

Exploring the health needs of internally displaced women living with or at heightened risk for HIV in Ukraine

Ukrainian Institute on Public Health Policy (Tetiana Kiriazova & Olena Makarenko)

U-M Faculty (Elizabeth J. King, William Axinn, Abigail Dumes)

Introduction

- Ukraine has been experiencing war since 2014 and the full-scale invasion since 2022
- Healthcare facilities have been attacked; services interrupted
- Internal displacement, especially from eastern Ukraine (in or near occupied territories/frontlines) to central or western regions
- Women IDP--alone or often as sole caregiver to families
- HIV epidemic is significant in Ukraine; the full-scale war has caused disruption to HIV treatment, testing and prevention services
- **The health needs of the specific population of women IDP who are at risk for or living with HIV have not been comprehensively assessed**

Research Methods

- Qualitative research methods in 3 locations (Kyiv, Poltava, and Ivano-Frankivsk)
- In-depth interviews with service providers (16 to date)
 - including NGOs, social services, clinics, and shelters staff
- In-depth interviews with women IDP (13 to date)
 - forced to move since 2022
 - 18+ years old
 - key affected population (living with HIV, drug use, involvement in sex work and/or partner risk)
- Interviews started in August 2025 and are ongoing
- Audiorecorded and transcribed
- Team meetings to discuss the interviews, think about recruitment and sampling strategy, note data saturation points, and preliminary findings
- Open coding of interviews to generate codebook for team-based coding

Noted Preliminary Findings

- First priority is basic survival needs (food, housing, security)
- Financial concerns also take priority
- Childcare issues, lack of childcare as a barrier to services
- Gender-based violence
- Difficulty in finding primary care, gynecologist, dental care, pediatrician, and other needed health services
- Need for trauma-informed mental health care, psychological support
- Adapting to new environment brings challenges to health/well-being
- Stigma of IDP, acceptance, and integration
- Lack of information about resources from government and NGOs
- Need for better referral systems between services

Next Steps

- Complete interviews
- Formal data analysis
- Dissemination to stakeholders in Ukraine
- Develop quantitative survey
- Plan for a co-design intervention



Project Objective

Our project objective is to identify the health needs of women who are internally displaced due to the ongoing war in Ukraine, focusing specifically on women living with or at heightened risk for HIV, given their particularly vulnerable status in society.

Women IDP, who are living with HIV and/or are at increased susceptibility to HIV, experience a **range of complex mental and physical health needs** in the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Intervention ideas include a **brief screening tool** to assess health needs and a **patient navigation system** for Ukrainian women IDP.