



# SOCIAL SITUATION IN FRONTLINE CITIES BASED ON THE CASE OF BAKHMUT. PROBLEMS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS, SHORT-TERM VISITORS AND LOCAL RESIDENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

This analytical report is based on a study conducted by the NGO "Foundation.101" from October 2016 to January 2017.

The aim of the study was to outline the main trends and problems faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and Bakhmut residents because of the city's frontline location and related social issues. The social tension in the city is related to the significant numbers of the IDPs that are permanently residing in the city, as well as with the thousands of short-term visitors (residents of Luhansk and Donetsk regions who travel to government-controlled territory to meet their needs) who come to Bakhmut daily. The report also outlines the issues that short-term visitors (STVs) face.

An additional goal of the research was to collect information about the stakeholders who assist IDPs and STVs in Bakhmut and their activities.

To conduct the study, Foundation.101 collected in-depth interviews with representatives of local authorities and NGOs that assist IDPs, as well as with IDPs and STVs themselves.

The quotes of the respondents in the report are cited without the names or positions to keep respondents' anonymity for security reasons.

## 1. METHODOLOGY

For the study, Foundation.101 used a qualitative research method, namely in-depth, semi-structured interviews with experts. This method helps to deeply analyze and understand social problems that were not studied before, define causal relationships, etc.

Overall in the course of the study, analysts conducted 46 in-depth interviews among four target groups:

1. Internally displaced persons (15 persons)
2. Short-term visitors (15 persons)
3. Civic activists and volunteers assisting IDPs (8 persons)
4. Authorities (8 persons)

The set of questions for each of the target audiences slightly differed. The interview guide was available in Ukrainian and Russian according to respondents' preferences. The average duration of an interview was 60 minutes, but could vary from 30 to 90 minutes.

Search and selection of the respondents was organized as follows:

**Target group #1 (IDPs, 15 people).** Given the absence of open registers with contact information of IDPs, the main source to find this category of respondents was contact lists of the NGOs that assist IDPs. Organized IDP groups served as an additional source of information.

**Target group #2 (STVs, 15 people).** The search for respondents for the second target group focused on places that are visited by crowds of short-term visitors, i.e., in state agencies that provide information and assistance to IDPs and residents from occupied territory, e.g., near the Oshchadbank (state savings bank), supermarkets, and ATMs. Of those approached, those persons who seemed to have positive attitude toward the interviewers, were invited for an interview in a quiet and secluded place.

**Target group #3 (civic activists and volunteers assisting IDPs and STVs, 8 people).** Respondents in this target group derived from a list of registered NGOs and informal groups of volunteers who assist IDPs and STVs in Bakhmut. This information was collected through Internet research, as well as from feedback obtained from local authorities and NGOs who were contacted by Foundation.101 prior to conducting the interviews. Interviews were conducted with the following organizations: "Bakhmut Ukrainskyy" (Ukrainian Bakhmut), "Nasnaga" Foundation, "Slovo Zhyttya" (The Word of Life) church, "Moya Edyna", "Oberih" art workshop, Center for IDP Assistance, "Bakhmutska Fortetsya" (Bakhmut Fortress), "Diya" Center of Democracy and Female Initiatives.

**Target group #4 (authorities, 8 people).** This group comprised senior representatives of local authorities and other agencies responsible for assisting IDPs and addressing social issues related to the frontline location of the city. Foundation.101 primarily targeted directors or deputy directors of the following state agencies: Pension Fund, Department of Labor and Social Welfare, Department of Health, Executive Committee of Bakhmut City Council, City Center of Social Service for Family, Children and Youth, Department of Education, Department of Youth Policy and Children.

In-depth interviews were decoded and analyzed with application of content analysis. Based on the results of the in-depth interviews, Foundation.101 drafted this analytical report on the social issues in Bakhmut.

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## 2. OVERALL SITUATION AND DYNAMICS WITH INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND SHORT-TERM VISITORS

According to the experts interviewed within the study, the main flow of IDPs from the temporarily occupied area occurred in 2014 and partly in 2015. Currently, the situation has more or less stabilized. The majority of IDPs either settled in Bakhmut or returned to their home. Therefore, the majority of IDPs who stayed on government controlled territory, live in Bakhmut for couple years already.

Respondents reported that for a number of IDPs, Bakhmut is an optimal city in which to live. On the one hand, it is peaceful territory where Ukrainian legislation governs and social guarantees are provided. On the other hand, Bakhmut is located close to the frontline and thus is close to their native settlements and homes they left. According to the Department of Labor and Social Welfare, 99,300 people have registered as IDPs.

Some IDPs have started up or relocated their businesses to Bakhmut from the occupied territory. The Pension Fund reported that 650 legal entities re-registered in the city since the beginning of the armed conflict; 211 of which are large legal entities, and 439 are individual entrepreneurs. Among the largest entities that moved to Bakhmut are the Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages and Donetsk Olympic Reserve School.

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*A lot of people stayed in Bakhmut and settled down, a lot of them started up their business here. A number of entrepreneurs have moved their businesses to peaceful territory and operate them in the frontline cities since this is close to their original location.*

Currently, people from the non-controlled territory come to Bakhmut predominantly for short-term visits to address their social assistance or livelihood needs; e.g., to withdraw cash from the ATMs, purchase food and other goods, visit their relatives, etc.

A significant share of IDPs cross the contact line to obtain an IDP certificate or resolve problems with social benefits they receive from the Ukrainian government. Mainly they are pensioners; some of them are people with disabilities, young mothers, etc. These findings are supported with the statistics; there are 78,000 IDPs registered in Bakhmut to date. Of this total number, 10,700 are working-age population, 3,600 are children, 2,700 are people with disabilities, and 61,000 are pensioners.

On June 8, 2016 the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine adopted Resolution #365 "On some questions of proceeding with social benefits for IDPs". The resolution foresees a special commission that should verify the place of IDP's permanent location. If the commission determines that the person does not reside in the place registered as his or her location on government-controlled territory, the IDP loses all social benefits from the Ukrainian government. After the local commission began to implement this resolution, only 30 per cent of people successfully passed IDP verification. Meanwhile, both NGOs and local authorities warn that address verification can often bring false results. The majority of the verification visits are conducted during working hours when the adult population is at work and children are at school.

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### 3. MAIN PROBLEMS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

According to authorities' statistics there are 78,000 IDPs in Bakhmut. Foundation.101 interviewed 15 IDPs who came to Bakhmut from Donetsk city, Horlivka, Debaltseve, Pervomaisk, and Yenakieve.

The majority of respondents came to government-controlled territory in summer 2014 or in early 2015, when there was intensification of the armed conflict in their settlements. Among the main reasons that motivated people to leave their cities, respondents cited the threat to their lives and the lives of their children when there was regular shelling and profusions of armed people, and the need to spend all the time in basements and bomb shelters.

“ *The shelling was intense at that time. We were sitting in the bomb shelters all the time. There was no food, no water, stores were closed. We received no money, no pensions, nothing. And on the government controlled area they provided assistance, volunteers were helping, too. That's why we decided to move here.*

Infrastructure in the settlements under the shelling have also collapsed at that time. There were disruptions in water supply, stores, drug stores, hospitals and ambulances didn't work. Some IDP moved to the government controlled area with their offices and colleagues.

“ *The most global reason of course was the occupation of the city. To tell the truth we moved away slightly earlier, because we had health problems and at that time the hospitals and drugstores didn't work and ambulances didn't come on a call. In addition, my husband's office demanded him to relocate to Ukrainian territory. Everything was connected.*

Slightly more than one-half of interviewed people knew where they plan to relocate. For them, among the main reasons to move to Bakhmut were motivation of friends who moved earlier and invited to join them, permanent location of their relatives or friends in the city, or displacement of their places of work to Bakhmut.

One-third of respondents did not know where to go from the occupied territory. Their primary aim was to escape the shelling and get to peaceful territory. Meanwhile, Bakhmut was one of the most optimal decisions because it was one of the closest cities to their homes.

**The main issues that IDPs face in government-controlled territory include employment, expensive housing, registration or re-registration of documents and social benefits. There is also concern among IDPs surrounding their property that remains in the occupied territory.**

**Employment.** Searching for job is the main problem IDPs face. Most of the available jobs are low-paid, low skilled and hard. That's why some IDPs takes temporary and seasonal jobs. They help others with gardening work, do housework, participate in the surveys for a small fee, etc. Respondents from both local authorities and IDPs highly evaluated programs of the international organizations that provide financial and humanitarian assistance in exchange for part-time public works.

“ *These programs are important in order not to raise freeloaders. One of the programs foresaw short-term employment. The person worked 4 hours a day during 2 weeks. The wage was 2,000 hryvnias. 24 IDP and 6 locals worked in Chasiv Yar within this initiative. They cleaned the park. People in Soledar cleaned two playgrounds and dug out a trench for construction of a new playground. In Siversk people cleaned 6 kilometers of gutter. It was important and valuable for the local community.*

**Housing.** In the beginning people who were running away from shelling and gunfire to Bakhmut were placed in dorms and hospitals, they were also hosted by their relatives and sometimes by strangers. Currently, the majority of IDPs live in rented apartments and houses, part of them live in dorms and one respondent lives in an inherited apartment.

Respondents confirmed that it is not difficult to find and rent an apartment in Bakhmut. However, the new expensive utility bills post the real challenge. Yet another problem for IDPs and locals who rent apartments is difficulties in obtaining state subsidies for the utilities if owners of the house do not want or cannot sign a lease agreement. That is why expensive housing is one of the top reasons why some IDPs return back to the occupied territory.

**Social benefits** are among the vital issues, too. State social benefit are usually paid with a delay of 1-2 months. Sometime the delay might even be up to 4-5 months. In addition, state financial aid for the IDPs is relatively small; it is impossible to live on it alone. The amount of financial aid for IDPs is 884 hryvnias for people who cannot work (i.e., pensioners, children, people with disabilities) and 442 hryvnias for working-age people.

In addition, starting from June 2016 the government launched mandatory address verification to check whether IDPs actually reside in the government-controlled territory and at the specific address they indicated to obtain their IDP certificate. In the event a person failed the address verification, he or she loses all social benefits. The introduction of address verification has created difficulties not only for IDPs, but also for those performing the address verification (i.e., the Department of Labor and Social Protection). The verification visit usually takes place during working hours when the majority of IDPs are at work or school. In Bakhmut, inspectors will leave a note in case of absence of the IDP during the verification visit. While the IDP then has a chance to confirm his or her permanent location at this address within the next three days, it is an additional bureaucratic obstacle among many which IDPs must face to confirm and keep their IDP status.

**Paperwork** usually evokes problems during the IDP's first visit to state agencies. The queues in the Department of Labor and Social Protection were reduced due to implementation of a more organized appointment system that allows the customer to address their issues at a specific date and hour. However, in the Pension Fund and Oshchadbank, the public service system has not changed, and there are big queues there on daily basis.

Another paperwork issue in obtaining IDP status is related to the registration in this or another settlement. In case the person lived in an area that is now occupied but was not properly registered there, it might cause a problem when applying to the get the IDP certificate. This problem was partly solved by letting people prove their previous place of residence with other types of documents, e.g., a record that proves that the person worked at the place located in the temporarily occupied territory.



**Concerns about property left in the non-controlled territory.** Most of the respondents who visited the non-controlled territory after their permanent relocation to Bakhmut travelled to collect their possessions and check their property. Their concerns were associated with marauding and risk of losing their houses or apartments.

“ *Some relatives stayed there because there are a lot of houses to take care of. Property there can be robbed or expropriated entirely. We left two houses in occupied territory. We rented first house to some people, at least to have the utilities paid. We asked brother-in-law to move in the second house so they see that someone lives there and don't take it away. We were afraid that somebody could set the house on fire, but at least they see that the houses are inhabited.* ”

“ *Armed people from Horlivka moved into my house. I don't visit [occupied area] because I'm afraid [of them].* ”

**There are no problems with healthcare and education.** According to the representatives of the NGOs, authorities and IDPs themselves, it is not a problem to get service in medical or educational facilities. Internally displaced children are welcome in kindergartens and schools. IDPs can get Medicaid if they show their IDP certificate. However, if there is no certificate, nobody rejects IDPs either. IDPs and STVs most often address maternity wards.

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## 4. MAIN PROBLEMS OF SHORT-TERM VISITORS

The main issues STVs address while in government-controlled territory include paperwork, cash withdrawals, shopping and visiting relatives. According to previous Foundation.101 studies, 40 per cent of STVs combine several missions within the one visit to government-controlled territory.

Among the main problems faced by STVs are the following: time and money consuming trips over the contact line, lack of information, bureaucracy and periodical changes in the procedures related to paperwork and social benefits. Another problem occurs with lodging when it takes an STV more than one day to solve his or her issues in government controlled territory.

Waiting time in the queues to cross the contact line significantly increased compared to 2014. In the beginning of the armed conflict in 2014 it took people up to two hours to get to the government-controlled area while now they spend, on average, five hours on the road while travelling to Bakhmut through Mayorske entry-exit control point.

At the same time, according to STVs' opinion, waiting conditions at the entry-exit control points are more comfortable, compare to previous years. They appreciate the presence of WCs, drinking water, heating points and shelters from the bad weather. Waiting conditions on the government-controlled side of the contact line are significantly better than on the non-government-controlled side.

The next problem is bureaucracy, lack of information and changes in procedures associated with the paperwork and social benefits. Lack of clear information and constant legislative changes cause more problems particularly for STVs than for IDPs, because STVs basically live in informational isolation.

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*Where do we get information from? From nowhere! Sometimes it pops out that someone tells you something in the queue. And sometimes it's very tough. There was a recent story: We went to Social Security office, and the administrators there told us "This is a wrong place; you should go to the Pension Fund". Alright, we went to the Pension Fund, it was also crowded with the people in the queues. There was one kind of information on the door but in fact they provide different services. I told them "but there's a signboard", but they replied back to me: "everything is changed since last Tuesday". And we continued, looking for a third address.*

In order to get social benefits, people have to collect a big stack of documents and in some cases change or update them. Taking into account long queues and slow services of the social assistance agencies, especially the Pension Fund and Oshchadbank, it significantly complicates and slows down the process. For instance, one of respondents said that it took her half a day just to get blank forms from the Oshchadbank to pass them to the administrator at the Pension Fund. This seems to be a useless waste of time since Oshchadbank forms could have been provided as leaflets at the entrance to the bank or forwarded directly to the social assistance agencies.

Volunteers used to work at social assistance agencies, for instance in the Pension Fund, to help visitors sort out and check the documents to obtain the service or certificate they need. They were a big help for people and also decreased the burden on the administrators. According to one of the respondents, this initiative was terminated despite the fact that social assistance agencies and their visitors still desperately need it.

Because of the absence or termination of the IDs or certificates, there are delays in social benefits. Sometimes the payments can be delayed for a few months.

It is nearly impossible to fix all the issues within one day, report the respondents. That is why STVs often have to stay in Bakhmut for a couple of days. To provide them with housing, local authorities offer lodging in a dorm where they can stay overnight. There is hot water, linens and a place to cook food in the dorm.

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## 5. CITY TRANSFORMATION RELATED TO FRONTLINE LOCATION. LOCALS' ATTITUDE TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS AND SHORT-TERM VISITORS

Changes in the city related to its location and proximity to the crossing point to occupied territory and the significant number of IDPs and STVs can be divided into positive, negative or neutral for the majority of the city population.

### Positive changes

**New competitive workplaces.** The displacement crisis caused the Bakhmut population to grow, which, some respondents believe, has resulted in the creation of new work places. Also some IDPs moved their businesses to Bakhmut or established new ones, not to mention the fact that some big organizations, i.e. Horlivka Institute for Foreign Languages and Donetsk School of Olympic Reserve, have moved to the city. It helped some local residents find new competitive employment that was not available earlier. However, most of the available vacancies foresee low-paid and low-skilled work.

**Reconstruction of infrastructure.** Attention and technical assistance of international and charity organizations helped reconstruct and renovate social infrastructure such as dorms, kindergartens, schools and hospitals.

**Increased profitability of some businesses.** According to respondents' opinion, daily flows of STVs make some fields of business activities much more profitable than they were before. The businesses that benefit the most are those related to retail, transportation and real estate rental.

## Negative changes

**Increased prices for consumer goods.** All the respondents report that the average market prices in local stores are higher than in neighboring cities and settlements. This is mainly connected with demand formed by the hundreds of STVs who visit Bakhmut daily.

**Increased load on the infrastructure.** The increase in population has increased the burden on public infrastructure, such as hospitals and medical facilities, roads, parking lots, and banks. Respondents highlight a big influx of private vehicles in the center of city in weekdays. These cars mainly belong to STVs who came to do paperwork, shopping, etc.

“ *The city is overloaded. The city is small and all the STVs are crowded in particular places: ATMs, social assistance agencies, and stores. You simply can't go to the store during rush hour because of the huge queues there.* ”

A similar situation is with banks and ATMs, especially with Oshchadbank that distributes pensions and social benefits.

“ *There's not enough [cash in] ATMs. When you go to work there's no cash in the ATMs yet. When you come home from work the ATMs are already empty.* ”

**Growing criminality.** Respondents connect this fact with the decrease of welfare assistance, increased availability of weapons, and opportunity to easily escape from Ukrainian law enforcement in the non-controlled territory.

**Increased burden on administrators of social assistance agencies** who serve IDPs and STVs. At the same time, there are open vacancies in a number of the social assistance agencies. Low salary and a lot of responsibility make this job unattractive for job seekers and result in high staff turnover. Technical infrastructure also remains on the same low level; only the Pension Fund reported the purchase of a few items of office equipment for one of their departments.

## Neutral changes

**Increased demand for housing and rent prices.** At the same time, the demand for purchasing real estate in Bakhmut has not increased significantly. Respondents believe it is connected with the several factors. Some people might believe that the frontline might be moving and do not want to risk buying property, others still hope to return to their homes, while the majority of IDPs do not have enough money for such an expensive purchase. The growing rent prices are good for the landlords and obviously bad for people who seek a place to rent. The majority of local residents own their own places and have a neutral attitude to this fact.

The majority of respondents believe that local residents do not have a single opinion about IDPs and STVs. Their attitude is primarily formed by the activities and behavior of the IDPs and STVs themselves. There is a neutral or even negative attitude toward IDPs who neither work nor contribute to the social life of the city. Meanwhile locals respect and highly value IDPs who moved their businesses to Bakhmut and created new workplaces. The attitude toward the STVs varies as well. Some locals feel sorry for them, but some people are irritated because of the inconveniences caused by the number of STVs who visit the city daily.

In general, respondents concluded that the majority of residents acclimated to the changes caused by the IDPs and STVs. Locals tend to adapt to the new realities, for instance, they try to stay away from stores on weekdays before 4 p.m.



## 6. NGOs' EFFORTS

There are a number of local initiatives and international organizations that work in the city – the respondents report. The most prominent of them are United Nations and its agencies such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNHCR, etc. Other organizations and projects, including People in Need, Save the Children, Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières International, ADRA, USAID, Caritas International, International Organization for Migration (IOM). Internews and News ID work with problems in the East of Ukraine but rather indirectly. Among the Ukrainian local organizations, respondents mentioned Ukrainian Bakhmut, Right to Protection, Plich-o-Plich, and Center of Humane Pedagogy. These organizations provide humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable people, provide psychological help or participate in the reconstruction of infrastructure.

Humanitarian assistance is divided into financial aid and provision with basic supplies, e.g., shoes, clothes, medicine, food packages, hygiene packages, pillows and blankets, etc. One of the types of financial aid is a plastic card to purchase food in "Brusnichka" stores provided by People in Need. Once in a while people get wires to the card to buy consumer goods, excluding for tobacco and alcohol.

Psychological aid varies from the psychologists' consultations and crisis consultations to art-therapy, workshops and parties for children.

With help of international organizations, several infrastructure objects were reconstructed and renovated. They include dormitories, library, schools etc.

In addition, international organizations are starting a new type of program: provision of humanitarian assistance or small payments in exchange for short-term social/public works.

### Challenges

The respondents consider that international organizations that provide technical assistance in the East of Ukraine should take into account the following three recommendations.

First, the experts believe it is time to reduce the amount of humanitarian assistance provided. Programs should be focused on creation of new working places, launching small businesses and private entrepreneurship. Provision of humanitarian packages in exchange for part-time short-term work is also a good solution.



*Humanitarian assistance was relevant at the beginning of confrontation in 2014–2015. Back then people needed urgent help because they fled from the occupied territories with nothing in their hands. Continuation of that strategy can create a whole cluster of freeloaders who don't want to work and contribute to the community.*

Second, experts recommend reducing the segregation of target groups into IDPs and locals (who usually don't get any assistance). In the same time, the projects should be directed at the population of the frontline communities overall as they continue to suffer from the armed conflict and the overloaded infrastructure.

Third, it is important to pay attention to the sustainability and efficiency of project implementation.

## 7. AUTHORITIES' EFFORTS

The main services for IDPs are provided by the Department of Labor and Social Protection, Pension Fund, Employment Center, Department of Health, Center of Social Services for Families, Children and Youth, Department of Education, Department for Youth Policy and Children, etc.

The list of services each of the state agencies provides looks as follows:

**Employment Center.** It provides information on employment vacancies, holds trainings for people who decided to start up their businesses. It also hosts "Under One Roof" initiative, in which different social assistance agencies provide information and services to clients on a weekly basis.

**Department of Labor and Social Protection.** It registers IDPs and provides them with the corresponding certificate. It provides people with financial aid, financial aid for housing, utilities, healthcare treatment in sanatoriums, etc. It also carries out IDP address verification.

**City Center of Social Services for Families, Children and Youth.** It provides people with social support, assistance in the settlement in the collective centers, informational consultations for families and youth (for example, they consult IDPs about the procedures, types of documents they need, and also help with lodging the appeals).

**Department of Education.** It provides educational services to children of kindergarten and school age. It also launched and coordinates external form of education and organizes the internal independent testing (so called ZNO) for students who live in the non-controlled territory.

**Pension Fund.** It collects the documents to renew the pension payments and processes the requests of people who were receiving their pensions elsewhere. They process paperwork on electronic pension IDs for IDPs. These IDs simultaneously serve as a bank card for cash wires, an ID card with a person's photo and electronic signature on it. The Pension Fund also processes paperwork to provide people with funeral assistance.

**Department of Health.** It provides health care services, including outpatient and inpatient treatment. Since the summer of 2014, more than 12,000 IDPs were treated in the medical facilities in Bakhmut.

The majority of these state agencies did not receive additional budget funding or additional staff to serve IDPs and STVs. For instance, in 2015 the city received a subvention of 25 million hryvnias for healthcare, while in 2016 they did not receive a penny to cover healthcare needs of the city with a growing population. This caused an additional burden on the local budget and infrastructure, as well as increased the burden on social assistance agencies that were previously designed for a less populated community.

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*The burden on each specialist has doubled or even tripled, while the number of staff and their salary remained the same.*

Currently, most of the state agencies serve all citizens regardless of their status. There is a general procedure for serving people and additional staff responsible for IDPs or STVs only was not provisioned.

### Efficient solutions

The main problems of IDPs and STVs, according to the authorities, are expensive housing and obtaining services from the city's social assistance agencies. Sometimes a simple procedure of paperwork to receive an IDP ID can be difficult.

In the case of housing, the city provided IDPs and STVs with the two dorms that provide a roof for almost 200 people at a time. Thus STVs can have affordable place to stay overnight in the city. Currently, a number of negotiations have started with international donors to repair or reconstruct existing buildings to provide IDP and ATO participants with housing.

To reduce the queues and improve social services, the Department of Labor and Social Protection implemented prior appointment system. A person can sign up for a consultation for a particular date and hour. The initiative with volunteers who consulted and coordinated the people in the corridors of the social assistance agencies was also extremely efficient as respondents report. It reduced misunderstanding and saved the administrators' time for paperwork. According to respondents' information this initiative was terminated.

The "Under One Roof" initiative at the Employment Center is also valued by many people. The initiative hosts administrators from different state agencies in its venue so that people can obtain information, service or certificate quicker and in one place.

The Department of Education implemented distance learning program for students who live in the non-controlled territory. It makes it possible for students to earn the state education diploma and continue schooling in Ukrainian or foreign universities. In 2015–2016, 183 students used this form to study in Bakhmut schools. These students have their individual schedules of classes and consultations with teachers. They can forward their homework electronically, but it is mandatory for them to be present at some exams and tests, as well as at the internal independent test (so called ZNO).

## Challenges

To the date, queues at the state agencies that serve IDPs and STVs remain the most essential problem. This problem is especially relevant for the Pension Fund, because almost 80 per cent of registered IDPs residing in Bakhmut are pensioners. Queues in the Pension Fund can last for a couple of days with morning and evening call-overs. At the same time, a number of positions at the Pension Fund remains vacant. Young professionals avoid it because of the low salary and high workload and responsibility.

“ Social assistance agencies that work with IDPs have a modest amount of staff. I see a lot of people in front of the Pension Fund every day on my way to work. They all put their names into the list they create themselves. There are 15h and 250 appointments on those lists. When I'm going home from work they update the list for the next day. I often hear that they took away the volunteers who consulted and coordinated people in the corridors of the Pension Fund and Social Service. Coordinators could advise "you need office number N, and you don't need this agency at all, you should go to a different department." And currently people without the coordinators can wait in the queue for a few days and then find out that they needed a different state agency. I heard about this problem from different people.

Another problem is related to the need of attending a number of social assistance agencies and departments in order to collect all the required documents for a particular service. These departments are often located in different places all over the city. This problem was partly solved by "Under One Roof" initiative that is hosted by Employment Center every Wednesday in Bakhmut. Experts also note that it would be a good idea to create separate administrative center for IDPs service provision and finally launch a common online database of IDPs. Nowadays, social assistance agencies use their own databases that differ from each other. That is why administrators send people to other department to get a certificate or a record from a different database. It creates a lot of inconveniences, especially for elderly people, people with disabilities and those who have health issues. Not even mentioning that it is senseless waste of time for thousands of citizens as it makes paperwork more time consuming.

Technical equipment is bad and should be replaced the modern items. Administrators of the social assistance agencies often work on the outdated PCs that repeatedly lag. It slows down the process of providing citizens with the services and increase the workload on the specialist.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

### **For donors and international organizations that provide technical assistance in the East of Ukraine:**

1. Shift the focus from give-away humanitarian aid to exchanging this aid for short-term social works.
2. Analyze the possibility to fund or co-fund infrastructure projects, reconstruction of destroyed infrastructure. It will also lead to increase of workplaces for local people who reside in the frontline communities.
3. Assist in launching the centers for administrative services for IDPs, where all kinds of services and information are provided in one venue.
4. Increase the number of projects that focus on the frontline communities overall rather than specifically on IDPs. There is a need for projects designed to help the frontline communities since they continue suffering from the armed conflict and overloaded infrastructure.
5. Assist in building additional residential houses for IDPs to move them away from the dormitories and collective centers.

### **For local authorities:**

1. Increase the number of staff in the social assistance agencies and facilitate filling in the free vacancies there.
2. Renovate equipment in the social assistance agencies.
3. Co-fund and promote creation of single centers to provide people with administrative services.
4. Launch employment programs for IDPs, including programs of short-term and part time social work such as clean-ups and revitalization of the city.

### **For national level authorities:**

1. Allocate additional funding from the national budget to solve social and infrastructural problems of the regions with high concentration of IDPs.
2. Consider the possibility to allocate additional funding to hire additional staff and increase administrator salaries in the social assistance agencies that serve IDPs given the increasing workload they experience.
3. Consider the cancellation of the Cabinet of Ministers decree #365 that regulates verification of IDPs who are eligible for pension payments.
4. Improve the connection with other big Ukrainian cities. In particular, restore railway connection between Bakhmut and Kharkiv.
5. Change the approach of assigning state subsidies for utilities for IDPs in case of the absence of a rental agreement.

# PARTNERS



This publication has been made possible by the support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the terms of Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative (UCBI).

The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.



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