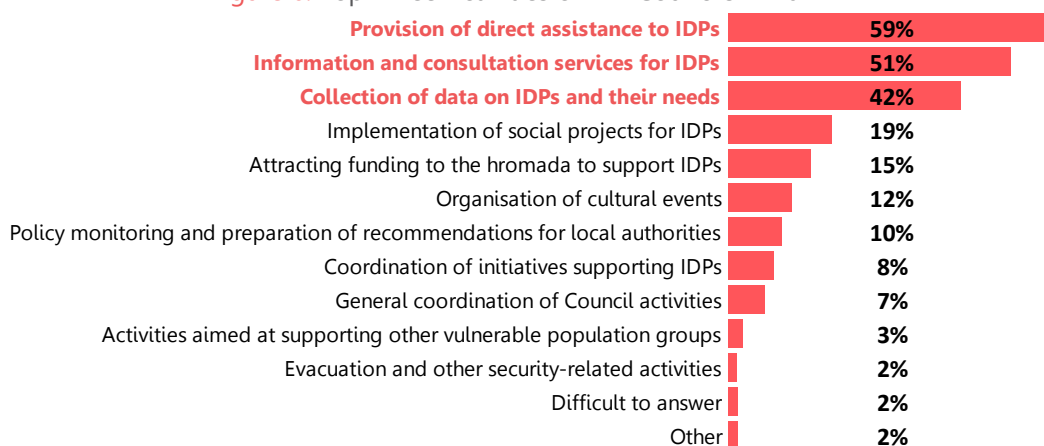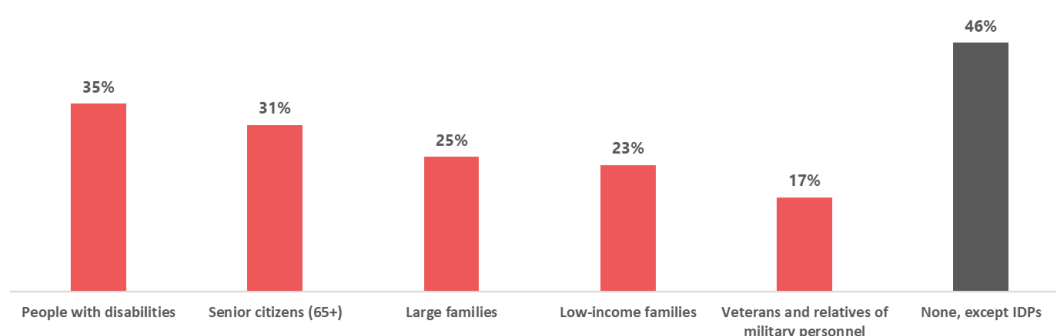Figure 6. Top Three Activities of IDP Councils in 2024

Activity	%
Provision of direct assistance to IDPs	**59%**
Information and consultation services for IDPs	**51%**
Collection of data on IDPs and their needs	**42%**
Implementation of social projects for IDPs	**19%**
Attracting funding to the hromada to support IDPs	**15%**
Organisation of cultural events	**12%**
Policy monitoring and preparation of recommendations for local authorities	**10%**
Coordination of initiatives supporting IDPs	**8%**
General coordination of Council activities	**7%**
Activities aimed at supporting other vulnerable population groups	**3%**
Evacuation and other security-related activities	**2%**
Difficult to answer	**2%**
Other	**2%**

Figure 7. Vulnerable Population Groups that IDP Councils Focus on in their Activities

Group	%
People with disabilities	35%
Senior citizens (65+)	31%
Large families	25%
Low-income families	23%
Veterans and relatives of military personnel	17%
None, except IDPs	46%

92% of surveyed IDP Councils believed they had fully or partly worked in the right direction during 2024. Such a high level of consistency between factual and self-perceived mandate suggests that most Councils see their mission primarily as a practical tool for improving life within the hromada. When asked *where their primary efforts and resources should go in the future*, Council Heads most often cited: providing direct assistance to IDPs (54%), gathering information on IDPs and their needs (49%), and informing and consulting IDPs (43%). Other practical priorities included attracting funding for IDP support (29%) and implementing social projects (19%). Policy monitoring and preparation of recommendations for local authorities, while foreseen by the Model Regulation, were

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mentioned much less frequently (13%). Other areas such as coordination of assistance initiatives (9%), organising cultural events (8%), and working with other vulnerable groups (1%) received the lowest prioritisation.

Regional-level findings showed minor variations in focus areas and challenges. For instance, informing and consulting IDPs was more common in the South-Eastern (54%) and Western (51%) macro-regions, compared to 48% in the North-Central macro-region. In the Western macro-region, cultural activities (17%) were organised more frequently and are often viewed as a tool for IDP integration, whereas policy monitoring was somewhat more prominent in the North-Central region (14%).

2.2 Focus on Humanitarian Assistance Over Systemic Work

Despite a general consensus among interview participants that IDP Councils should not be responsible for providing humanitarian assistance, but rather focus on more structural functions, several informants stressed that Councils' priorities must remain context-sensitive, especially in frontline areas or for relocated Councils. In such settings, systemic political reforms often take a back seat to more urgent challenges such as the risk of occupation or large-scale destruction, meaning that all available resources must be channelled towards crisis response.

During focus group discussions and expert interviews, participants repeatedly raised the issue of the gap between the formal mandate of IDP Councils, which focuses on advocacy and engagement with local authorities, and the actual activities of many Councils, which often drift towards humanitarian functions. This tendency was attributed to a set of systemic factors that push Councils to focus on immediate assistance:

1. Meaningful Activities That Do Not Require Additional Qualifications

Emergency assistance is the most obvious and urgent form of support, one that does not require providers to have specialised knowledge or expertise in policy matters. At the same time, it has a clearly defined purpose and straightforward implementation pathways. In situations where IDP Council members lack specialised competencies, humanitarian assistance often becomes the natural focus of their activities.

2. Motivation Through Tangible Results

Individuals involved in Council activities are often motivated by achieving visible successes, and providing direct assistance delivers such immediate and measurable results, boosting engagement and activity levels. In contrast, policy monitoring and advocacy for change is a slow, multi-stage human rights process that requires specialised training, favourable external conditions, and an internalised understanding of the importance of systemic change. In many cases, the results of such work only become apparent after months or even years, which can negatively impact the motivation and sustained engagement of IDP Council members.

> *"Some people are ready to work long-term, but others need to see success stories. When members of IDP Councils are told that developing a programme takes a year of continuous effort, they realise it's not something achieved in a day. Some may be inspired; others may be discouraged. People need a real understanding of how long such processes take, how many resources were invested, and what outcomes are possible. I always give examples like the [ratification of the] Rome Statute or the Istanbul Convention — it took decades of work to reach results."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a CSO representative*

3. Direct Contact with People in Need of Assistance

Since IDP Councils interact directly with displaced persons and often receive individual requests from families, choosing to prioritise long-term advocacy over immediate assistance can be emotionally difficult and internally conflicting. In such situations, it is hard to overlook the

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urgent needs of individuals, even when strategically justified systemic changes could deliver more sustainable results in the future.

According to the survey, a large share of IDP Councils remained in direct contact with displaced persons throughout 2024. Over half (51%) reported maintaining frequent or fairly frequent direct interaction with IDPs, while another 46% had less frequent or rare contact. Only 3% of Councils reported no direct interaction. Most of the requests received by Councils related to humanitarian aid and housing issues, with far fewer related to employment, documentation support, or other topics (see Figure 8). Furthermore, the majority of IDP requests were for direct support (66%), compared to 22% concerning consultations and 13% related to information provision.

Figure 8: Top Three Topics of IDP Requests to Councils

Topic	%
Humanitarian aid	**81%**
Housing	**64%**
Employment	**34%**
Administrative	**23%**
School/children's	**13%**
Psychosocial	**10%**

These findings suggest that IDP expectations of Councils are mainly practical and centred around immediate assistance. Direct requests were most common in the Western macro-region (71%) and least common in the Eastern macro-region (61%).
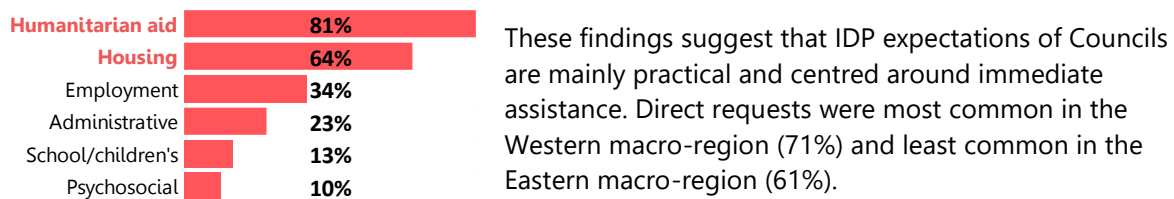
> *"We deal more with needs that may not seem so important to others but are crucial to our people. They aren't particularly concerned about when the local programme will be drafted or when it will start working. People have urgent issues that need solving now, not two years from now."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a representative of a relocated local authority*

In these circumstances, most Councils (78%) reported that they were able to successfully respond to IDP requests, either consistently or in most cases. Key barriers to response included: lack of resources (56%), requests falling outside the Council's formal mandate (27%), and lack of available partners to delegate requests to (16%).

When Councils are continually acting as first-line responders for urgent requests, it becomes extremely challenging to maintain a focus on systemic advocacy work. Continuous direct interaction with vulnerable individuals, combined with the limited capacity to address their needs, places a significant emotional burden on Council members. This not only demands time and resources but can also lead to exhaustion, especially when immediate needs vastly outweigh available support mechanisms. As a result, individual casework often overtakes long-term strategic goals, such as advocacy or influencing local policy, which inherently require strategic thinking and delayed outcomes.

4. Lack of Alternative Assistance Providers
In communities where local authorities, NGOs, or humanitarian organisations do not actively fulfil the role of primary assistance providers, the responsibility for humanitarian response effectively shifts to IDP Councils due to the absence of alternatives.

5. Overlapping Roles in Smaller Hromadas
In smaller hromadas, IDP Council members are often the only active representatives of the civic sector. They are engaged in a wide range of tasks — from responding to urgent needs to attempting to influence long-term decision-making. In this context, the boundary between short-term support and systemic engagement often becomes blurred, making it more difficult to maintain a focus on strategic priorities.

> *"The real challenge is that IDP Councils are simultaneously covering different sectors because they are active community members who – to varying degrees – have access to coordination mechanisms with the authorities. But they often become fully absorbed in humanitarian aid and accommodation issues. (…) So for me, the issue is not what is written in the regulation – it's actually well designed – but whether people can focus their work clearly. If something falls outside the mandate, it should be moved to another structure. For example, humanitarian response is now being worked on at the level of the President's Office, and new instruments are being explored. (…) Yet at the local level, it's hard because it's often the same people handling everything, especially in smaller hromadas. And then we must ask whether maintaining 'purity' of the mandate is always practical. We need to explore different options."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a CSO representative*

Figure 9. Percentage of IDP Councils that **Reported Not Providing Any Recommendations** to Local Authorities to Improve Local Policies in 2024
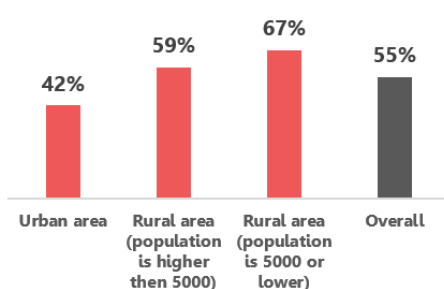
Figure 10. Percentage of IDP Councils that **Reported Not Submitting Any Proposals** for the Development of Local policies for IDPs to Local Authorities in 2024:
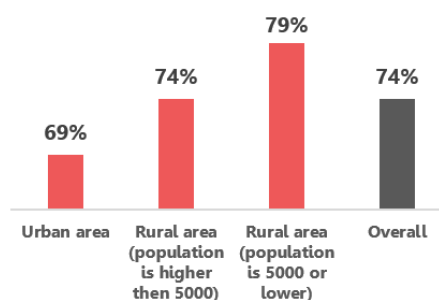
> *"Often, there is a lack of understanding of how processes work. Many IDP Council members have never been part of local government or civil society before and now find themselves involved without fully grasping how the decision-making cycle operates. As a result, Council mandates can become blurred. This can be addressed through continuous training and awareness-raising so that members understand how local governance works and can better align their efforts with the official scope of the Council's mandate."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a CSO representative*

2.3 External Expectations of Councils and Barriers to Fulfilling Their Mandate

All participants in expert interviews and focus group discussions unanimously agreed that the primary mission of IDP Councils should be to build a communication "bridge" between internally displaced persons and local authorities. Councils are primarily perceived as mediation bodies that gather and convey aggregated information about IDP needs and challenges to local self-governance structures. However, views varied regarding other expectations.

Actors at the national and regional levels more often emphasised the importance of monitoring local policies and providing recommendations to authorities — a task explicitly mentioned in the Model Regulation. Some representatives of the governmental sector expected Councils to provide context-sensitive information from communities to be summarised and incorporated into national legislative processes.

In contrast, local authorities (hromadas) more frequently expressed practical expectations. This involved not only formulating recommendations but also mobilising resources and assisting with their implementation — largely due to the high workload faced by local officials, especially in specialised social protection departments. Following the onset of the full-scale invasion, these departments were tasked with an expanded range of responsibilities for supporting vulnerable groups, whose numbers significantly increased due to the war. However, the increase in responsibilities was not accompanied by additional budgetary allocations or staff increases.

> *"We hoped and expected that we would receive support. We were aware of the problems faced by IDPs through our interactions with them. Where do they go? – Naturally, they go to the Hromada [authorities]; they came to us as they registered and received assistance here. To solve these problems at the local level, we needed some kind of support, a driving force, you know, something that would push things forward, because solving IDP problems without IDPs is simply wrong."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a local authority representative*

Representatives of IDP Councils at the hromada level had differing views regarding such practical expectations. Some agreed that the Council should support the local authorities in an executive capacity, while others criticised this approach. As one focus group participant noted: **"in reality, in territorial hromadas, social protection responsibilities are often shifted onto IDP Councils. Excuse me, but how can an IDP Council solve the issue of accommodating a person when there is no space available in a Collective Site? How am I supposed to solve that?"**

Overall, during interviews and discussions at the local level, informants mostly focused not on types of activities, but on thematic priorities when speaking about the mission of IDP Councils. The most frequently mentioned topic was housing — including direct accommodation of families, auditing municipal premises, seeking donors for social housing construction, or arranging temporary accommodation facilities.

Employment and integration into the community were also frequently cited as areas that should remain constant priorities for IDP Councils. Representatives of local authorities often highlighted the need for cooperation with other administrative structures to fulfil this mission, such as employment centres, pension funds, and administrative service centres (CNAPs). When discussing employment and integration, local actors most often mentioned the need to organise public events for IDPs, such as job fairs or cultural events with elements of social inclusion, which were also expected from IDP Councils.

At the same time, one of the key barriers to implementing such thematic priorities at the local level was identified as the lack of systemic solutions at the national level — particularly in the fields of housing, employment, healthcare, education, and integration. Under these circumstances, local authorities and IDP Councils are often forced to find solutions independently, which frequently leads to fragmented or ineffective outcomes.

A broader issue relates to the absence of a single coordinating body that would facilitate national IDP policy (and, consequently, guide the work of IDP Councils), develop standards, and ensure representation in crisis situations. Following the dissolution of the Ministry for Reintegration, this mandate became dispersed across various institutions. Although the primary responsibility for IDP-related policy was formally transferred to the Ministry for Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, respondents noted that the transition has created a sense of fragmentation and confusion. Many IDP Councils remain unclear about which ministry leads on specific issues, and report a lack of consistent communication and guidance.

Other common barriers associated with the broader institutional environment, as cited by informants, included: lack of interaction between Councils at regional and national levels, lack of access to up-to-date data (e.g., on housing stock or IDP registration), absence of task differentiation based on Council levels, lack of experience, limited expertise, and restricted cooperation opportunities with local authorities and other actors.

Meanwhile, according to quantitative data, 28% of IDP Council representatives reported encountering no barriers in fulfilling their mandate. This could primarily be attributed to the alignment between the expected mandate and actual activities of Councils at the local level (see

Section 2.1). Furthermore, 73% of respondents were unable to name any activities that an IDP Council should not perform in their hromada — either because they saw no such activities or were reluctant to comment. This may reflect a lack of clear understanding of Councils' functions and boundaries.

Where barriers were mentioned, the most frequently cited were: lack of budget or resources (44%), insufficient number of active members (24%), limited expertise (18%), and low motivation (16%). The North-Central macroregion most often cited lack of resources (53%), while the Western macroregion more frequently reported a shortage of active members (28%). In the South-Eastern macroregion, the highest proportion of Councils (33%) reported no barriers at all.

Conclusions on the mandate of IDP Councils

- **The absence of a single coordinating body at the national level leads to fragmented approaches to the functioning and support of IDP Councils.** Without a shared framework of expectations, tools, and standards, even basic functions — such as needs systematisation or recommendation development — remain fragmented, inconsistent, and dependent solely on the initiative of individual Councils.

- **The mismatch of expectations between national and local actors places additional burdens on Councils.** Local authorities (hromadas) expect operational support and assistance with implementation, IDPs expect direct assistance, while national partners seek analytical outputs and policy recommendations. At the same time, Councils often lack both a formal mandate and resources to adequately meet these expectations.

- **A lack of expertise, networks, and long-term vision, as well as the practical absence of functioning national policies and guidelines for IDP Councils, limits their ability to influence local decision-making.** Under such conditions, Councils are forced to focus on what they can deliver quickly and independently — moving away from the systemic role envisioned in their formal mandate.

- **In smaller communities, or where IDP Councils remain the only active actors, there is a lack of shared understanding of how to balance humanitarian assistance with systemic policy work.** Mechanisms are missing that would allow these roles to be separated, functions to be delegated to other structures, or IDP support to be integrated into broader local initiatives.

3. Cooperation Between IDP Councils and Local Authorities

The most critical factor determining the effectiveness of an IDP Council is the level of interest demonstrated by the local authority in its work. This factor, rather than the internal characteristics of the Council, was most frequently cited as decisive in whether the Council can fulfil its role. All participants in the qualitative component of the study, regardless of region, unanimously emphasised that **even a highly engaged Council has little impact if local authorities are not open to collaboration**. Conversely, in communities with proactive local authorities (hromadas), even a weakly structured Council can gradually reach a higher level of functioning if motivated individuals are involved.

3.1 Main Scenarios for Building Relationships Between Councils and Local Authorities

The analysis identified five typical scenarios of interaction between IDP Councils and local authorities. These scenarios were mapped along two axes: the Council's level of activity (active / low-active or inactive) and the local authority's level of engagement (high / low / fundamentally absent). They are presented in order from the most to the least effective in terms of creating a supportive environment for IDP policy development and implementation.

The first scenario describes a hromada where an active IDP Council collaborates with an engaged local authority. This configuration enables the full realisation of the Council's functions: from representing the interests of IDPs to developing local policies and implementing community projects. It is considered the most effective and desirable model of interaction. The second and third scenarios reflect transitional models, where the potential exists to gradually build stronger cooperation and eventually move towards the first, optimal scenario.

The second scenario occurs when the local authority demonstrates a strong interest in the work of the IDP Council, but the Council itself remains low-active or non-functional. In such cases, local authorities might initiate a review of the Council's composition or facilitate a full renewal to attract motivated individuals. However, in the absence of such revitalisation, local authorities may proceed with IDP-related initiatives independently, bypassing the Council, thereby undermining its role as a participation mechanism. The third scenario involves an active IDP Council operating in a hromada where the local authority initially shows little or no interest. In these cases, Councils often strive to build trust, foster communication, and demonstrate their value, gradually establishing stronger cooperation. If successful, the relationship can evolve towards the first scenario. However, in the absence of meaningful feedback or willingness to engage from the local authority, this scenario risks deteriorating into a less favourable configuration.

The fourth scenario describes a situation where an active Council operates within a hromada governed by a fundamentally uninterested local authority. Despite the Council's internal motivation and competency, it remains isolated from local decision-making, lacks access to resources, and has minimal influence on public policy. Such conditions frequently result in member burnout and a gradual decline in Council activity. The fifth scenario depicts a situation where both the Council is inactive (or exists only formally) and the local authority is uninterested. In these cases, the participatory mechanism is essentially non-functional, its existence reduced to fulfilling formal requirements or responding to external pressure. These last two scenarios are the most concerning from a policy monitoring perspective, as they often correlate with the absence or ineffective implementation of IDP support policies at the local level.

## I. Active IDP Council and Engaged Local Authority

Within the current model of IDP Councils as advisory bodies to local authorities, the scenario where the Council is active and the local authority demonstrates a high level of engagement emerged as the most effective — and the one most closely aligned with the intended purpose of the mechanism. In such a configuration, the voice of IDPs is integrated into decision-making processes, changes are implemented swiftly, and decisions are made jointly, with mutual agreement between the Council and the authorities. This approach not only enables timely responses to emerging needs but also facilitates policy development, the launch of joint initiatives, and resource mobilisation.

This scenario was likely the most common among surveyed IDP Councils, according to the quantitative findings. For instance, 78% of respondents reported contacting local authorities very often or somewhat often, and 56% said they encountered no barriers in cooperation. It is important, however, to consider the potential influence of social desirability bias: respondents may have been reluctant to criticise either the local authorities or their own Council. Nevertheless, even among those Councils that submitted recommendations in 2024 (45% of all respondents) or proposals for new policies (26%), the majority reported full acceptance of their initiatives (see Figures 11, 12).

Figure 11. Share of Existing Policy Recommendations Accepted by Local Authorities among those IDP Councils that Submitted them in 2024
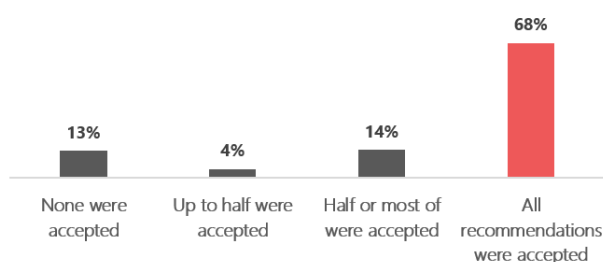
Figure 12. Share of Proposals for New Policies Accepted by Local Authorities among those IDP Councils that Submitted them in 2024
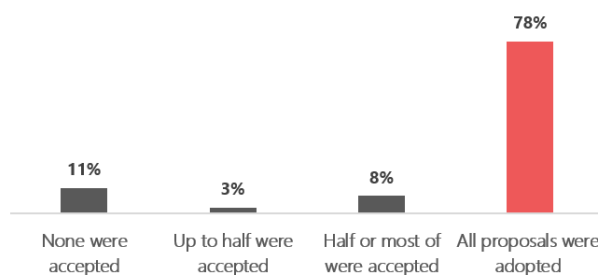
The strength of the partnership was further reflected in the responses of 69% of Councils, who indicated no concerns about a local authority representative holding a leadership position within the Council. This suggested a high degree of trust in the local authorities and broad support for a model of close collaboration where Councils and authorities work as a cohesive team.

Despite the overall positive dynamic, the main barrier to implementing recommendations — as reported by respondents — was a lack of funding from local budgets (30%). Some local authority representatives also noted that certain recommendations could not be implemented precisely due to financial constraints within their communities.

Separate attention was given to relocated IDP Councils, which demonstrated the highest levels of cooperation with relocated local administrations. These cases were characterised by synchronised activity, joint decision-making, successful resource mobilisation, and policy development. According to participants of focus group discussions, this success was largely rooted in shared displacement experiences, which fostered a particularly high level of trust and understanding between the Councils and local authorities.

> *"It is worth noting that we have established close cooperation with our Military-Civil Administration (MCA). The head of the MCA attends every meeting of the Council, and any issues that arise are addressed immediately. As an IDP Council, we are also authorised to summon any specialist from the MCA to provide updates on urgent matters.* *(…) Cooperation with the local authority is easier for us because our local officials are themselves IDPs, just like me and all our residents."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives.*

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Moreover, this type of positive dynamic was more frequently reported by hromadas in the South-Eastern macroregion. According to several informants, cooperation between IDP Councils and local authorities in these areas was generally more structured, supported by shared motivation, the proximity to frontline areas, and a common understanding of urgent needs.

II. Low-Active IDP Councils and Engaged Local Authorities

This scenario is among the least explored in both the qualitative and quantitative components of the research, largely due to methodological limitations. Firstly, the study primarily focused on the perspectives of IDP Council representatives rather than local authority representatives, resulting in broader documentation of active Councils. Secondly, local authorities associated with inactive Councils were often reluctant to participate in the assessment.

8% of IDP Councils reported being unable to develop recommendations or proposals for local policies due to a lack of expertise.

7% of IDP Councils reported being unable to develop recommendations or proposals for local policies due to the irregularity of their activities.

Nevertheless, according to the quantitative data, a small proportion of surveyed IDP Councils reported being unable to develop recommendations or proposals for local policies — either due to a lack of expertise or the irregularity of their activities. **Although the figures are relatively low, they still highlight the existence of certain structural challenges.**

The qualitative component also captured isolated cases where IDP Councils were primarily composed of individuals pursuing their own interests, rather than collectively representing displaced communities:

> *"There are also opposite examples. In one of the hromadas — I won't name it specifically — the IDP Council essentially addresses only the personal needs of its members. For example, the housing waiting list consists solely of the head of the Council, and other applications are simply ignored..."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with oblast-level IDP Council representatives*

When an IDP Council remains passive, it is often the local authority that assumes the initiative for driving engagement. In some cases, representatives of local authorities become the main drivers of activity — initiating meetings, suggesting discussion topics, inviting guest speakers, organising training sessions, and at times even joining the Council themselves. As one local authority representative explained: ***"We were really hoping for greater activity from the IDP Council... We explain everything to them, we bring them together, but unfortunately, they show little willingness or initiative."***

For local authorities, this situation often means additional workload, with the hope that these efforts will eventually bear fruit. In some cases, this hope is justified: after updating the Council's membership or attracting more motivated participants, cooperation with the local authority can gradually evolve into a full partnership resembling the first scenario. However, when no such shift occurs, the IDP Council risks becoming a purely nominal structure — existing only formally, while local authorities continue implementing IDP-related policies without its involvement.

III. Active IDP Councils and Not Engaged Local Authorities

This scenario describes a situation where the initiative comes from the IDP Council's members themselves, while the local authority remains passive or non-committal in its support. The Council operates based on internal motivation — often driven by displaced persons — and seeks to establish dialogue with the local authority, but encounters barriers in the form of indifference, lack of attention,

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or mistrust from officials. **Under these conditions, the Council's ability to influence local policies remains limited until the local authority recognises it as a legitimate partner.**

During a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives, almost all participants shared their experiences of how they had to "prove themselves" to local authorities in order for the newly established Council to operate effectively. Two common approaches were identified that Councils use to build partnerships with local authorities.

The first approach is to demonstrate professionalism. Participants noted that this requires not only initiating dialogue but also being thoroughly prepared, knowing key documents, understanding budget procedures, and formulating requests clearly. This observation is consistent with insights from expert interviews, where the need to train Councils in effective communication — particularly with local authorities — was consistently highlighted.

> *"If you approach the local authority and say: '(…) I need to ask where the budget funds are being distributed,' they will likely not tell you anything. But if you come and say: 'I represent the Council. We have reviewed the budget programme, identified certain expenses and categories, and noticed that a certain percentage is allocated to IDPs. Could you please explain why this proportion has been set?', then the local authority will treat you much more seriously."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives.*

The second approach is to take over some of the local authority's operational functions **to demonstrate practical value.** One of the cases mentioned during the focus group discussions related to the situation following cuts in state assistance for IDPs. At the time, the local authorities were unable to properly explain the reasons behind these changes, tensions began to rise, and a peaceful assembly took place outside the local council offices.

It was the IDP Council that stepped in to manage crisis communications with the displaced population: they organised explanations, answered questions, redirected those who needed support, and effectively "shielded" the local authorities: *"later, we met directly with the head of the local council. He had seen the whole situation unfold and was extremely grateful that we had taken over negotiations with the IDPs, because no one in the hromada wanted a conflict, and frankly, he himself did not know what to tell them. This was our first experience of successful engagement with the local authority."*

Informants highlighted that local authorities often tend to view IDPs as a burden rather than recognising them as a potential source of human capital and community growth. As a result, many IDP Councils are forced to start their engagement from a position of "proving their value."
To build trust, Council members work actively: organising consultations, coordinating assistance, hosting public events, and demonstrating that they can serve as serious partners. In several cases, this strategy allowed Councils to gradually establish full-fledged cooperation with local authorities.

Nevertheless, in many hromadas, IDPs are still perceived as a temporary phenomenon — as an added strain on local infrastructure rather than as integral members of the hromada. **One of the key challenges under this scenario is shifting that perception and convincing local authorities that IDPs can be a valuable resource for community development, and that IDP Councils can serve as an effective mechanism for supporting this process.**

However, even where Councils show initiative, communicate professionally, or take on part of the local authority's functions, it does not always lead to stable cooperation. In cases where local authorities fundamentally fail to recognise the value of the Council or are reluctant to involve new actors, Council

efforts often lose momentum. This leads into the next — and significantly less effective — scenario discussed below.

7% of IDP Councils reported that they were unable to develop recommendations or proposals on local policies due to a lack of interest or inactivity from the local authorities.

4% of IDP Councils reported that they were unable to develop recommendations or proposals on local policies due to infrequent meetings with the local authorities.

IV. Active IDP Councils and Principally Disengaged Local Authorities

Not all participants of the focus group discussions shared positive experiences regarding efforts to build cooperation with local authorities. In some cases, participants of the qualitative component highlighted that local authorities were uninterested in either pursuing change or establishing collaboration, meaning that even effective communication or the demonstration of successful practices by IDP Councils did not lead to meaningful partnerships.

In the quantitative component, this scenario was less commonly reported; however, some IDP Councils indicated irregular interaction or a lack of interest from local authorities, and 1% pointed to the absence of local authority representatives within the Council itself.

> *"When I try to explain how things could work, how the approach could be modernised – because in the hromada where I used to live, certain stages of democratic development were already completed back in 2014 – it causes irritation among local authority representatives. It's like, 'Don't bring your own rules into someone else's house.' That's it. They say: 'This is how we live, everything was fine, everything was normal.'"*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with oblast-level IDP Council representatives*

In addition to communication barriers, some focus group participants pointed to limited access to data or budgetary information, which hindered policy planning and monitoring. In some cases, they noted a perceived lack of transparency in how local authorities made decisions regarding support for IDPs, which could further fuel mistrust.

While mistrust was less frequently recorded in the quantitative component, it remained noticeable. Specifically, 8% of respondents noted that if a local authority representative chaired the Council, its focus could shift away from IDP-related issues toward other priorities. A further 7% believed that this situation would limit the Council's ability to critique or challenge local authority decisions. These findings highlight a localised but tangible degree of mistrust within certain interaction dynamics.

V. Inactive IDP Council and Principally Disengaged Local Authorities

This scenario is generally the least visible in research, as neither side — the IDP Council nor the local authorities — demonstrates any meaningful activity, leaving them largely outside the scope of direct observation. The few documented examples come mainly from national-level expert interviews or focus group discussions, often as second-hand observations of some hromadas.

Several key factors were identified as contributing to the emergence of such inactive Councils. First, the misinterpretation of the Model Regulation as imposing a formal obligation to establish an IDP Council in any hromada hosting displaced persons — even where no real demand exists. In such cases, local authorities may set up a Council solely to fulfil reporting requirements, without genuine engagement. Second, some Councils initially created through sincere efforts gradually lose momentum as either the local authority or the Council members themselves disengage. Over time, these Councils may continue to exist on paper but cease any real activity.

Some informants also raised concerns about IDP Councils being used as a mechanism to block meaningful participation by displaced persons in local governance. They cited examples where

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Councils were deliberately staffed with nominal members to prevent the formation of genuinely active bodies. In certain hromadas, this was reportedly a conscious tactic to avoid pressure from IDPs on sensitive issues such as housing allocation or local budgeting decisions. Given the sensitivity of the issue and the challenges in systematically documenting such cases, these situations remain anecdotal and require further targeted research.

3.2 Main Barriers to Cooperation with Local Authorities

Against the backdrop of the last two scenarios, participants in expert interviews increasingly recommended revisiting the formal framework regulating interaction between IDP Councils and local authorities. The discussion emphasised **the need not just for symbolic recognition of IDP Councils, but for the establishment of real obligations — including providing feedback, considering recommendations, and responding to Council submissions.** According to experts, without such mechanisms even the most active Councils remain excluded from decision-making processes, with outcomes depending solely on the goodwill of individual local officials.

At the hromada level, IDP Council representatives highlighted that, in some cases, the absence of clear cooperation mechanisms made it impossible to implement even the decisions that had already been developed — such as local IDP policy plans or housing initiatives. Several participants explicitly linked this situation to the lack of political will among local authorities. This points not only to the absence of formal obligations at the local level, but also to the lack of a central coordinating body at the national level that could support advocacy efforts, facilitate dialogue in complex cases, and bring together Councils to influence national policymaking.

> *"How can an IDP Council have a voice in the hromada if it is neither listened to nor allowed to attend city council sessions or other key meetings? The very existence of an IDP Council as a consultative body becomes meaningless in such cases. In my view, the regulation must be amended to require that, if IDPs constitute a certain percentage of the hromada's population, the head of the IDP Council must have the right to attend official meetings."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a representative of the national-level governmental institution*

One state sector representative also shared her experience advocating for expanded legal rights for IDP Councils and for requiring local authorities to formally respond to their initiatives. According to her, the attempt was unsuccessful, and the issue remains unresolved. Additional proposals to strengthen the influence of IDP Councils included introducing a formalised procedure obligating local authorities to review Council proposals within a set timeframe or publicly explain any refusals. There were also discussions about establishing new dedicated local positions — similar to "veteran assistants" — that would focus specifically on IDP issues, backed by state coordination and resources.

> *"We need to clarify the status of IDP Councils. If we remain purely consultative, then all our activities depend on our own initiative and on how seriously the local authorities take the issue of IDPs. If, however, we are expected to deliver results, we need resources – human, financial, material, and legal. And this must be established from the highest level. Otherwise, no person will choose unpaid public service over earning an income, caring for a family, or even having some rest. Therefore, as long as we are treated as purely consultative bodies, it is unrealistic to plan for significant change. Councils today operate solely thanks to the enthusiasm of those who want to drive change. Why do I do it? Because when I arrived with my three children and had nothing, someone helped me. Now I help others because I understand their struggles and can offer support through my experience and connections. But structurally, the Council cannot go beyond what is outlined in the regulation. Without resources, expecting us to take over the responsibilities of state institutions is simply unreasonable."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

A separate challenge concerns relocated IDP Councils and their collaboration with local authorities or military administrations in the hromadas to which they have been evacuated. In these cases, effective response to IDP needs requires engagement not only with relocated local authorities but also with the

hosting local government structures. However, respondents noted that engagement with these structures often remains limited or lacking altogether.
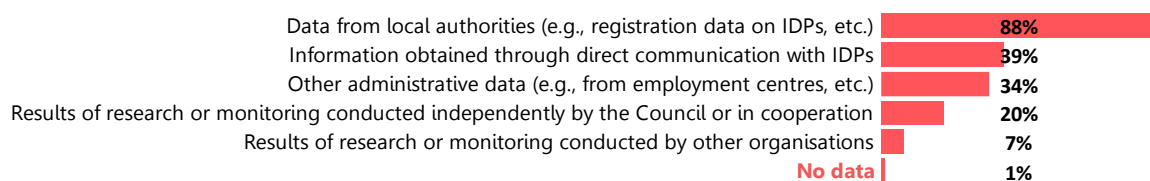
3.3 Access to Data on the Hromada and IDPs

Most representatives of IDP Councils, as well as local authorities, noted that Councils generally have regular access to information regarding the situation and needs of IDPs in the hromada — primarily through direct communication or shared Viber or Telegram chats, where displaced persons can promptly submit complaints, requests, or ideas. This format was most frequently mentioned as the main source of a "full picture" of current challenges. This finding is consistent with the quantitative results: 65% of Councils reported learning about IDP needs directly through communication (see Figure 14), while information on the socio-demographic profile was mostly obtained from official data provided by local authorities (88%).
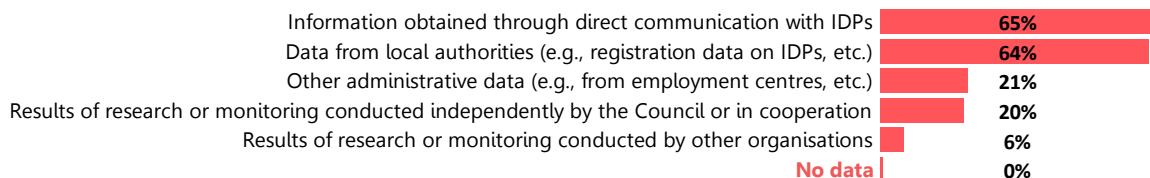
87% of IDP Councils reported being **very well or relatively well informed about the demographic profile, socio-economic situation**, and needs of IDPs in their hromada.

98% of IDP Councils indicated that having up-to-date information about IDPs in the hromada is **very important or rather important** for the effectiveness of their work.

Figure 13. The Most Common Sources of Information about the Socio-demographic Characteristics of IDPs in the Hromada

Data from local authorities (e.g., registration data on IDPs, etc.)	88%
Information obtained through direct communication with IDPs	39%
Other administrative data (e.g., from employment centres, etc.)	34%
Results of research or monitoring conducted independently by the Council or in cooperation	20%
Results of research or monitoring conducted by other organisations	7%
No data	1%

Figure 14. The Most Common Sources of Information about IDP Needs in the Hromada

Information obtained through direct communication with IDPs	65%
Data from local authorities (e.g., registration data on IDPs, etc.)	64%
Other administrative data (e.g., from employment centres, etc.)	21%
Results of research or monitoring conducted independently by the Council or in cooperation	20%
Results of research or monitoring conducted by other organisations	6%
No data	0%

Council representatives also emphasised that they usually do not face major barriers in accessing information from local authorities or other administrative structures. In a number of hromadas, local authorities themselves initiated meetings with healthcare, social protection and housing and communal services departments to share up-to-date information and inform Council members. In some cases, Councils jointly with local authorities-initiated surveys, even without external expertise, support, or funding.

These observations are supported by the quantitative component: 45% of Councils reported facing no barriers in collecting or using information, while 32% cited the lack of funding for research initiatives as the main obstacle. Another 17% pointed to the reluctance of IDPs to participate in surveys, and 11% noted the lack of institutions or centres that could assist in conducting such initiatives.

However, access to basic information and openness from local authorities represent only part of the broader picture. During focus group discussions, participants identified two key barriers that still limit Councils' information capacities:

1. Limited awareness or restricted access to the broader context of hromada life, such as the local budget, population profile, available housing stock, or professional opportunities. In some cases, this information is not available at the hromada level, as it is held at the oblast or national level, to which neither the Councils nor local authorities have direct access.

2. The limited quality and completeness of available data. Even where oblast and local authorities demonstrate openness, the data itself is often fragmented, outdated, or incomplete. This is especially relevant when it comes to the number and geographic distribution of IDPs and the inventory of housing stock. In particular, the lack of coordination between different state institutions and the absence of a unified system lead to numerous challenges at the local level, complicating IDPs' access to services and the realisation of their rights.

> *"The most pressing concern for everyone is access to housing. How is it being addressed locally? It isn't. We have raised this issue numerous times within our hromada, because most people would prefer to stay in the district centre rather than relocate to villages (…). We approached the local authorities – they said, in theory, something could be done: there are abandoned dormitory buildings that could be renovated and used as temporary or social housing for IDPs. But discussions never progress beyond the talking stage: once they start looking into it, it turns out no one knows who owns the land or the building, and, above all, there is no funding for renovations."*
>
> *From an expert interview with a local authority representative*

Separately, some key informants at the national level stressed the absence of a centralised registry of IDP Councils across the country. According to them, the lack of an up-to-date contact database significantly hinders systematic support, coordination, and the development of horizontal platforms for experience sharing. In such circumstances, the potential of IDP Councils as local actors remains largely underutilised. Additionally, during focus group discussions, several participants expressed growing fatigue with repeated surveys, data collection efforts, and interviews, especially when such initiatives were not followed by concrete actions or tangible outcomes. This highlights a broader disconnection between the various institutions engaged in supporting IDP Councils.

> *"There was a time when we were asked to submit all our needs (…). We prepared detailed tables, which were excellent. But you know what is most frustrating now? I always warn everyone: it is better not to ask about needs if there is no plan to address them. If there is no follow-up, it is better not to raise expectations in the first place. Back then, we carefully outlined what kind of support we needed – both material and organisational…"*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

Conclusions on the Interaction Between IDP Councils and Local Authorities

- **Most IDP Councils have succeeded in establishing effective cooperation with their hromadas.** Among those Councils that submitted recommendations in 2024, 68% reported that all their recommendations had been fully adopted, and 78% noted that all their new proposals had been accepted by the local authorities. This indicates a significant level of trust towards Councils on the part of local authorities and a willingness to cooperate when there is a shared motivation. In such cases, Councils genuinely act as effective mediators between the hromada, the local authorities, and displaced persons.

- **However, in hromadas where local authorities show little or no interest, IDP Councils lack any formal tools to influence decision-making.** Without a legal obligation for local authorities to engage with or respond to Councils, the latter are left in a position of petitioners rather than full-fledged partners. In such contexts, even the strongest initiatives from Councils often encounter systemic indifference or outright disregard. This not only

undermines motivation and trust in institutions but also narrows the space for attracting new members.

- **Against this backdrop, awareness-raising efforts targeting local authorities become particularly critical.** Throughout the qualitative component, respondents consistently pointed out that IDPs are still widely perceived as a "social burden." Shifting this perception — recognising displaced persons as an integral part of the hromada, with their own resources, skills, and willingness to contribute — is essential for building strong partnerships and fostering sustainable integration policies.

- **Openness from local authorities is important, but it alone is not enough to ensure effective cooperation. As the discussions revealed, most Councils do not have access to comprehensive information on the status of their hromadas, such as the number of IDPs, available housing stock, or social infrastructure.** Even when such information exists, it is often stored at the oblast or national level and remains inaccessible to local Councils. Moreover, available data is frequently fragmented, outdated, or inconsistent across different agencies. This severely hinders the ability of Councils to develop effective local policies and highlights the urgent need for robust mechanisms to collect, update, and share information across governance levels, ensuring Councils have guaranteed access to accurate, complete, and actionable data.

# 4. Enabling and Constraining Factors for IDP Councils' Work

4.1 External Engagement and Resource Partners for IDP Councils

Although IDP Councils were established as instruments of local participation, they do not operate in isolation, or even solely within the confines of their own hromadas. Their effectiveness largely depends on how well they are integrated into broader networks of external support actors, including NGOs and governmental bodies at various levels. At the same time, the scale and nature of this engagement remain highly fragmented, limiting the sustainability of support and the development of long-term partnerships.

The following subsections explore the main types of external actors and their level of involvement in supporting IDP Councils — from horizontal linkages between the Councils themselves to cooperation with NGOs, international organisations, and national-level authorities.

Cooperation between IDP Councils

Figure 15. Forms of Interaction Between IDP Councils at the Hromada Level
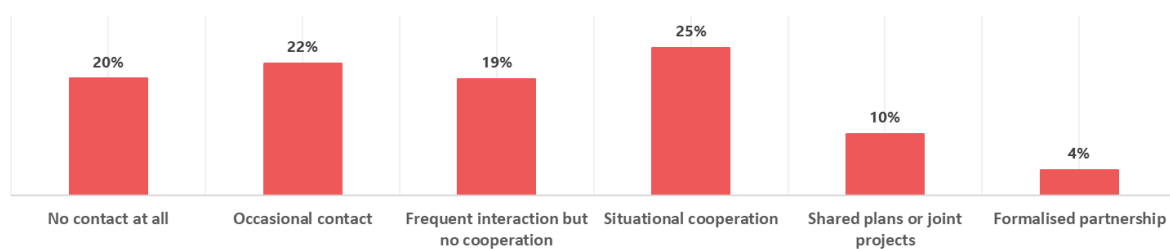
Only 38% of IDP Councils had the opportunity to participate in experience-sharing events with other Councils at least once in 2024. Among those who did, 67% highlighted this format as one of the most valuable forms of support.

Both interviews and focus group discussions consistently pointed to a lack of networking between IDP Councils at the hromada level. Quantitative data reinforced this observation: one in five Councils (20%) reported having no contact with other Councils at all, operating in complete isolation. This isolation was observed regardless of the macro-region, type of hromada, or the Council's year of establishment.

Nonetheless, platforms for interaction do exist. Many participants spoke positively about the Ukrainian National Forum of IDP Councils, which for some became a key source of motivation and activation.

> *"For the first six months, our Council didn't really do anything for the hromada. But in June, I attended the Forum, where we exchanged experiences with the Kyiv Council and Councils from Western Ukraine. I saw how active others were, and when I came back, I had my first idea: I proposed creating a chat group on social media. I started sharing information, building a following, representing our Council, and actively encouraging people to join. Eventually, I also attended the second All-Ukrainian Forum of IDP Councils with Iryna Vereshchuk present. When I returned and shared that we had presented our hromada and Council, attracted the interest of international donors, and planned to develop a needs assessment and a roadmap, as well as establish an NGO, only then did the local authorities start taking notice of us."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

At the same time, the Forum also drew some critical reflections — not regarding the content itself, but due to the overall scarcity of similar platforms. Key concerns included event oversaturation, an overwhelming number of participants, and limited opportunities for meaningful networking. Participants often noted that large-scale events were challenging for building sustainable connections, which require more space for informal communication. One informant also pointed to a broader issue: the absence of follow-up and joint planning after networking events, which gradually erodes the social links created. Most often, participants called for the creation of additional formats for interaction — both at the national and regional levels.

> *"By the way, such forums, where many IDP Council representatives gather, are a powerful source of motivation. We really don't have enough of them. It would be great to have such events more often, even if not everyone can attend at once – even small gatherings would help. They really inspire people to act."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

Cooperation with oblast level IDP Councils
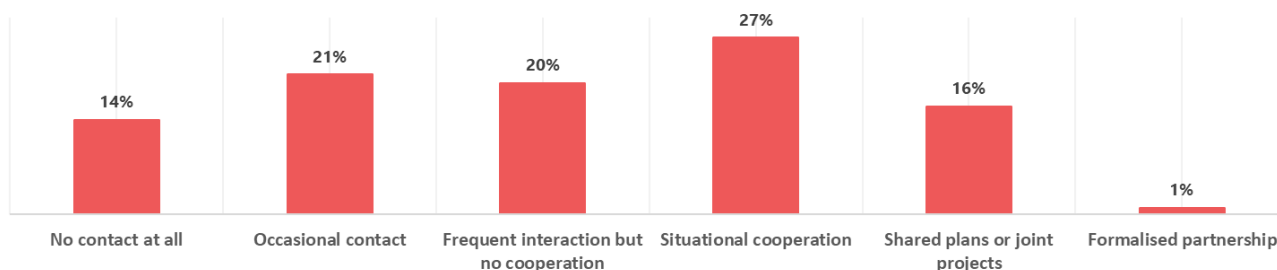
Figure 16. Forms of Interaction Between IDP Councils at the Hromada Level and Oblast Level

Twenty-two percent (22%) of IDP Councils identified the oblast-level Council as one of their most valuable partners. Most participants in the qualitative component emphasised that oblast-level IDP Councils are expected to play a coordinating and supporting role for local-level Councils. This includes gathering and consolidating issues raised at the community level, facilitating engagement with the oblast administration, and supporting advocacy for changes that extend beyond the boundaries of a single hromada.

At the same time, oblast-level Councils are often involved in a very wide range of activities — including social protection functions such as managing temporary accommodation centres — which makes it difficult for them to fully perform the role of a dedicated support hub. This also impacts the quality of cooperation between different levels: 35% of local IDP Councils either reported no contact with their oblast Council at all or mentioned only occasional interactions. A further 20% indicated that while they often crossed paths, no structured collaboration had been established.

During focus group discussions, participants repeatedly stressed the need for clearer institutional role differentiation and the creation of a structured cooperation model. As one participant put it:

> *"Networking needs to be properly organised at the oblast level, so that all information flows into the oblast-level IDP Council. This would allow for a comprehensive analysis of challenges across the entire oblast. At the same time, the oblast Council should be supporting the IDP Councils at the hromada level, establishing an effective communication channel."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with representatives of oblast-level IDP Councils*
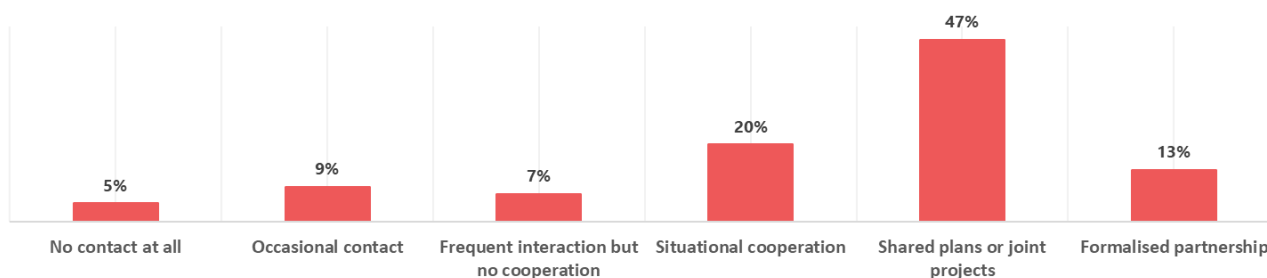
Discussions pointed not only to the need for better coordination, but also for a clearer division of responsibilities based on the level of complexity. Hromada Councils should primarily focus on collecting information, highlighting local issues, and responding to the needs of displaced populations within their communities. Oblast-level Councils, on the other hand, are envisioned as structures capable of consolidating these needs, supporting inter-hromada communication, coordinating advocacy efforts, and contributing to oblast-level policy development. Such a division of responsibilities would help strengthen both levels, avoid duplication of efforts, and make the voice of IDP Councils more coherent and influential.

> *"Let's be realistic. IDP Councils established under Oblast Military Administrations, as consultative bodies, cannot provide a full picture across the oblast. In my opinion, IDP Councils should be differentiated by levels, with each having clearly defined tasks. At the oblast level, the Council should focus on consultation and institutional support for local-level Councils. Advocacy efforts should also be consolidated — when issues are raised collectively at the oblast level, they are much more effective than when each hromada advocates separately and risks being overlooked. Additionally, we must rethink the very concept of IDP Councils: whether to reform them within the current consultative framework, or move towards establishing an association. In any case, each level of IDP Council must have clear, distinct functions."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with representatives of oblast-level IDP Councils*

Cooperation with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Figure 17. Forms of Interaction Between IDP Councils and NGOs

No contact at all	Occasional contact	Frequent interaction but no cooperation	Situational cooperation	Shared plans or joint projects	Formalised partnership
5%	9%	7%	20%	47%	13%

Among all external actors, non-governmental organisations have established the strongest engagement with IDP Councils. NGOs were cited among the top three most valuable partners by 65% of Councils, and 47% reported having joint plans or projects, including those involving financial support. A further 13% indicated having formalised agreements or memoranda of understanding with NGOs. This makes NGOs the only type of actor with whom long-term, structured partnerships are relatively widespread. In most cases, this involved cooperation with local NGOs, whose representatives often participate directly in the Councils' activities. Joint projects typically focus on supporting IDPs within the hromada, and partnerships are often built on personal connections and previous collaboration experience. Only a minority (5%) of Councils reported no interaction with NGOs, while 9% mentioned only occasional contact.

The other most common form of cooperation with NGOs involved ad-hoc consultations or non-regular support. Often, national-level NGOs were noted for providing capacity-building support to the Councils, particularly through mentoring programmes, experience-sharing events, and strategic planning assistance. During focus group discussions and expert interviews, both IDP Council and local authority representatives consistently highlighted mentorship, peer exchanges, and technical support in strategic development as among the most useful, effective, and inspiring forms of engagement. In some cases, such initiatives were described as a "launching point" for a Council's activity — after attending their first event, Councils often began developing plans, mobilising new members, and increasing their visibility within the hromada. Most frequently, Councils participated in training

sessions (55%), received practical materials (22%), and received support in developing strategies (22%).

Despite the recognised importance of training activities, participants in focus groups expressed concern about the relevance and practical impact of such initiatives. Some noted that many training sessions remained too general or too abstract to be applied to the specific contexts of individual hromadas. Others stressed the need for broader access to success stories from other Councils, which could serve both as inspiration and as practical guidance for emerging Councils or those seeking to expand their work. In some cases, training activities were organised without considering the development level or specific needs of a particular Council, limiting their impact. Participants emphasised that the most valuable learning opportunities were those tailored to local realities, offering practical tools and demonstrating how change could be initiated even with limited resources.

> *"In terms of training, the need certainly remains, but it is important to approach it carefully. In my circle, for instance, people have started to voice concerns that there are now too many training sessions, leading to a sense of fatigue. However, I can see that what people really need is well-structured, practical training. Online formats are largely ineffective. When there is an opportunity to come to the hromada, bring people together, address their specific questions, and deliver training sessions with experts who truly meet their needs, the results are entirely different. It is critical that such learning opportunities are methodically organised, consistent, and not chaotic."*
>
> *From an expert interview with an CSO representative*

Several representatives at the national level also recognised the need to adjust not only the content of training programmes for IDP Councils but also the methods by which they are delivered. It was emphasised that the effectiveness of such initiatives depends not only on the relevance of the material, adapted to real-world conditions, but also on the facilitators' ability to communicate complex topics in a clear and accessible way. This highlighted the need to select and train experts with experience in adult education, capable of explaining intricate legal and administrative concepts in a structured and comprehensible manner.

> *"To be honest, the speakers from state authorities were assessed very negatively. They simply do not know how to communicate in plain language. They use too many technical terms, and after five, ten, or fifteen minutes, people simply lose interest and disengage. As a result, fewer and fewer people participated in each successive event. We clearly need experts who know exactly what is written in the regulations, but we must either limit their speaking time or train them to communicate differently."*
>
> *From an expert interview with an CSO representative*

Additionally, IDP Council representatives highlighted the limited nature of support over time. Participation in a training event was often not followed by any sustained mentorship or opportunities to apply the newly gained knowledge. By contrast, Councils that maintained ongoing contact with NGOs—receiving help with strategy development, presentation of results, and support during the implementation phase—reported significantly stronger capacities, enhanced autonomy, and growing trust from local authorities.

Cooperation with International Organisations

Figure 18. Forms of Interaction between IDP Councils and International Organisations
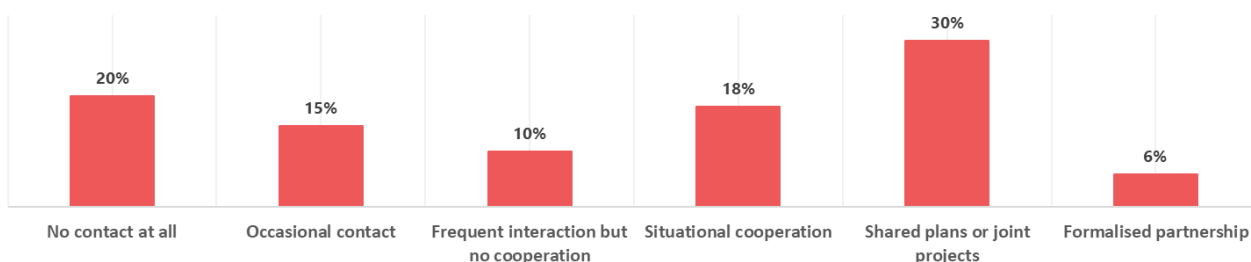
International organisations were cited as valuable partners by 41% of IDP Councils, while 30% reported having joint projects or plans with them. However, in most cases, collaboration occurred indirectly through NGOs representing the interests of IDP Councils, rather than through direct engagement with the Councils themselves.

For many IDP Councils, financial support remains the only realistic avenue to strengthen their institutional capacity or implement initiatives within their hromadas. Given the financial constraints facing local authorities and the absence of a national support system for IDP Councils, international organisations have the potential to play a crucial role as strategic partners. Nevertheless, real engagement remains limited: 20% of Councils reported no experience of cooperation, and a further 15% mentioned only non-regular contacts. This highlights a lack of clear and accessible mechanisms for collaboration — both in terms of project-based initiatives and institutional support.

Qualitative data reinforced the finding, and according to interview participants international organisations as often do not view IDP Councils as independent and legitimate structures, mainly due to a lack of understanding of their role. There is also a notable gap in programme support for the advisory function of the Councils: initiatives aimed at needs assessments, monitoring, or local guidelines and policy development rarely fall within the focus of international grant programmes.

> *"There are many examples where international partners prefer not to work with local authorities directly, choosing instead to collaborate exclusively with NGOs. I believe this is a drawback."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

One of the main barriers to deeper engagement is the lack of legal status for IDP Councils. Even when donors are willing to offer support, without the mediation of NGOs, direct assistance is not feasible. This creates administrative complications, reduces transparency, and generates numerous practical challenges. As one focus group participant observed, **"We were provided with furniture for our Council, but where should it be registered? We are not a legal entity, so we cannot formally accept it."** As a result, some Council members begin operating through their own NGOs, blurring the line between representing the Council collectively and pursuing individual organisational agendas: **"In some cases, the majority of colleagues tend to advocate primarily for their own civil society organisations rather than considering the interests of the IDP Council as a whole."**

Furthermore, when multiple NGOs are represented within the same Council, it can lead to conflicts over ownership of assets, attribution of project outcomes, and overall accountability. This not only complicates operational processes but also undermines internal trust and cooperation.

Strengthening IDP Councils is vital for the long-term transition towards the localisation of humanitarian response, through responsible handover of roles to local actors. This shift from

externally driven management towards sustainable local governance, with embedded participation, feedback, and policymaking mechanisms, requires the development of Councils as legitimate, capable, and recognised partners. In this context, international organisations and donors have a critical role to play in building the capacity of IDP Councils and ensuring their continued presence and effectiveness within hromadas.

Cooperation with Higher-Level State Institutions

Figure 19. Forms of Interaction between IDP Councils and Higher-Level State Institutions
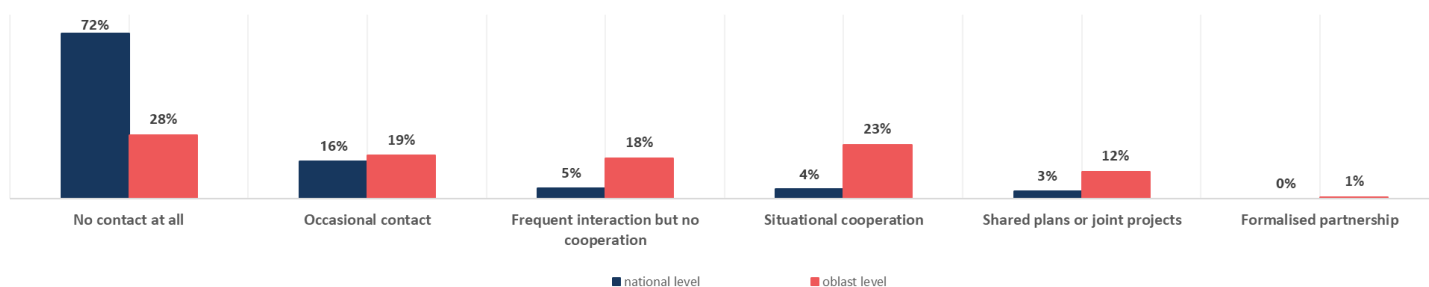
Institutional cooperation between IDP Councils and higher-level authorities—both at the oblast and national levels—remains irregular and underdeveloped. Oblast administrations were considered useful by only 12% of Councils, while over a quarter (28%) reported having no interaction with them at all. At the same time, 23% of Councils mentioned occasional cooperation, and 16% had implemented joint initiatives. These figures point to a potential for strengthening links at the oblast level, particularly in joint responses to challenges and the development of oblast-level policies.

Contact with national authorities is even more limited: 72% of Councils reported no interaction with state institutions at all, while only 3% indicated that they had developed joint plans or projects. Formalised partnerships remain an exception, with only 1% of Councils reporting such arrangements. This gap deprives national institutions of valuable resources—local data and hromada-level insights—which could significantly contribute to the development of adaptive policies.

Nevertheless, the need for such information is recognised. One key informant at the national level acknowledged that ministries and central structures lack detailed information about IDPs at the community level, which could otherwise be supplied by IDP Councils. However, this potential remains untapped. As noted by one state sector representative, the main barrier lies in the limited capacity of the Councils themselves: they often lack the expertise and analytical tools required to systematically collect, process, and consolidate community-level data.

Moreover, participants in the qualitative component repeatedly highlighted the importance of improving access to reliable data (see Section 3.3 on Access to Data on Hromadas and IDPs). In this regard, higher-level government structures should play a leading role in ensuring the availability of aggregated and verified information, thus strengthening the analytical capacities of Councils and enabling more effective participation in decision-making processes.

Despite the growing volume of tasks and expectations placed upon them, IDP Councils remain largely invisible to higher-level state institutions. This not only deprives the government of a potential partner at the community level but also reinforces the sense of isolation and limited agency among the Councils themselves. Nevertheless, some examples illustrate the potential for establishing more effective cooperation. **For instance, the Coordination Hub under the former Ministry for Reintegration was repeatedly cited as an example of an effective mechanism linking the local and national levels.** Regular meetings, the opportunity for direct communication, and the discussion of local challenges all contributed to a sense of inclusion for Councils in national-level processes.

However, such formats remain isolated cases. The absence of a formal interaction structure and institutional frameworks that recognise IDP Councils as legitimate governance partners means that these initiatives have yet to gain a systematic character. The development of formalised cooperation mechanisms, the establishment of information-sharing channels, and the strengthening of trust and technical capacity among Councils could significantly enhance their contribution to shaping responsible policymaking at all levels.

It should also be noted that interaction with certain sectors—such as media and business—while present in isolated instances, largely remains outside the Councils' operational sphere: 65% of Councils reported no contact with media, and 52% had no interaction with the business sector.

Overall, engagement between IDP Councils and external actors remains highly uneven ranging from well-established partnerships to complete absence of contact. While cooperation with NGOs shows relatively consistent and meaningful engagement, other forms of interaction remain sporadic or weakly developed. A majority of Councils (61%) reported no experience of failing to establish contact with a potential partner. Among those who did encounter such challenges, the most common difficulties were with businesses (12%), international organisations and donors (10%), and media outlets (7%).

Key barriers most frequently mentioned by Councils included the lack of specific ideas for cooperation (43%) or the absence of responsible contact persons (25%). Additionally, 25% indicated that certain institutions did not view the IDP Council as a potential cooperation partner, while 8% cited a lack of trust on the part of these actors. Conversely, Councils themselves do not always clearly understand or articulate their role in such partnerships, further compounding the challenges from both sides.

4.2 Available resources

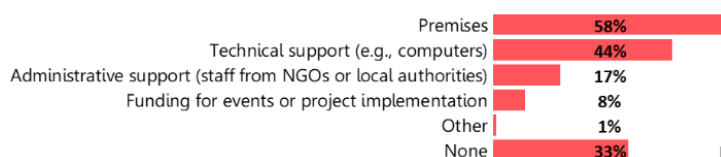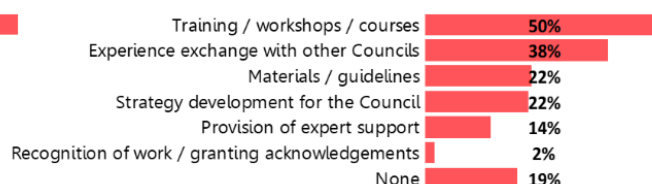Figure 20: Material support provided to Councils in 2024

Premises	58%
Technical support (e.g., computers)	44%
Administrative support (staff from NGOs or local authorities)	17%
Funding for events or project implementation	8%
Other	1%
None	33%

Figure 21: Non-material support provided to Councils in 2024

Training / workshops / courses	50%
Experience exchange with other Councils	38%
Materials / guidelines	22%
Strategy development for the Council	22%
Provision of expert support	14%
Recognition of work / granting acknowledgements	2%
None	19%

Most IDP Councils operate with limited access to both material and non-material resources, often relying on support from local authorities or civil society organisations. In 2024, 58% of Councils reported receiving access to premises, 44% received technical equipment such as computers, and one-third benefited from other types of material support, including stationery or furniture. However, financial assistance and administrative support remained rare: only 8% of Councils secured project funding, and 17% received help with administrative tasks.

Material resources were most commonly provided by local authorities (94% of cases), with less frequent support coming from CSOs (14%) and international organisations (7%). Only three Councils reported having paid positions within their teams; in one instance, the funding was provided by a CSO, while in the others the source was unspecified.

Access to non-material support was somewhat broader: 50% of Councils participated in training sessions, 38% engaged in experience-sharing exchanges, and 22% received practical materials or assistance in developing strategies. The main providers of this type of support were CSOs and charitable organisations (55%), local authorities (47%), and international partners (26%). National-level

government structures were rarely mentioned as sources of support, referenced by only 7% of Councils.

Despite the existing assistance, available resources remain fragmented and unstable, preventing Councils from operating at full capacity. The lack of consistent funding and institutional support, particularly from the state, exacerbates the Councils' vulnerability and hampers their ability to fulfil even their core functions.

Conclusions on the engagement of IDP Councils with supporting actors

- **The need for stronger horizontal linkages between IDP Councils emerged as one of the most frequently mentioned issues throughout the research.** Participants in focus group discussions and expert interviews emphasised that peer-to-peer experience sharing, regular communication, and opportunities for mutual support are critical for the resilience and professional development of Councils. Despite the existence of some platforms, such as the All-Ukrainian Forum of IDP Councils, a broader networking mechanism is still lacking. As a result, each Council is often forced to build its strategy almost from scratch, without being able to draw on the achievements of peers.

- **Alongside the demand for stronger horizontal linkages, participants also highlighted the urgent need for structured communication with national-level institutions.** None of the respondents were able to identify examples of systematic engagement between IDP Councils and central government bodies. The Coordination Hub at the former Ministry for Reintegration was mentioned as a positive example, but its operational focus did not substitute for a long-term feedback mechanism. In the absence of such a structure, Councils are cut off from national policymaking processes, while the state loses access to first-hand information from local communities.

- **Another crucial area requiring development is cooperation with international donors. Some Councils have already engaged in projects jointly with NGOs acting as intermediaries between them and donors.** However, this approach not only complicates administration but also blurs the role of the Councils as consultative and advisory bodies. Participants in the qualitative component of the research called for the establishment of mechanisms for direct collaboration between IDP Councils and donors — not only by expanding funding opportunities, but also by increasing the number of grants focused on policy development, analysis, and advocacy. Such an approach was seen as key to strengthening Councils' autonomy and enhancing their role within longer-term stabilisation strategies.

5. Needs of IDP Councils: Key Considerations for Strengthening Their Role at the Local Level

IDP Councils have gradually become an important mechanism for participation in local governance. However, their work continues to develop under conditions of fragmented support, limited coordination among key stakeholders, and the absence of an overarching coordination framework. Limited access to up-to-date contacts, data, and feedback mechanisms has left some Councils overlooked by support programmes, resulting in their potential remaining underutilised.

Effective integration of IDP Councils into local processes requires not only strengthening their resources but also establishing a shared understanding of who should be supported, how, and for what purpose. This section summarises the key needs of IDP Councils, based on findings from the qualitative component of the study, open-ended survey responses, and analytical conclusions from previous sections. These needs are structured into four categories: material, educational, institutional, and cooperative.

Material Needs

For IDP Councils to not only formally exist but also effectively fulfil their functions, they require a basic level of material capacity. First and foremost, this concerns access to dedicated working spaces. In many hromadas, Councils lack premises for regular meetings, reception of displaced persons, or the organisation of public events. Where spaces do exist, they are often unsuitable—unfit for use during colder months, unavailable outside of standard working hours, or shared with other institutions. **Focus group participants also highlighted the need for child-friendly spaces to enable members to combine Council activities with childcare responsibilities.**

Resource shortages were felt most acutely in rural and settlement hromadas, where logistical challenges were compounded by difficulties in accessing the internet, electricity, and technical equipment. Basic items such as printers, laptops, office supplies, and consumables were often purchased personally by activists, undermining the sustainability of Council's operations.

Another consistently expressed need was the establishment of at least one paid position to coordinate Council activities. This would involve a key role (such as a leadership or secretary position) responsible for maintaining operational continuity, record-keeping, and liaising with local authorities, donors, and other Councils. Such roles cannot sustainably rely on volunteerism or ad hoc arrangements. As repeatedly noted in qualitative interviews, it is unrealistic to expect hromadas alone to finance these positions, given the pressures on local budgets. An alternative model referenced during the research was the existing "veterans' assistant" scheme, funded by the relevant ministry, which could be adapted to support IDP Council operations.

> *"If we are introducing mechanisms such as veterans' assistants, then why can we not establish an IDP assistant, funded not from local budgets but, for instance, from the budget of the newly created ministry? We are already doing this work as part of our responsibilities. But why not simply adopt successful models that are already operating within other ministries?"*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with hromada-level IDP Council representatives*

In addition, one informant highlighted the risk that such initiatives could be implemented only formally, by assigning the responsibility for working with IDP Councils to existing local government staff who are already salaried but lack the resources, time, or motivation to take on additional duties:
"I think it must be clearly stipulated: it should be a person specifically responsible for working with the IDP Council... and not like, for example, when the head of the hromada simply told me,

'I will just assign this to you as part of your duties'. I believe many hromadas would do the same."

Thus, the availability of resources is not merely a matter of convenience; it is a critical precondition for the effective functioning of IDP Councils. The absence of such support leads to burnout among active members, undermines the role of the Councils, and erodes trust in the mechanism as a whole.

Training and Mentorship Needs

The development of the institutional capacity of IDP Councils is not possible without targeted educational support. According to the qualitative component of the study, training emerged as one of the key resources enabling Councils not only to understand their function but also to gradually achieve autonomy and influence within their hromadas.

The training needs span several levels. First, Councils require **basic knowledge** essential for effectively fulfilling their mandate. The most frequently mentioned topics included advocacy, legal literacy, understanding the basics of decentralisation, the current legal framework concerning IDPs, as well as skills in navigating state registers and conducting needs assessments within the hromada.

The second level relates to **practical skills that can be acquired through training**. The most requested topics were communication with local authorities, public communication and social media management (SMM), strategic planning, internal organisational work of the Council, record-keeping, and documentation. There was also a clear demand for practical training in mobilising financial resources: searching for grants, preparing applications, reporting, and engaging with donors.

Simultaneously, informants consistently highlighted **the need for psychological self-care training**, particularly for Councils working regularly with affected populations. This included developing skills to preserve personal resilience, prevent burnout, and build emotional literacy for ethical communication with individuals who had experienced loss, evacuation, or violence.

The third element is civic education—**developing a shared value framework**. This involved a deeper understanding of the role of IDP Councils as part of the democratic process, differentiating them from NGOs or government structures, and recognising the importance of advocacy, rights protection, and policy formation as part of a long-term strategy rather than ad hoc responses.

It was frequently stressed that effective training formats must be context-sensitive, tailored to local realities and participants' existing capacities. Standardised programmes with abstract content and overly complex terminology were often criticised. Respondents emphasised the need for professional trainer preparation, focusing on clear, simple delivery of content adapted to the audience. There was also a strong call for practical resources, such as legal guides, document templates, and examples from other Councils' practices.

The most impactful initiatives were not one-off events but longer-term educational interventions—where Councils were supported by mentors or experts during the development of strategies, advocacy campaigns, or policy papers. Such formats were seen as the most effective in achieving meaningful change and increasing the influence of Councils within their communities.

An additional need identified was the training of local authority representatives. This related not only to technical knowledge on collaborating with IDP Councils but also to shifting perceptions: recognising IDPs not as a burden, but as an integral part of the community and a valuable source of human capital. Such a shift in perspective was viewed as essential for fostering constructive partnerships.

Institutional Needs

For IDP Councils to fulfil their functions effectively, they require not only motivation and basic resources, but also a clear institutional framework. The absence of legal status, blurred functions, and a lack of structured interaction mechanisms with authorities create systemic uncertainty. Participants in the qualitative component of the study consistently emphasised: without addressing this institutional landscape, the potential of IDP Councils will remain unrealised.

First and foremost, the issue concerns **the legal standing of IDP Councils**. At present, they exist as advisory bodies under a Cabinet of Ministers resolution but do not possess formal subject status. This prevents them from carrying out independent operations, complicates access to resources, and leaves Councils outside the formal distribution of powers. Informants repeatedly stressed that for Councils to be not only visible but also effective, they require either a distinct legal status or a formalised framework granting them the right to directly receive funding, property, and other forms of support. This need becomes particularly acute when Councils are active and already mobilising resources but lack the mechanisms to legally manage or transparently administer them without relying on external NGOs as intermediaries.

The status issue is closely linked to a second major need**: the formalisation of cooperation with local authorities**. The research shows that today, interaction between local administrations and IDP Councils largely depends on the goodwill of individual officials, rather than on clearly defined procedures. There is no accountability framework: local authorities are not obliged to invite Councils to participate in decision-making processes, respond within set deadlines, or even consider their recommendations. As a result, during focus group discussions and interviews, participants repeatedly proposed formalising these relationships. Suggested measures included mandatory involvement of Councils in planning and decision-making processes, protocols for mandatory responses to Council appeals, and even requirements to seek Council approval for certain executive decisions. According to respondents, such measures would fundamentally shift the balance of influence within hromadas — transforming Councils from symbolic entities into genuine actors in local governance.

> *"There is a general understanding and a resolution we are supposed to follow, but in practice, it does not work. If IDP Councils were legal entities with actual influence over local authorities, for example, if no decision could be passed without the signature of the head of the oblast IDP Council — it would work. Suppose we are approving a housing programme for IDPs: without the Council's sign-off, the programme would not be valid. In that case, yes, it would be effective because there would be mechanisms of influence. Without them, it's difficult."*
>
> *From a focus group discussion with oblast-level IDP Council representatives*

However, it was equally emphasised that none of these reforms would be effective without strengthening the institutional capacity of the Councils themselves. Therefore, alongside legal recognition, there is a clear need to establish **a permanent legal advisory role within each Council** — a specialist to assist with drafting appeals, verifying compliance with legislation, advising on mandate-related issues, and helping formulate legal arguments. Short-term consultations or occasional training sessions were seen as insufficient; institutionalisation, rather than ad hoc support, was seen as the solution.

Another critical aspect is the need **to clearly define the roles of Councils at different levels**. The research revealed significant functional overlap between Councils at hromada, raion, and oblast levels. Sometimes they duplicate each other's activities, while in other cases they operate in isolation without any shared framework. Participants stressed the importance of clear role differentiation: for instance, hromada-level Councils could focus on needs assessment, local advocacy, and communication, while oblast-level Councils could concentrate on strategic planning, consolidating information across hromadas, coordinating with local Councils, and policy analysis. This approach would gradually increase the capacity of the Councils and avoid duplication.

Another recurring theme was the need for regular review and renewal of Council membership. Some Councils, as informants noted, had been established formally without an active core and gradually became inactive. Others, while having an active membership, lacked mechanisms for rotating or recalling inactive members. Participants highlighted the need for proactive review processes and **monitoring mechanisms to track and temporarily dissolve non-functional Councils if necessary**.

Finally, particularly against the backdrop of broader institutional reform in the state governance system, there was a strong call for the creation of **a central coordination body for IDP Councils**. Following the dissolution of the Ministry for Reintegration, responsibilities for IDP-related matters have been fragmented across different state agencies, resulting in dispersed accountability and diminished attention to IDP Councils as an instrument. In this environment, there is currently no single body tasked with coordinating actions, supporting and monitoring Councils, or advocating for their interests at the national level. Throughout interviews and discussions, participants expressed hopes for the establishment of a permanent platform or division that would not only coordinate efforts but also provide official representation of IDP Councils in dealings with ministries and international partners.

Cooperation Needs

For IDP Councils to become an integral part of local governance and perform their functions effectively, they require not only support within their hromadas but also sustainable mechanisms for cooperation with different levels of government, international donors, and with each other.

One of the key cooperation needs is **the inclusion of IDP Councils in local, oblast, and national-level planning and budgeting processes.** Respondents emphasised that Councils should not only serve as sources of needs assessment but should also be active participants in the budgeting cycle — with access to up-to-date information, involvement in planning processes, and the ability to review and endorse local programmes related to IDPs. To enable such participation, transparent instruments for accessing data and formal mechanisms for submitting information requests are urgently needed, yet currently lacking.

There is also a need for **clearer positioning of IDP Councils within the broader humanitarian architecture**. Some Councils today are engaged in functions such as aid distribution and registration, whereas their primary mission should focus on representation, monitoring, and influencing policy. As such, either a clear separation of these functions through distinct humanitarian mechanisms is needed, or flexible recognition that Councils may adapt to local contexts — but require support and a shared understanding of their core role.

Another important need relates to formalising cooperation with international organisations and donors. While some initiatives already engage IDP Councils through partnerships with NGOs, such interaction remains the exception rather than the norm. Participants in the qualitative component of the study stressed that **IDP Councils should be seen as potential direct beneficiaries of programmes aimed at policy development, local governance strengthening, and civic participation** — not only as partners for short-term humanitarian initiatives mediated by NGOs. A clear call was made to the donor community to recognise IDP Councils as crucial stakeholders in sustainable development and **to integrate them into long-term localisation strategies**. In particular, there is a shortage of grant opportunities that would support advisory functions, decision-making processes, and strategic planning — beyond short-term humanitarian assistance.

Strengthening horizontal connections between IDP Councils also requires appropriate infrastructure. The All-Ukrainian IDP Council Forum, often mentioned positively, has significant potential but remains largely inaccessible for many Councils due to its scale. Participants stressed the need for regular interregional communication — not limited to an annual forum but expanded through thematic offline and online meetings, professional networks, shared contact maps, and group chats. Special

emphasis was placed on developing oblast- or macroregional-level associations that could rapidly respond to challenges within specific regions.

Despite the growing role of IDP Councils within their hromadas, the majority continue to operate under conditions of uncertainty — lacking guaranteed support, clear cooperation frameworks, or sufficient resources. The study shows that the needs of IDP Councils are multi-dimensional: they require material capacity, professional support, legal recognition, and structured opportunities for meaningful engagement with other actors at all levels. The absence of basic tools — from a meeting space to strategic vision — severely limits their ability to fulfil even the most fundamental representative functions.

Participation in shaping IDP-related policies cannot be left solely to displaced persons themselves in the form of an additional unpaid burden — without remuneration, without authority, and without access to decision-making systems. On the contrary, meaningful engagement must be grounded in the recognition that for people to genuinely participate in governance, they must be equipped with real tools that strengthen their position rather than exhaust their capacities. Participation must be more than a mechanism for the state or the hromada — it must be a point of empowerment and growth for individuals and groups: resourceful, visible, and legitimate.

IMPACT

**Shaping practices
Influencing policies
Impacting lives**

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