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# **Armed Conflict in Ukraine and Social Work Response to it: What strategies should be used for internally displaced persons?**

Dr. Tetyana Semigina, Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism;  
National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine

Dr. Natalia Gusak, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine

## **Abstract**

Literature on social work demonstrates that relations between conflicts and social work constitute two paradigms – therapeutic and empowering. Each of them provides social workers with a different set of strategies and interventions.

Focusing on social support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, this paper explores the social work interventions in the aftermath of violence available for displaced people and gaps therein. It also discusses the implications for the social work profession caused by the on-going conflict in the country. This paper takes into account that modern social work comes from the fact that displacement violates social ecology of humans, causes deprivation, social exclusion, increases the risk of violence and the emergence of psychological ‘catch of dependency’, and so on. Specific consideration is given to social work strategies in different phases of displacement. This paper

is based on a review of documents, semi-structured interviews with the social workers providing services for IDPs, and focus-groups with communities' representatives.

According to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, by August 2015 more than 1.4 million IDPs were officially registered. In brief, services providing social support to the IDPs in Ukraine can be grouped into three categories: government agencies, NGOs, and volunteers (organized or chaotic). In working with IDPs, social workers can use short-term (crisis intervention, outreach work, task-oriented model of social work) and long-term intervention strategies focused on the system-ecological model of social work and community development. The necessity for implications for IDPs, the empowering strategies and changing public perceptions towards IDPs are evident. Issues of social work education might be reconsidered, as well as the value and perception of social work as a profession in Ukraine.

**Keywords:** social work; conflict; armed conflict; internally displaced persons; IDPs; empowerment; Ukraine.

## Introduction

Social work by its nature is rather contextual. Despite the attempt to establish social work's credentials as a unified profession, it has always been divided by different 'politics of social work' (McLaughlin, 2008). And, this profession is or should be responsive to the societal changes, including armed, military conflicts, 'modern wars' or 'hybrid wars' as devastating outbreak of mass violence. Actually, such conflicts and wars are regarded as 'man-made disasters' (Mahdi, 2007) as they deprive people of the homes, families, schools, places of worship etc., while humanitarian organizations increase their importance in crisis areas. These developments greatly spill into social work practice internationally (Seifert, 2015).

The two World Wars exposed voids in international responses to victims and survivors of conflict, making way for policy developments (Woodiwiss, 2005; Canning, 2013). However, professional literature in social work has not paid much attention to this issue. The role of social work in armed conflict was made a topic of a few publications (Lorentz, 1993; Staub-Bernasconi, 2004; Cox & Pawar, 2006). Necessity to theorize displacement as a social work problem and social work interventions in times of conflict and post-conflict became more evident in 2000s, especially after wars in countries of

former Yugoslavia, violence between Israel and Palestine, and war between Russia and Georgia. Ioakimidis (2015) notices: “The paradoxical nature of social work in the context of conflict has not been resolved in the 21st century but instead it has taken the form of a more subtle and complicated affair” (p. 7).

For Ukraine, mass scale violence and armed conflict when the civilian population was involved in this conflict as a central target or as collateral damage had been challenging the life of this peaceful country since 2014. It causes massive internal displacement of people, emergency of disabled military veterans, families who lost their relatives in armed conflict, etc. Armed conflict has also raised the issue of social solidarity and tolerance, social values, as well as has questioned the nature of welfare policy in the country and social services, their responsibilities and the level of professionalism. For sure, social work has responded to the challenges posed by this context and other related contextual factors.

Focusing on social support to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine, this paper explores the social work interventions in the aftermath of violence that are available for displaced people and gaps therein. It also discusses the implications for the social work profession caused by the on-going armed conflict in the country. The section following this introduction covers paradigms in understanding the relationship between conflict and social work. The next section provides background information on the peculiarities of social work in Ukraine and a brief description on the internal displacement in the country. Data retrieved from the interviews and desk reviews are analyzed and presented in the section ‘Key Findings’, covering the needs of the IDPs, interventions provided, and problems encountered. The paper concludes with a discussion of the key findings and lessons learnt.

### **Conflicts and Social Work: Theoretical framework**

Social work as a profession has a long-standing tradition of dealing with conflicts in society. According to Ioakimidis (2015), the origins of social work should be traced in the context of the rising sociopolitical tensions and conflicts, which defined much of the 19th century. However, social work scholars are hesitant in recognizing the dialectic relationship between those concepts of social work and conflicts.

A search on academic databases allows for the defining of two paradigms in order to understand the relationship between social work and conflict (armed conflict or any other sociopolitical conflict).

The first paradigm is based on utilitarian values of ‘maximum utility for the maximum number of people’, focusing on the idea of the ‘common good’ achieved through the provision of social services. It includes therapeutic approaches aimed at the elimination of the disaster (conflict) consequences for an individual and for society (Ramon et al., 2006). Social work as a profession occupies the specific space of interaction between the individual and his/her social environment (Bašić, 2015) by using a set of crisis interventions and long-term support activities (Cox & Pawar, 2006; IFSW, 2012b; Lai & Toliashvili, 2010; Pertini, 2014; Ramon & Maglajlic, 2012). Within the framework of these interventions, relations between social workers and service users are viewed as non-oppressive, but neutral (Dominelly, 2002).

This paradigm perfectly fits the modern neoliberal model of social work practice (Lavalette & Ferguson, 2007), and policies on trans-governmental or transnational organizations supporting local social services (Webb, 2003). Ioakimidis (2015) argues that these organizations produce top-down toolkits that ‘bear no relevance to the real needs of communities on the ground’ (p. 11).

The second paradigm examines social work interventions through the lenses of empowerment, social inclusion, and social justice values (Staples, 1990; Sadan, 1997). The social work based on this paradigm sometimes is called ‘radical social work’ (Alinsky, 1971; McDermott, 2014) or more narrow – ‘marxist’ or ‘socialist’ (Ferguson, 2007) approaches. We challenge the last definition as under the socialist state a social protection system as a whole and social services in particular were built on the ideological perspective of social pathology and social control, but not empowerment. In the prevailing general approach to address social issues, these issues were viewed as similar to medical issues (Semigina & Boyko, 2014).

The paradigm of empowerment and inclusion comes from the fact that displacement violates social ecology of humans, causes deprivation, social exclusion, increases the risk of violence and the emergence of psychological ‘catch of dependency’, and so on (Lindgren, 2013). Thus, social work intervention should be built on the activation of people and communities, as well as the advocacy for their rights through policy actions. Radical social work incorporates ideas of Paulo Freire (1990), the Brazilian pedagogue, who highlighted responsibilities of social workers as follows: “The social worker, as much as the educator, is not a neutral agent, either in practice or in action. One of the inclinations that we sometimes have—and this is an offense, an illegality, that we imbibe in our technological society—is to think that the social worker is a very specialized person, a

technician, who works in a compartmentalized technical area, and who has a sort of protection within this area, a sort of aggregate of rights, as a particular social group, to stand apart from the political battles of society. For me, this is impossible. It is an error” (p. 5). In this stance, we can see political prospective in social work that is now broadly manifested by the profession. See, for example, the Global Agenda of Social Development and Social Work adopted in 2012 (IFSW, 2012b).

From this perspective, social workers’ frontline knowledge and expertise can be crucial in documenting the horrors of war and inspiring anti-war movements (Ioakimidis, 2015), while social workers can build not neutral relations with service users, but face them as equal partners in the process of change on the basis of a set of commonly agreed goals (Sewpaul, 2015).

Two paradigms stand as contradictory to each other and set up a ground for different types of social work interventions. This paper takes into account both paradigms and looks at the social work interventions for the IDPs from the perspective of values, and based on them, the interventions and relations between workers and service users.

### **Methodology**

As many social scientists doing fieldwork in complex humanitarian situations, we face a dual imperative described by Jacobsen and Landau (2003): research should be both academically sound and policy relevant and at the same time ethically correct. This paper employed a mixed methods approach based on rapid appraisal techniques (Bebe, 1995) for quick, yet systematic, collection of data. Such techniques are used in social work to obtain quick information on acute issues and practices with unclear long-term implications (Pyles, 2007).

In our case, we were interested in assessing emerging interventions with IDPs, as well as assessing the challenges that social workers and communities had faced dealing with the new (for them) problem of displacement and armed conflict. The set of flexible and illustrative methods with respect to the research idea of triangulation included the following:

- 1) the review of literature and desk review of secondary sources (reports, official websites, data on IDPs needs assessment etc.)
- 2) semi-structured interviews with 10 professional social workers from organizations providing services for IDPs (2 social workers from government agencies – Centres

of Social Services for Families, Children and Youth and 8 – from different NGOs (UNDP; IOM; LHSI; ‘Caritas Kharkiv’; ‘Caritas Lviv’; ‘Bethany Social Services’, Kyiv; ‘Light of Hope’, Poltava were interviewed in December 2014 – June 2015 mostly with using of Skype calls)

- 3) two focus-groups with teachers and activists of communities with IDPs from three regions (Donetsk, Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk) of Ukraine had been arranged in July 2015

Narrative thematic analysis was applied for proceeding of data. Specific considerations were given to social work strategies and interventions—within two theoretical paradigms of social work and conflict—for different stages of displacement: (a) initial displacement; (b) protracted displacement; and (c) resettlement/return. This paper also looks at issues of stigma, polarization of society and ambivalent attitudes toward IDPs and how these issues are being tackled by social workers in Ukraine. The results of the research are presented in descriptive analysis; also some quotations from interviews are used throughout this paper. Ethical dilemmas including security and confidentiality were taking into account.

Authors were aware of the limitations of the research based on the qualitative analysis techniques (non-representativeness and biases in selection of respondents who represented only professional views on the interventions for the IDPs). However, we hope the research will serve to encompass those who want to understand the realities of social work practices in a post-socialist country experiencing a ‘hybrid war’.

## **Background Information**

### **Social Work and Social Services in Ukraine**

Ukraine, as well as other countries (Russia, Georgia, Latvia, Lithuania, and others) has inherited from the USSR the network of social institutions where there were no social workers and which were established based on the ideological perspective of social pathology. As the specialty, social work was approved by the Presidential Decree and by the relevant Law of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in 1997. In 2004, social work was included in the current Ukrainian Occupations Classification, and since then, it is an officially accredited profession in the country.

Despite existing innovative social services introduced mainly by NGOs, the public social services system definitely requires further organizational, legal, and personnel

development. Major challenges that the public system of social services experiences are its fragmentary structure, predominantly in-patient arrangement, and little continuity in providing services to specific groups of clients. Still relevant is the actual reforming of social care that will address the issue of deinstitutionalization and introduction of community-based models of social care (Semigina et al., 2005).

Social work development is constrained by the political context of the country. As power in Ukraine belongs to rich elite groups, its political actions are intended to support the position of rich groups and not the development of welfare programmes. Meanwhile, public discourse is based on socialist political rhetoric—populist proclamations of helping the poor, the provision of social guarantees, and social equality. It resulted in the ambivalent combination of state paternalism (with the intention of the state to regulate all areas of society) and neo-liberalisation. The Constitution adopted in 1997 proclaims Ukraine a welfare state; however, the standards of living are very low, and the socialist-style system of privileges for elite groups was preserved. The Soviet-style welfare programs keep pro-medical approaches to practice and focus on ‘helping relations’. Social workers develop public services, as well as clients expect that a worker has a main responsibility to solve problems, while a client possesses a passive role as a recipient. Moreover, a client is often conceived as a victim of social circumstances. At the same time, the neo-liberal context and its individualist perception of social problems, enhanced by post-modernist views strengthening reflexivity and reciprocity in social relations, lays a new foundation of ‘social work as a service’ consumerist approach (Semigina & Boyko, 2014).

Ideas of empowerment and inclusion are new for social services. These concept and practices based on them confront the dominant professional culture.

### **Armed Conflict and Displacement in Ukraine**

Since March 2014, Ukraine has been experiencing a violent conflict in the heavily populated regions of Donetsk and Luhansk (supported by Russian military units without insignia) and annexation of the Crimea peninsula by the Russian Federation. This armed conflict in Ukraine has a political nature; it is a conflict of values and senses with severe social implications. At the same time, it fits the concept of asymmetrical ‘new wars’, meaning that the parties within the conflict are using dramatically different means of fighting. They are not conflicts that are fought between regular armies, but are non-state actors and irregular forces, including criminal gangs (Kaldor, 2000).

The armed conflict in Ukraine has a rather peculiar nature: it has not officially been



declared a war but has by August 2014 killed nearly 7,000 people (UNIAN, 2015). Ukrainian, Russian, and Western media uses different labels to name forces formally initiating the conflict—‘rebels’, ‘separatists’, ‘terrorist’ and conflict per se—‘a Ukrainian-Russian war’, ‘a civil war’, ‘a hybrid war’, ‘antiterrorist operation’ (legal term in Ukraine). Mitrokhin (2015) analyzes the evidence on the nature of the Russian military presence and the changing composition of the “separatist” forces in the armed conflict in the Donbass region of Ukraine and identifies three distinct phases in the conflict, each of which was characterized by the involvement of a different set of actors and forces operating on the pro-Russian side. He argues that the available evidence demonstrates conclusively that the new “republics” in the Donbass received vital assistance from Russia in the form of military manpower and materials throughout this period, including regular soldiers sent to the region from August 2014. “Russian regular soldiers fought back against the Ukrainian army and forced a (very fragile) ceasefire, formalized in the Minsk Protocol of 5 September. From a military perspective, this was a victory for Russia. From a political perspective, the outcome of the war remains completely open” (p. 222).

At the time of writing this paper, despite all diplomatic peace efforts, the situation in Donetsk and Lugansk regions remains very tense and could be characterized as catastrophic in many senses; especially for people who stay there and for those who had to flee from their homes to the safer regions of Ukraine or neighboring countries. Due to the military actions, people in Ukraine are suffering humiliation, deprivation of basic human rights, and forced internal displacement. The UN has stated, “armed conflict [in Ukraine] has caused great damage to the economy, the social infrastructure is ruined, and people are suffering” (UN, 2014).

In August 2014, there were 56,000 officially registered IDPs and until August 2015 this number kept rising to 1.4 million (MSPU, 2015). IDPs from eastern Ukraine now account for 98% of the total displaced Ukrainians, while those from Crimea account for 2% (UNHCR, 2015). But the UNHCR stressed that while the process of centralized registration is still ongoing, the real figure of IDPs remains unknown and is likely to be higher.

## **Key Findings**

### **Initial Displacement and Social Support for IDPs**

Displacement from the armed conflict zones in Ukraine was chaotic and arranged mainly by people themselves or volunteers. It experienced certain waves depending on



violations in these zones, and still is going on the moment of writing this paper.

The largest number of IDPs is hosted in the areas immediately surrounding the conflict-affected area: in peaceful areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, as well as in Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhia regions. As of April 2015, 12.6% of IDPs are children, 4.2% are people with disabilities and 60.4% are receiving some type of pension (MSPU, 2015). It is possible that there are some overlaps such as disabled persons being included in the figure for persons receiving pensions. The IDPs are living with their relatives/friends, in rented houses or in collective centers. During interviews respondents stated the following:

Some people undertook registration as an IDP in order to get a pension or social assistance from the Ukrainian government, but in reality they still reside in the conflict area'. (Social worker, Kyiv)

The results of the needs assessment, conducted by NGO 'Labor and Health Social Initiatives' (LHSI), among IDP families in Ukraine showed that the most important needs of the IDPs are financial (employment), humanitarian (food and clothes), housing (permanent or temporary lodging), and medical need. Less important needs include social (participation in community life), legal (protection of rights), psychological, cultural, and political (participation in political life) areas (LHSI, 2015).

Social workers directly involved in supporting people who had fled to Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, stressed that the most common basic needs of IDPs are food, clothing, hygiene kits, medicine, and accommodation:

IDP families had a sufficient life in places which they have left. But they were forced to flee from their home without seasonal clothing, steady income, and food for tomorrow. (Social worker, Kyiv)

The social peculiarities of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions should be taken into account by those who arranged social services for IDPs from these regions. Both of them have a high level of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, drug use, etc. So, people taking antiretroviral drugs, tuberculosis treatment or methadone substitute therapy were left without real medical assistance. This pushed them to flee to the governmentally-controlled territory. The same situation occurred with clients of methadone substitute therapy in Crimea, where after annexation by Russia all harm reduction programmes were prohibited (Demchenko et al., 2014).

The country and its social services were not ready to address the needs of the new group of clients. Social workers shared their memories on their hard work in spring and summer of 2014:

For me, the challenge was the large number of those who need help here and now. The number of those who need help outweigh the resources we have.

Social work with IDPs differs from social work with vulnerable families what we previously do. IDP families were good in their parental responsibilities. The main challenge was to ensure the basic needs of these families. We began fundraising for helping to provide basic needs'.

Many of IDPs had psychological problems and were affected by Russian propaganda against Ukraine:

In January 2015, people displaced from a heavily shelled town in the war zone where they spent a month in the cellar were afraid of Ukrainian social workers and everything Ukrainian. (Social worker of foundation 'Light of hope', Poltava)

The quickest response to internal migration was initiated by newly established volunteer organizations. Most of these organizations were originally simple associations of concerned citizens, volunteers, and students who participated in the massive actions ended by the ousting of the former President of Ukraine. All of them have their own websites, hotline phone numbers for rapid response, pages in social networks with an established search system of the housing areas, warehouses of humanitarian aid, etc. But volunteer organizations that actively started to be involved in helping the IDPs, lacked systematic approaches and qualified professionals, and were not using empowering strategies but passive tactics of meeting basic needs. Anyway, they can be regarded as 'pushers' and 'challengers' to the conservative post-socialist bureaucratic system of social services, as tensions between state social services and grassroots solidarities were evident.

International organizations responded quite fast to this social challenge in the country. For example, UNHCR, UNDP, The Red Cross, and IOM created special aid programmes inside organizations. In partnership with national NGOs, they provide targeted humanitarian, medical, psychological, and legal assistance. Moreover, they partly help in finding housing and employment. Ukrainian NGOs with the support of international organizations supplied drugs, including drugs for people living with HIV/AIDS, to the territories that are not controlled by the Ukrainian government.

Initially, governmental organizations were rather reluctant to set up a system of rapid response to this new challenge. A step-by-step legal framework in support of the IDPs had been adopted by the Ukrainian parliament. Currently, at the national level, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, Ministry of Social Policy, State Employment Service, State Migration Service, State Emergency Service, regional state administrations, and other institutions have been sharing the information about solutions to the IDPs' certain issues (document recovery, financial aid registration, pensions renewal, etc.—on their official websites, social networks, publications, and media interviews. However, this is just common informational services.

Also, the State Emergency Service of Ukraine initiated the creation of the Interdepartmental coordinating staff on the social security of citizens of Ukraine who move from the areas of anti-terrorism operations and temporarily occupied territories. Its web-source includes the latest daily updated statistics of IDPs in Ukraine. Moreover, the source shows that State Emergency Service of Ukraine along with the representatives of non-governmental (voluntary) organizations provides psychological and medical help for IDPs in their temporary residences. At the same time, the State Employment Service of Ukraine provides the informational service, develops and coordinates the database of vacancies, organizes professional trainings and seminars, as well as provides vouchers to maintain the competitiveness of people aged over 45 in the labor market, regardless of their place of residence.

The analysis of the regional state administrations' Internet sources demonstrates that almost each region has gradually introduced its own system of rapid response to the internal displacement of people, which includes hotlines, helplines, checkpoints of citizens, road and location maps that are available on the websites, list of important phone numbers of public services and public organizations, latest statistics of IDPs in Ukraine, etc. Also, regions with a larger percentage of IDPs, such as Kyiv, Odessa, Dniepropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Vinnitsa and Kirovograd, have assistance from groups that include psychologists and social workers. But, unfortunately, the amount of professionals in such areas is low, and definitely not enough for a qualified complete recovery of all IDPs in these regions, especially of large families, single parents, women, and children. In addition, public social services have very few professionals with the appropriate training level of modern social work in general; especially, those who have a repertoire of techniques and skills needed for effective crisis intervention and for cases of force majeure conditions.

It is worth mentioning that a displaced person or a family may seek support in as many organisations as possible or ignore such an opportunity (let's bear in mind that many 'local migrants' belong to wealthy groups who fled zones of armed conflict among the first and bought apartments in other cities, transferred businesses, and so on):

We haven't a common database for all organizations, where all IDPs who are receiving assistance are registered. In Kharkiv, for example, each organization registers only those who ask for assistance. Some of them may apply to several organizations, and others will not apply at all. (Social worker at Charitable foundation. 'Caritas Kharkiv')

So, currently, in Ukraine, there are three categories of institutions providing assistance for the IDPs at the initial displacement stage: government agencies, NGOs, and volunteers (individuals or groups of people, organized platforms or chaotic, spontaneous help). Each has its own way of solving the IDPs' problems and helping them. But, their services are rather individualistic and fragmented than collective and autonomous.

### **Protracted Displacement and Social Work**

As armed conflict had started in Ukraine in March-April 2014, some IDPs are at the protracted stage of displacement.

In mid-2015, the Ukrainian government reported on the low level of re-employment of the IDPs (MSPU, 2015). Shrinking economy, high unemployment rate, and policies of austerity are not the only determinants of this situation. Some IDPs are also expecting that social workers—in post-socialist paternalistic tradition—are obliged to solve all their problems and satisfy all their needs, both urgent and long-term:

Another challenge was the consumer attitude of some IDPs. It is important to feel the distinction of working with them when they need help and support, and when it is important to give people responsibility for their own lives. (Social worker at Charitable foundation 'Bethany Social Services')

Since March 2015, the State Employment Service implementing new Ukrainian by-laws has introduced a system of public work for the IDPs and supplies them with vouchers for free of charge professional re-training at educational establishments. Anyway, due to the demographic profile of IDPs where a large number constitute women with infants or small kids, these programmes are not popular.

The practice of provision settlements (financed mainly by international organizations or foreign governments) was not successful either. It was sort of a segregation with no prospect to obtain a job or to become integrated into a new community.

In summer 2015, the state ‘social’ services, to deal with the (post)traumatic experiences of combatants, their relatives and IDPs, have been opened in a number of larger cities in Ukraine (i.e. Kyiv, Dniepropetrovsk, etc.). The manual of the WHO ‘First Psychological Help for IDPs’ has been translated into Ukrainian and Russian. Psychologists and medical doctors, mainly psychiatrists—trained with the support of international organisations—are involved in the provision of this type of support, but not qualified social workers.

Traditional state social services are still focused on the provision of in-kind support to IDPs and not integration or reconciliation. Overall, local level social services do not play a key role in the development of holistic and empowering approaches to address the issue of displacement through a combination of psychological services, social and health care programmes, and employment support programmes.

### **Challenges of Resettlement/Return of the IDPs**

In Ukraine, as the International Organization of Migration pointed out, ‘as displaced persons’ basic needs are not yet fully covered, the ability to integrate so far remains vague’ (IOM, 2014). Lack of clarity about the Ukrainian legislation and assistance mechanisms, bureaucracy and difficulties in accessing relief programmes creates confusion, frustration and an increasing sense of isolation among IDPs.

Despite the generosity shown by local residents, negative perception has arisen among host communities who see IDPs being favored by ‘positive discrimination’. This increases stigmatization and affects their ability to rent accommodation or find jobs (Quintanilla et al., 2015).

Due to the obscure, ambivalent nature of military conflict in Ukraine, sometimes women with their children are looking for assistance as IDPs while their husbands take part in the armed conflict as ‘separatists’. Social workers face considerable ethical dilemmas when they have to work with IDPs who support the ‘side of the conflict’ which differs from their personal one:

Some women are not expecting any resettlement; they are waiting for the end of shelling, and then come back. Receiving aid in the Ukrainian state service and they

still hate all Ukrainian. (Social worker, Kyiv)

Rapid appraisal done in mid-2014 demonstrated the limited ‘vision of future’ among IDPs (Balakireva, 2014). Interviews with social workers and focus groups conducted one year after shows the vitality of this vision:

Our clients have no perception that their life had changed forever. They perceive it as a temporary situation and sit on their suitcases ready to go home. (Social worker, Lviv)

Children and their mother are not accepting the changes. They want to reunite with the rest of the family staying in Eastern Ukraine. (Community activist, Ivano-Frankivsk)

Statistic shows the tendency for IDPs to return, especially to Donetsk oblast—both to governmentally-controlled and uncontrolled areas (Demchenko et al., 2014). These data have been confirmed during interviews:

Some had already come back, some are going to return home; some want to earn money here and then come back. (Social worker, Kyiv)

In summer 2015, the information campaign ‘We are different, we are together’ aimed to empower IDPs to start a new life was launched. NGO ‘Internews-Ukraine’ launched this project with the support of ‘Matra’ Program, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in partnership with regional editions and TV channels in eight regions of Ukraine, where the largest number of IDPs were located. The aim of the project is to show the life of IDPs in different areas, the role of volunteers and government, the situation with social support, work, life, psychological problems, and possibilities for their solution.

## **Discussions**

Looking at the services available to IDPs in Ukraine, gaps in these services and challenges for the social work profession in the country, it is worthwhile to compare the situation with some standards of such services and international experience, scholarly debates on the interventions for IDPs and more broadly—on the concept of social work per se.

### **Limited Social Services for IDPs and for the Whole Population of Ukraine**

There is no clear list of methods or procedures or interventions that social work can pursue in working with IDPs.

The UN Commission on Human Rights in its Resolution 73/1992 designated a Special Rapporteur on Internal Displacement in response to growing international concern about the large number of internally displaced people in the world and their need for assistance and protection (UN, 1992). The United Nations has published the 'Guiding Principles of International Displacement' (UN, 2004) and the 'Manual on Field Practices of Internal Displacement' (UN, 1999) to guide us on the subject. These documents stressed that work with displaced populations should aim at sustainability, overcoming dependence on humanitarian assistance, regaining productive capacity, rebuilding socio-cultural and community structures as well as personal and collective ability to contribute proactively to national and regional development. The goal of such a work should be autonomy and community empowerment and not only survival. Therefore, services for displaced populations should be collective and autonomous rather than individual and fragmented.

The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW) adopted a policy paper "Displaced persons" covering issues of the conditions of displaced individuals, the very existence of displacement and the political strategies and programs, which may have caused it. Moreover, IFSW is aware that humanitarian assistance and alternative or developmental solutions for displaced persons cannot replace the political will of governments in their quest for solutions for internal conflicts that caused the displacement (IFSW, 2012a).

Exploration of modern social work practice allows for the definition of different types of general and specific-area programs for IDPs: (1) pertaining to prevailing conditions (advocacy programs, outreach programs, humanitarian aid programs, health programs, and programs designed to humanize existing conditions); (2) pertaining to people's past experience (trauma counseling programs, rehabilitation programs, support programs, and social and recreational programs); (3) pertaining to group situation (self-help programs, community building programs, and community relations programs); (4) pertaining to future needs (education programs, skills development and capacity-building programs, and income-generation programs). Specific-area programs including the following programs: (1) pertaining to families and family members (children's education and psychosocial programs, services for refugee women, family services programs, and intercountry



casework programs); (2) pertaining to specific needs (repatriation and reintegration programs, integration programs, human rights programs, and legal-oriented programs). Given the diversity of forced migration situations, Cox and Pawar (2006) point out: “It is not being suggested that all programs are equally applicable to all contexts or always able to be implemented in an identical manner.” (p. 292). However, all of them should be considered in any forced migration situation.

While implementing these programs, social workers and members of the other helping professions have different strategies to use. For example, they can use short-term (crisis intervention, outreach social work model / mobile interventions in camps, and task-oriented model of social work etc.) as well as long-term intervention strategies focused on system-ecological model of social work (‘person-in-environment’ concept) and community development (Ramon & Maglajlic, 2012; Lai & Toliashvili, 2010). First type of interventions is more oriented on the paternalistic approaches; second one – on empowerment and social inclusion.

Having in mind this wide range of possible interventions and strategies to work with IDPs described by social work standards and scholars, we may say that in Ukraine a limited number of services are available and they mostly oriented on crisis interventions and therapeutic paradigm of social work. It might be explained by not only by low professionalism of social workers, but lack of many essential social services for any types of clients and lack of traditions of rapid responses to any type of disasters.

### **Lack of Community-based Approaches**

Long-term intervention strategies (Lai & Toliashvili, 2010; Kang, 2013) foresee that services for IDPs must be multileveled (individual assistance, connection with the community and advocacy, participation in collective political actions) and must be focused on recovering the relations between person and social systems, developing local support systems, involving community resources, including volunteers, to help people who find themselves outside the usual environment and relationships. Other authors add that assistance could be effective only if it will be based on the community development approach (Frederico & Picton, 2007) or on developing local forms of support (Dousset & Denov, 2012).

Community development strategies and community-centered approaches are new for Ukraine, and are implemented in some areas of Ukraine with the support of the international organisations. Such programmes are mainly focused on development of self-

government and strengthening social infrastructure. Undertaken study of social work response to address issue of displacement shows little attention to this domain of social work.

### **Needs for Reconciliation and Empowering Strategies**

Needs of Ukrainian IDPs' identified due to the rapid appraisal, expert interviews and survey are actually the same as described in literature (Hines & Balletto, 2002; Walter and Ahearn, 2008) with the only one difference. Data from rapid appraisal (Balakireva, 2014) suggest that displaced people experience lack of identifications with Ukraine and have problems with tolerance, values of solidarity and patriotism. Undertaken research proves that many IDPs assume 'dependent', 'client role' expecting social workers to solve all their expressed needs.

In scholarly literature we may find useful debates on social work strategies to be applied in the situations of mass violence and post-colonial context. We share the idea of Sewpaul (2015) on the necessity of focusing on re-integration and social inclusion strategies that include "an examination of those complex factors that contribute to group based violence and conflict" (p. 17). Such strategies will be helpful for the processes of reconciliation and peace-building.

We also support position of Stubs (1999) that trauma associated with the displacement cannot be regard as a major area of concern, as well as Becker's (2006) considerations who calls the diagnosis of the so-called post-traumatic stress syndrome (a popular concept in social work) in war victims a masterpiece of decontextualizing and de-politicizing experiences. What is considered inappropriate is the sole concentration on the individual ignoring that the real problem is not the person but the political and social conditions a person has been exposed to. Seifert (2015) pointed out that absurd to think of large population groups labelled as 'traumatized' having to undergo therapy. Thus a social work approach that takes into consideration the political implications of the effects of political violence on their clientele, theoretically and practically has to consider 'collective healing', i.e. the provision of existential security in the receiving areas and the reconstruction of a secure, functioning and reconciliatory environment in the crisis regions.

Lack of empowering strategies based building of self-efficacy of people and preserving of pathological, stigmatizing model of social work inherited from the socialist traditions are narrowing chances for reintegration of displaced people in Ukraine. While

new strategies rooted to social justice, appreciating the knowledge acquired at a grassroots level during the conflict and addressing the contentious questions of social workers' tolerance, oppression, war crimes and human rights violations should be used for supporting IDPs and other people affected by the undeclared war in Ukraine. Attitudes and public opinion toward IDPs should be reconsidered, as well as therapeutic practices and building of segregated settlements.

### **Need for Reconceptualization of Social Work Profession**

As it was stated earlier, social work is rather new profession for the Ukraine and social services are underdeveloped. In fact, public social services have very few professionals with appropriate training levels meeting modern social work standards. In 2014, due to policies of austerity staff of state social services for family and children had been significantly cut.

Since WWII country had never been involved in any military conflicts and didn't have internal civic conflicts. So, one of the notable features of social services in Ukraine that public services as well as specialists were not ready to deal with this totally new problem for the country – both professionally and psychologically. However, if we look on the situation broader, we see that the necessity to address issue of displacement raises questions on social services responsibilities, standards of services provision, and concept of social work as a profession moving from paternalistic professional values into empowering.

These challenges raise questions regarding the content of social work education, in particular how to make future social workers ready to provide services in the situation of emergency, making choice between paternalistic and empowering approaches. These challenges reinforce the requirements for social workers' training, teaching them how to enhance client, how to use task oriented approach, how to build partnership relationships with clients. On the other hand, social workers should be trained how to use strategies for community development, to involve community resources, building a team of volunteers etc.

Also, the social work profession in Ukraine has to be (re)conceptualized based on ideas of consolidating disciplinary identity without leaving its ethical values and goal of empowering people (IFSW, 2012b) behind.

NGOs and voluntary initiatives shaping what is called by Jones and Lavalette (2013) ‘popular social work’ should be supported and not ignored by the mainstream local services. These activities have their roots in political and social movement born during and after *Euromaidan*, they have been set out to address the needs of individuals and communities and to confront the social and political issues and problems of the day. ‘Popular social work’ doesn’t contest state directed social work, but enhancing it. And this has to be recognized by the state and social work professionals.

Importantly to note, the similar experience of revisioning social work profession and education might be found in other countries with armed conflict or massive violence (Bašić, 2015; Chaparro-Pacheco and Pinto-Velásquez, 2015). It means that man-made humanitarian disasters breaks the professional homeostasis and push social workers to go beyond the lines, leave “zone of comfort” and become more flexible and up-to-date.

To sum up, the very first lesson Ukraine has to learn from the social work response to an armed conflict is how to work with conflicts of values and negative perceptions, and how to develop inclusive social services for the new types of needy people in times of economic collapse caused by this ‘hybrid war’.

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**Tetyana Semigina** (PhD and Dr., MSW), Secretary of the International Association of Schools of Social Work; Professor, Academy of Labour, Social Relations and Tourism (Ukraine); Associate Professor, National University ‘Kyiv-Mohyla Academy’ (Ukraine). Dr. Semigina is a co-editor of the International Journal ‘Social Policy and Social Work in Transition’ (UK), she was involved as an expert and consultant in the various international projects aimed at strengthening social policy and social services in Ukraine. She is an author of more than 280 publications. Research interest areas are: social and health policy, community development, HIV/AIDS, disability studies.

**Natalia Gusak** (PhD, MSW), Head of Social Work, Master Programme and an Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work, National University of ‘Kyiv-Mohyla Academy’ (Ukraine). She was involved as an expert and consultant in the various international projects aimed at strengthening social services in Ukraine. She is an author of more than 40 publications. Research interest areas are: social services, social rehabilitation, human trafficking, methodology of social work researches, and disability studies.

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