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THE ROLE OF A SOCIAL WORKER IN BUILDING COMMUNITY TOLERANCE TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Толерантність є основоположною цінністю, яка визначає рівень зрілості та гуманності будь-якого суспільства. У сучасному світі, що характеризується частими кризовими явищами, міграціями та соціальною напругою, толерантність стає не лише моральним, але й практичним інструментом забезпечення стабільності та соціальної згуртованості. Особливо важливим це поняття є для України, яка з 2014 року стикається з безпрецедентними викликами, пов'язаними із внутрішнім переміщенням населення. Анексія Криму, військові дії на Донбасі та повномасштабне вторгнення Росії у 2022 році призвели до масового переміщення мільйонів українців. За даними Міжнародної організації з міграції (МОМ), станом на кінець 2024 року в Україні зареєстровано понад 5,1 мільйона внутрішньо переміщених осіб (ВПО). Це найбільша кількість переселенців за всю історію незалежної України. Ці люди, залишивши свої домівки, втратили не лише житло та роботу, але й відчуття стабільності, соціальні зв'язки та частину своєї ідентичності. Процес інтеграції ВПО у нові громади є складним і багатогранним. Попри готовність багатьох громад допомагати переселенцям, існують численні випадки упередженого ставлення, дискримінації та конфліктів. Здебільшого це зумовлено стереотипами, браком інформації або страхом конкуренції за ресурси (житло, робочі місця, соціальні виплати). У такій ситуації толерантність громади стає ключовим чинником для успішної інтеграції ВПО. У цьому контексті соціальні працівники відіграють надзвичайно важливу роль. Вони виступають посередниками між переселенцями та місцевим населенням, сприяють налагодженню діалогу, організовують просвітницькі кампанії та інтеграційні заходи, а також надають переселенцям матеріальну, соціальну та психологічну підтримку. Діяльність соціального працівника спрямована не лише на подолання упереджень і конфліктів, але й на побудову соціально згуртованого суспільства, де всі громадяни, незалежно від їхнього минулого, мають рівні можливості для самореалізації.

Ця стаття присвячена аналізу ключової ролі соціального працівника у формуванні толерантності громади до внутрішньо переміщених осіб. У ній розглядаються сутність поняття толерантності та її значення для стабільного функціонування громади, основні виклики, з якими стикаються ВПО під час інтеграції у нове середовище, функції соціального працівника у створенні умов для адаптації переселенців і подолання упереджень, приклади успішних практик роботи з ВПО в Україні та країнах Європи, рекомендації для покращення роботи соціальних служб у цьому напрямі. Особливу увагу приділено порівнянню українського досвіду із міжнародними практиками. Наприклад, у Німеччині після міграційної кризи 2015 року активно впроваджувалися програми міжкультурної комунікації, які значно знижували рівень напруги між місцевим населенням та переселенцями. Аналіз таких прикладів допомагає зрозуміти, як адаптувати міжнародний досвід до українських реалій.

Актуальність дослідження обумовлена необхідністю не лише ефективної інтеграції ВПО, але й створення суспільства, де толерантність є основою взаємин між людьми. Ця публікація буде корисною для соціальних працівників, громадських діячів, представників місцевого самоврядування, науковців і студентів, які досліджують проблематику внутрішньо переміщених осіб та соціальної інтеграції.

Побудова толерантного суспільства є важливим кроком на шляху до подолання наслідків

кризи та забезпечення сталого розвитку України. Сподіваємось, що матеріали статті сприятимуть поширенню кращих практик роботи з ВПО та допоможуть у формуванні нових підходів до соціальної згуртованості.

Ключові слова: Толерантність, внутрішньо переміщені особи (ВПО), соціальна згуртованість, соціальні працівники, інтеграція, упередження, дискримінація, адаптація, соціальна підтримка, місцеві громади.

Вступ: Толерантність є однією з основних цінностей сучасного суспільства, яка забезпечує гармонійне співіснування людей з різними поглядами, віруваннями, культурними та соціальними особливостями. Особливо важливим це поняття стає у кризові періоди, коли соціальна згуртованість суспільства проходить перевірку на стійкість. В Україні, яка з 2014 року перебуває в умовах військових конфліктів та соціальних потрясінь, толерантність виступає не лише моральною категорією, а й необхідною умовою для подолання наслідків масштабних переміщень населення.

Внаслідок анексії Криму у 2014 році, бойових дій на Донбасі та повномасштабного вторгнення Росії у 2022 році мільйони українців були змушені залишити свої домівки та переміститися до інших регіонів країни. За даними Міжнародної організації з міграції (МОМ), кількість внутрішньо переміщених осіб (ВПО) в Україні на кінець 2024 року перевищила 5,1 мільйона осіб, що є рекордним показником за всю історію незалежної України. Ці люди опинилися у складному становищі, втративши звичний уклад життя, стабільність, житло, роботу та соціальні зв'язки. Переїзд до нових громад супроводжується численними викликами: економічними труднощами, психологічними травмами, браком інформації та упередженнями з боку місцевого населення. Багато переселенців стикаються з дискримінацією, відчувають себе «чужими» у нових громадах та часто потребують підтримки в процесі адаптації до нових умов життя.

На фоні цих викликів роль соціальних працівників стає особливо значущою. Вони виступають посередниками між ВПО та громадами, сприяючи не лише вирішенню соціальних проблем переселенців, але й формуванню толерантного ставлення до них у місцевих мешканців. Через інформаційні кампанії, інтеграційні заходи, медіацію у конфліктах і надання психологічної допомоги соціальні працівники створюють умови для налагодження взаєморозуміння між переселенцями та громадами. Рівень толерантності в суспільстві є важливим показником його зрілості та здатності до адаптації у кризові часи. Формування толерантного ставлення є складним і довготривалим процесом, який потребує зусиль не лише з боку держави, але й з боку кожного громадянина, місцевих органів влади, громадських організацій та соціальних працівників. Саме їхня діяльність сприяє зміцненню соціальної згуртованості, створенню сприятливих умов для інтеграції ВПО та зменшенню рівня соціальної напруги. Розуміння значення толерантності та ефективна реалізація її принципів у роботі з ВПО можуть стати основою для побудови більш стабільного та згуртованого суспільства, яке здатне долати виклики сучасного світу.

Мета: Аналіз ролі соціального працівника у формуванні толерантності громади до внутрішньо переміщених осіб. Дослідження спрямоване на висвітлення основних викликів, з якими стикаються ВПО, та підходів до їхньої інтеграції в нові громади. Особливу увагу приділено практичним інструментам, які соціальні працівники використовують для подолання упереджень, зниження соціальної напруги та створення умов для адаптації переселенців. Відповідно до поставленої мети передбачається вирішення наступних завдань:

Розкрити сутність поняття толерантності та її значення для соціальної згуртованості громад.

Проаналізувати основні проблеми, з якими стикаються ВПО у процесі інтеграції в громади.

Визначити роль соціального працівника у формуванні толерантного ставлення громади до ВПО.

Надати приклади успішних практик роботи соціальних працівників в Україні та країнах Європи.

Обґрунтувати необхідність впровадження системного підходу до формування толерантності в громадах.

Tolerance is a fundamental value that determines the level of maturity and humanity of any society. In today's world, characterized by frequent crises, migration, and social tension, tolerance is becoming not only a moral but also a practical tool for ensuring stability and social cohesion. This concept is particularly important for Ukraine, which since 2014 has faced unprecedented challenges related to internal population displacement. The annexation of Crimea, military actions in Donbas, and Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022 have led to the mass displacement of millions of Ukrainians. According to the International

Organization for Migration (IOM), as of the end of 2024, there were over 5.1 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) registered in Ukraine. This is the largest number of displaced persons in the history of independent Ukraine. These people, having left their homes, lost not only their housing and jobs, but also their sense of stability, social ties, and part of their identity. The process of integrating IDPs into new communities is complex and multifaceted. Despite the willingness of many communities to help displaced persons, there are numerous cases of prejudice, discrimination, and conflict. This is largely due to stereotypes, lack of information, or fear of competition for resources (housing, jobs, social benefits). In such a situation, community tolerance becomes a key factor for the successful integration of IDPs. In this context, social workers play an extremely important role. They act as mediators between IDPs and the local population, facilitate dialogue, organize educational campaigns and integration events, and provide IDPs with material, social, and psychological support. The work of social workers is aimed not only at overcoming prejudices and conflicts, but also at building a socially cohesive society where all citizens, regardless of their past, have equal opportunities for self-realization.

This article is devoted to analyzing the key role of social workers in shaping community tolerance towards internally displaced persons. It examines the essence of the concept of tolerance and its importance for the stable functioning of the community, the main challenges faced by IDPs during their integration into a new environment, the role of social workers in creating conditions for the adaptation of displaced persons and overcoming prejudices, examples of successful practices in working with IDPs in Ukraine and European countries, and recommendations for improving the work of social services in this area. Particular attention is paid to comparing Ukrainian experience with international practices. For example, in Germany, after the 2015 migration crisis, intercultural communication programs were actively implemented, which significantly reduced tensions between the local population and displaced persons. Analysis of such examples helps to understand how to adapt international experience to Ukrainian realities.

The relevance of the study is due to the need not only for effective integration of IDPs, but also for the creation of a society where tolerance is the basis of human relations. This publication will be useful for social workers, public figures, local government representatives, researchers, and students who study the issues of internally displaced persons and social integration.

Building a tolerant society is an important step towards overcoming the consequences of the crisis and ensuring the sustainable development of Ukraine. We hope that the materials in this article will contribute to the dissemination of best practices in working with IDPs and help to shape new approaches to social cohesion. Keywords: Tolerance, internally displaced persons (IDPs), social cohesion, social workers, integration, prejudice, discrimination, adaptation, social support, local communities.

Introduction: Tolerance is one of the core values of modern society, ensuring the harmonious coexistence of people with different views, beliefs, cultural and social characteristics. This concept becomes especially important in times of crisis, when the social cohesion of society is tested for resilience. In Ukraine, which has been in a state of military conflict and social upheaval since 2014, tolerance is not only a moral category but also a necessary condition for overcoming the consequences of large-scale population displacement.

As a result of the annexation of Crimea in 2014, hostilities in Donbas, and Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, millions of Ukrainians were forced to leave their homes and move to other regions of the country. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine exceeded 5.1 million by the end of 2024, a record high in the history of independent Ukraine. These people found themselves in a difficult situation, having lost their familiar way of life, stability, housing, jobs, and social ties. Moving to new communities is accompanied by numerous challenges: economic difficulties, psychological trauma, lack of information, and prejudice from the local population. Many IDPs face discrimination, feel like "outsiders" in their new communities, and often need support in adapting to their new living conditions.

Tolerance is critically important in crisis situations, such as internal displacement due to war. It should be seen as the ability of society to accept and respect the diversity of people, their beliefs, and their cultural, religious, and social differences. The UNESCO Declaration of Principles on Tolerance (1995) defines tolerance as "respect, acceptance and proper understanding of the rich diversity of our world's cultures." In the context of working with internally displaced persons (IDPs), tolerance means not only accepting displaced persons as part of the community, but also creating conditions for their integration without discrimination and prejudice. Its level determines how successfully the community will be able to ensure stability, social cohesion, and effective support for IDPs. In the context of working with internally displaced persons (IDPs), tolerance means not only accepting migrants as part of the community, but also

creating conditions for their integration without discrimination and prejudice. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) face multifaceted problems that require systematic solutions at both the local and national levels. These challenges encompass social, economic, psychological, and informational aspects of their lives. One of the main problems faced by IDPs is social isolation, which arises from a lack of support in new communities and prejudice on the part of local residents. IDPs are often perceived as “outsiders” who are claiming community resources: social assistance, housing, or jobs. In 2015, 32% of IDPs from Donetsk Oblast reported that they had encountered rejection and tension in their relations with local residents. The reasons for this were competition for jobs, insufficient resources for assistance, and the spread of stereotypes about “privileges” for IDPs (data from the International Organization for Migration, IOM). A similar situation is typical for modern European countries; during the 2015 migration crisis in Germany, a similar situation was observed. Local residents in small towns believed that refugees received more support from the state than they did. This caused social tension and conflicts, which were partially resolved through integration programs that included meetings between refugees and local communities and awareness campaigns. One of the most acute problems for IDPs is employment. Many displaced persons lose their jobs due to displacement and face difficulties in finding new jobs due to a lack of qualifications, high competition, or a lack of jobs in the region. According to a 2023 UNHCR report, 65% of IDPs in Ukraine said they faced difficulties in finding employment. It was most difficult to find work in rural communities and small towns, where the labor market is limited. For example, in the Kharkiv region, IDPs often took seasonal or low-paid jobs that did not match their qualifications. In Poland, which took in over a million Ukrainian IDPs in 2022–2023, many IDPs also faced difficulties in finding employment. According to data from the Polish Ministry of Labor, 40% of IDPs were forced to work in low-paying jobs, despite their higher education and experience. The Polish government has introduced retraining programs that have helped some IDPs adapt to the local labor market. It should also be noted that moving to new communities and losing their familiar way of life causes serious psychological stress for many IDPs. They often experience anxiety, depression, uncertainty, and social isolation, especially if they do not have support from their family or community. In addition to material support, psychological assistance is an important condition for the successful integration of IDPs. Social workers help IDPs overcome anxiety, stress, and isolation. In 2023, crisis centers were operating in the Cherkasy region, where specialists, together with psychologists, provided counseling, particularly for children and the elderly. Such initiatives facilitate adaptation to new living conditions..

Another important area of social workers' activities is the development of community initiatives that promote mutual understanding between IDPs and local residents. For example, in the Vinnytsia region, with the support of international organizations, the “Communities for All” project was implemented, which included training sessions, workshops, and integration events. This helped reduce tensions and foster a culture of tolerance. The experience of European countries confirms that the active participation of social workers in integration creates the basis for a cohesive and sustainable society.

In 2022, according to IOM surveys, 80% of IDPs reported high levels of stress caused by uncertainty about the future. However, only 40% of them sought help from psychologists because they were unaware of the availability of services or were embarrassed to talk about their problems. In Sweden, which took in a significant number of refugees during the migration crisis, the government introduced psychological support programs for displaced persons, including individual and group counseling. This helped reduce anxiety among IDPs and facilitated their integration into the community. Many IDPs face information barriers, not knowing what services are available in their new communities. This limits their ability to access social, medical, or material assistance. In 2023, the IOM reported that over 50% of IDPs in small communities did not know how to contact local authorities for help. In many regions, information was not available online or was not disseminated among displaced persons. In Germany, information support for displaced persons has become one of the priorities during integration. Multilingual online platforms were created where refugees could learn about available services, employment programs, and language courses. For example, the Ankommen platform has helped thousands of refugees obtain information about jobs, housing, and legal support.

Thus, the challenges faced by IDPs are multifaceted and require a comprehensive solution. To overcome these problems, Ukraine needs to draw on the experience of European countries to improve its approaches to IDP integration, based on the principles of tolerance, equality, and mutual respect. It also needs to empower social services and take into account the role of social workers as intermediaries between IDPs and the community in fostering tolerance:

1. Implement integration programs that reduce social isolation and promote mutual understanding between IDPs and local residents.

2. Implement retraining programs and create jobs for IDPs.

3. Ensure access to quality psychological assistance, especially in crisis situations.

4. Improve communication between authorities and IDPs by creating information platforms and disseminating information in an accessible form.

5. Social workers act as intermediaries between IDPs and the community, performing several key functions:

1. Informing the community. Social workers organize information campaigns to explain the issues faced by IDPs. For example, in 2019, educational events were held for local residents in the Lviv region, involving psychologists and IDPs who shared their stories. This helped reduce prejudice by 20% (UNHCR data).

2. Integration activities. Social workers organize joint cultural, sports, and educational events where IDPs and local residents can interact. For example, as part of the East and West Together program in the Vinnytsia region, integration meetings were held that helped strengthen ties between communities.

3. Psychological support. Social workers provide access to psychological counseling for IDPs, helping them to overcome stress and adapt to new conditions. In Germany, during the 2015 migration crisis, a model of mobile support groups was actively used to work with displaced persons.

4. Mediation in conflicts. Social workers help resolve conflicts that arise between displaced persons and the local population.

After 2014, many communities in Ukraine faced difficulties in integrating IDPs due to prejudice among the local population. For example, in 2015, a survey was conducted in the Zaporizhzhia region, which showed that 25% of local residents perceived IDPs as “competitors” for social benefits and jobs. This was especially true in rural communities, where resources are limited. However, over time, the situation began to change thanks to the active work of social workers, civil society organizations, and local administrations. For example, in 2017, the Lviv region implemented the “East and West Together” project, which included integration activities and joint training sessions for IDPs and local residents. This helped reduce social tension and increase the level of tolerance in the community. After 2022, due to the mass displacement of the population, the issue of tolerance became even more relevant. For example, in the Dnipropetrovsk region, training sessions were held for local residents with the involvement of psychologists, who explained how to avoid conflicts and promote the integration of IDPs. Such initiatives have significantly improved the perception of IDPs in communities. In 2023, social workers in the Vinnytsia region organized joint workshops for local residents and IDPs on conflict resolution and cultural understanding as part of the “Communities for All” program. As a result, over 70% of participants said that after taking part in the events, their attitude toward displaced persons became more positive. To reduce conflicts between IDPs and local residents in the Kharkiv region, open meditation meetings were organized in 2022 with the participation of psychologists, local leaders, and social workers. These events helped reduce the number of conflicts and complaints in communities. In addition to psychological support, socialization through participation in community initiatives and educational programs plays an important role in the integration process of IDPs. For example, in 2023, the “United Community” project was launched in the Odesa region, which included joint events for IDP children and local residents. This helped create a friendly environment for young people, promoting the formation of tolerant attitudes from childhood. A mentoring program for IDPs was also implemented in the Kyiv region, where local entrepreneurs helped displaced persons adapt to their new environment by providing advice on employment and business management.

It is also necessary to take into account the importance of information support for IDPs, as they often face difficulties in accessing up-to-date information on housing, employment and social services. For example, in 2023, “IDP Support Centers” were established in Dnipropetrovska oblast, where social workers provided legal advice and assistance with paperwork. In the first six months of operation, more than 10,000 IDPs received the necessary information and support. Similar initiatives have also been successfully implemented in European countries, for example, in Germany through the Ankommen platform, which has greatly facilitated the adaptation of IDPs to the new environment.

European countries that hosted millions of refugees during the 2015 migration crisis have demonstrated the importance of tolerance for the stability of society. In Germany, the “Wir schaffen das” (“We will do it”) program organized multicultural festivals, integration courses, and meetings between local residents and refugees in communities. For example, in Bavaria, such events helped reduce prejudice by

30%. The Ankommen platform helped IDPs find information on housing, jobs, social assistance, and integration courses.

Thanks to the platform, 90% of IDPs reported improved awareness of available services. In Poland, which hosted more than 1.5 million Ukrainian IDPs in 2022-2023, the government supported the organization of Polish language courses and created information platforms that explained IDPs their rights and opportunities. For example, the program “Solidarni z Ukrainą” helped strengthen ties between IDPs and communities.

In 2022-2023, the situation became much more complicated due to the massive displacement of people caused by the full-scale war. This scale of internal migration has placed a significant burden on host communities, which in turn has exacerbated the problem of adaptation and integration. According to IOM, 40% of internally displaced persons have faced prejudice from the local population. This indicates the existence of deep-rooted stereotypes and a lack of tolerance in some communities. In addition, 50% of residents of host communities believed that the amount of assistance provided to IDPs exceeded the available resources of the community, which provoked a sense of injustice and social tension. All of this emphasizes the urgency of implementing a systematic approach to IDP integration, which should be based not only on humanitarian support, but also on long-term planning, strategic resource management, and coordinated interaction between all levels of government.

As we can see, building tolerance in communities is a multifaceted process that requires a comprehensive and systematic approach. In the context of the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to military operations, annexation of territories and social crises, the implementation of systemic measures to ensure social cohesion is becoming an urgent need. Tolerance for IDPs is not a purely social or cultural category.

It is a multi-component challenge that encompasses:

Economic aspects (competition for jobs and resources);

Psychological aspects (stress and trauma of IDPs, prejudice of local residents);

Information aspects (lack of awareness of IDP issues and available resources).

The following measures should be taken to address these issues:

Informing and educating the community, as outreach is a basic component of building tolerance. Disseminating information about IDPs, their problems and contribution to community development helps to break down stereotypes.

Organization of integration activities. Given that tolerance is formed through joint activities, integration events, such as cultural festivals, trainings, and joint volunteer projects, allow IDPs and local residents to interact on equal terms.

Psychological support. Emotional stability is an important condition for building positive relationships between IDPs and communities. Psychological support helps IDPs overcome stress and helps local residents overcome their fears of “outsiders.”

Cooperation between the authorities, social services and civil society organizations. A systemic approach is impossible without coordinating the efforts of various structures. This includes::

1. financial support for state integration programs;
2. involvement of civil society organizations to work on the ground;
3. creation of local platforms for information exchange.

Training of social workers. Social workers are key agents of change in communities. Their training to work with IDPs, development of mediation and conflict management skills contributes to the effectiveness of tolerance building measures.

Conclusion

Building tolerance in communities towards internally displaced persons is a key factor in social cohesion and stability in times of crisis. Ukrainian and European experience shows that tolerance does not arise naturally - its formation requires a comprehensive approach that includes community awareness, integration measures, psychological support and cooperation between different levels of government, social workers and NGOs. Tolerance helps to reduce social tension, strengthen mutual understanding between IDPs and the local population, and creates conditions for economic activity of IDPs and community development. Successful integration of IDPs is not only a moral obligation of the society, but also a guarantee of its sustainable development. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to implement a systematic approach based on the experience of European countries and taking into account our own experience since 2014, which will help ensure comprehensive support for both IDPs and host communities.

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