



Ministero degli Affari Esteri
e della Cooperazione Internazionale



WOMEN FOR PEACE AND SECURITY

A focus on Women's Resilience
and Advocacy in Ukraine

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ACRONYMS

CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CSO	Civil society organization
CSW67	67th Commission on the Status of Women
EU	European Union
EUAM	European Union Advisory Mission
FGD	Focus group discussion
GBV	Gender-based violence
IDPs	Internally displaced populations
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer
NAP 1325	National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WIIS Italy	Women in International Security Italy
WPS	Women, Peace, and Security

It has been more than two years since Russia's invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine. No negotiations are yet on the table and peace talks seem far from starting.

The return of war to European soil reminded us that peace cannot be taken for granted, and that ensuring security and peace requires our collective effort. This means of course also benefiting from the women's perspectives and contribution, and making sure that everyone's needs are taken into consideration. Indeed, international actors have frequently called for the full implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the meaningful inclusion of women in all areas of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Still, no woman was represented at the only negotiation table that took place in Antalya at the beginning of the war, without reaching any progress; and women are still marginalised from discussions that might shape the future of the country, but that fail to include a meaningful gender perspective.

The project promoted by Women In International Security (WIIS) Italy on women facing security challenges, focusing on the role of Ukrainian women, and implemented with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan, finds its premises in some key considerations.

Conflicts affect women differently, and this should be reflected in policy responses and political decisions

Conflicts affect women differently, and this should be also reflected in policy responses and political decisions.

The conflict has inflicted untold suffering on all Ukrainian people. When it comes to women, however, it is well known that conflicts exacerbate existing social and gender inequalities and affect gender roles and relations. Thus, security crises are not gender neutral. This is the case also in Ukraine: from heightened trafficking and gender-based violence to the rising poverty levels and new roles societal roles, women and girls of Ukraine are facing severe impacts. The war has also displaced millions of people, both across Europe and internally, and most of those refugees are women who face significantly increased risks to their safety and protection as they act to save their families.

As women continue to bear different and additional burdens of conflict, recognition of the gendered effects of the war in Ukraine are essential for States, international agencies and civil society to develop holistic responses that address the different experiences of conflict. Women's needs, interests and perspectives must be taken into consideration at every step of the process; and women must be represented in all decision-making platforms on de-escalation, prevention, mitigation and other processes in pursuit of peace and security for all the people of Ukraine.

But at the same time, from frontline soldiers to unofficial ambassadors, Ukrainian women are playing a key role to protect their own country and to shape its future. One important aspect of Ukraine's fight back against Russian aggression has been the prominence of the country's women.

Both women and men are participating actively in the response to the conflict, serving in the armed forces or diplomacy, and working on the frontline to provide services as well as humanitarian aid. Beyond women's more prominent involvement in assistance and humanitarian work, an increased number of women are also serving in the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

Ukrainian women are especially mobilising beyond the battlefield to defend and support their country as journalists, paramedics, teachers, politicians, activists and artists, both on the ground and in diaspora. Women are also leading communities: in towns and villages, many men are on the frontlines, so women must keep hospitals, schools and even the villages themselves in operation, often without water, electricity or supplies. Some of them are also promoting mediation and dialogue initiatives, often in the shadows, but essential to keep these processes alive and begin the work of reconciliation and trust building among people.

Despite being underrepresented in both national and local government, Ukrainian women have emerged as prominent advocates of their country in the international arena. This is partly a result of martial law, which prevents most military-age Ukrainian men from leaving the country. Ukrainian women face no such restrictions and have risen to the challenge of representing Ukraine around the world as unofficial ambassadors. Prominent civil society activists are also part of this new class of wartime ambassadors. Ukrainian First Lady Olena Zelenska, prominent representatives of the current government such as the vice premier Olha Stefanishyna or human rights lawyer Oleksandra Matviichuk, Nobel Laureate, reflect the enhanced international role being played by Ukrainian women.

Ukrainian women have emerged as prominent advocates of their country in the international arena

Against this backdrop, the project promoted by WIIS Italy wants to highlight the contributions made by the women of Ukraine, recognising they are an incredible asset for the country and can play a positive and transformative role; while at the same time recalling the need to fully and meaningfully included them at all stages of the upcoming processes, so they can contribute to build a stable solution. First of all it is important to hear what those engaged women have to say: their stories, their insights, their practical and concrete recommendations based on their own personal experience. This is what we have done in the past few years: meeting incredible women, talking with them and organising focused group discussions,

providing a safe space to share experiences and reflections and feel the support of sisterhood, but also acting as a bridge to amplify those messages and channel them in different fora.

It is never too early to include a gender perspective and women's voices as discussions on recovery and reconstruction are already happening

Finally, as women's catalytic role for change must be leveraged, we should not forget about reconstruction: it is never too early to include a gender perspective and women's voices as discussions on recovery and reconstruction are already happening within and beyond international

conferences gathering key stakeholders and actors. And as Italy is getting ready to host the next Recovery conference in 2025, gender analysis must be mainstreamed in the responses and plans elaborated by world leaders and inform the reconstruction efforts.

With the upcoming 25th Anniversary of the WPS Agenda around the corner, the entire international community is called to reflect on how the Agenda applies and should be implemented in contexts like the Ukrainian one. Mainstreaming the agenda and fully integrating it in discussions and in political dossiers has become an absolute priority: it is no longer possible to consider the Agenda as something different from the discussions on the future of Ukraine, or other countries in conflict, taking place within the UN, EU or G7 leader summits.

To contribute to the reflections ahead, we have gathered some of the inputs that emerged during our focused group discussions with Ukrainian women engaged at different levels for the security and peace of their country, and especially from civil society still within the country, and have enriched these inputs with dedicated research. In this way, the messages we received from these women are amplified and we can channel them in different fora.

Ukrainian women are making an immense contribution to the resilience of their country. Their voices should be heard and reflected in the decision-making process, and their participation in the different processes and discussions should be supported by all actors of the international community. If Ukraine is to emerge from the war as a strong, safe, resilient and peaceful democracy, we must all recognise this emerging role for women: for the benefit of the whole society, and as a collective responsibility for all of us.

Loredana Teodorescu

President of Women In International Security (WIIS) Italy

I INTRODUCTION

Russia's aggression against Ukraine has inflicted significant humanitarian, social, and economic challenges, profoundly impacting the lives of all individuals, with specific effects on women and marginalized groups across the country. Recognizing the importance of understanding women's experiences and perspectives in armed conflict, this report aims to shed light on the resilience and advocacy efforts of Ukrainian women amidst the ongoing war and underline their critical role in all processes of conflict management, and peacebuilding, including post-war recovery.

This report, *Women's Resilience and Advocacy in Ukraine*, is part of the project *The Role of Women in Facing Global Security Challenges: a Focus on Ukraine*. This initiative, implemented by Women in International Security Italy (WIIS Italy) with the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, aims to highlight the critical role of women in conflict settings and to advance gender equality in peace and security efforts. The project organized focus group discussions (FGDs) with diverse stakeholders to gather women's perspectives on the conflict and their involvement in peace and security efforts, as well as on their anticipated role in the postwar recovery.

This report aims to shed light on the resilience and advocacy efforts of Ukrainian women amidst the ongoing war and underline their critical role in all processes of conflict management

More specifically, the project aims to underscore and showcase the significance of women's involvement in mediation, negotiation, and peacebuilding processes in Ukraine and their active engagement in conflict resolution and advocacy efforts. It aims to amplify the voices of Ukrainian women and advocate for their full and meaningful inclusion in peace processes. It emphasizes the need for policies and initiatives that support women's efforts, ensuring their voices and perspectives are heard and valued in shaping the future of their country.

The report also aims to inform policy discussions within institutions at national, regional, and international levels, including in multilateral fora such as the G7, leveraging Italy's 2024 G7 Presidency to stimulate reflection on gender equality and women's empowerment in conflict-affected areas.

The project builds on WIIS Italy's experience in promoting women's leadership and gender equality in peace and security, particularly through the implementation of relevant initiatives such as the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network and the Task Force for Afghan Women Leaders.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY



DESK
RESEARCH

KEY
INFORMANT
INTERVIEWS

FOCUS
GROUP
DISCUSSIONS

The research methodology for this report involved mainly desk research, key informant interviews and Focus Group Discussions. The FGDs took place in late February and March 2024 and brought together around thirty diverse representatives, mainly from civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, and international institutions. A list of organizations that participated in the discussions is included as Annex 1. The composition of the focus groups was carefully chosen to include a broad spectrum of perspectives and expertise, ensuring a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the lives of women in Ukraine.

Each FGD was designed to foster an open and collaborative discussion, encouraging participants to share experiences and opinions, while granting anonymity. The report captures valuable insights and recommendations from participants, which we hope will contribute to informed policy decisions and actions at local, national, and international levels.

Beyond the FGDs, the research draws on additional resources recommended by the FGD participants. These resources included reports, academic papers, and policy documents relevant to the discussion topics. Integration of perspectives from these additional materials ensured a comprehensive understanding of the issues and enriched the overall analysis.



II REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN UKRAINE: IS IT ENOUGH?

What progress have Ukrainian women achieved, and what challenges do they face, in their representation in politics, diplomacy, and the defense sector and in peace negotiations?¹ In this section we especially consider the role of influential women in national reforms and in efforts to advance gender equality through inclusive policies and advocacy.

Women's representation in Ukrainian politics, diplomacy, security, and defense has grown steadily since the country's independence in 1991. Following the last elections held in Ukraine in 2019, women comprised just over 21 percent of the members of the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament).² A similar proportion of women (about 20 percent) participate in Ukraine's armed forces,³ with around 6,000 of them in service at the front line.⁴ Women's representation in government positions is similar; four out of nineteen members of the Cabinet of Ministers are women. Women dominate government portfolios traditionally associated with female issues, such as gender equality, family and children's affairs, social inclusion, and social protection.⁵ Although over 75 percent of civil servants in Ukraine are women, they occupy merely 33 percent of the highest-ranking civil service positions, as UN Women in Ukraine reports.⁶

1 Early negotiations took place in March and April 2022.

2 Inter-Parliamentary Union (accessed 2024, March 15). Ukraine. <https://www.ipu.org/parliament/UA>

3 Euronews (2024, March 8). Women soldiers have to fight to get to the frontline in Ukraine. <https://www.euronews.com/2024/03/08/women-soldiers-have-to-fight-to-get-to-the-frontline-in-ukraine>

4 Arm Women Now (accessed 2024, March 15). <https://armwomennow.com/en/>

5 Apolitical (2023, June 21). What I learned organising the leadership programme for women public servants in Ukraine. <https://apolitical.co/solution-articles/en/what-i-learned-organising-the-leadership-programme-for-women-public-servants-in-ukraine>

6 UN Women (2023, March). Women in politics 2023. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023>

The 'Ukrainian Mother' is a monumental Soviet-era statue in Kiev, Ukraine

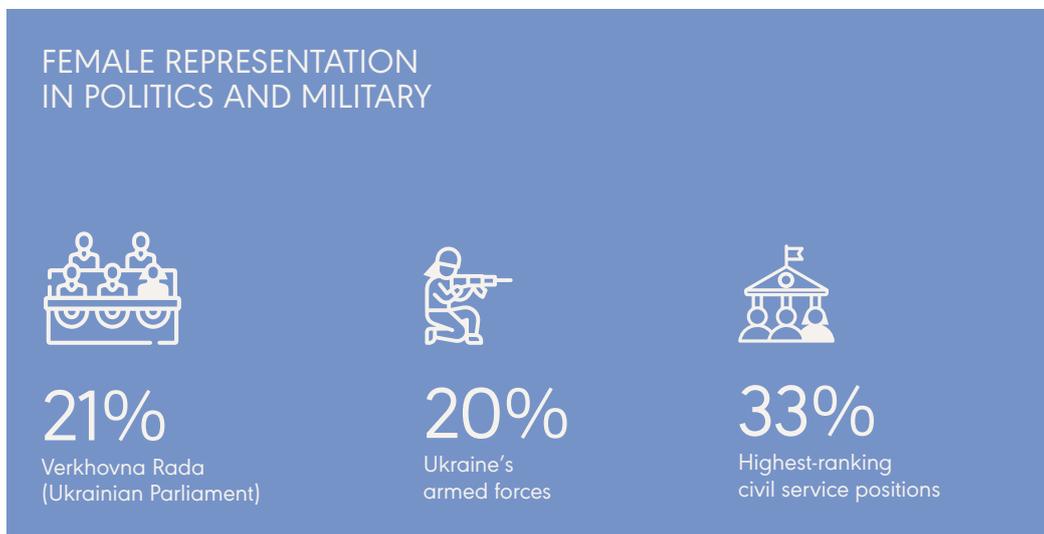
Photo credits: Adam Grant

Women’s representation in formal peace negotiations and mediation processes is still low. FGD participants stressed the need for an active mechanism to increase women’s inclusion in national leadership and decision-making as well as in the post-conflict rebuilding process, involving more women in the defense and security sectors. Participants recognized women’s unique perspectives, particularly in conflict and post-conflict situations, and highlighted their potential to mitigate and prevent conflicts.

Despite these challenges, some women exert great influence in the political sphere, garnering respect and recognition on the global stage. These women include Ivanna Orestivna Klymush-Tsintsadze, former Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration; Emina Japarova, former first deputy Minister of Information Policy, ministerial advisor on Information Policy regarding Crimea; and Olha Stefanishyna, Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration.⁷ Such women have played pivotal roles in advancing political agendas and reforms in Ukraine both before and during the full-scale war Russia has waged against the country.

Among the main challenges that women face are logistical ones, such as travel restrictions impacting their ability to advocate in international forums

FGD participants also underscored that the mere presence of women in political roles falls short without efforts to tackle gender inequality and advocate more equal and just policies, benefiting women.



In the field of civil society, Ukrainian women hold prominent and leadership roles – a trend that has been evident since the Revolution of Dignity of February 2014.⁸ While today Ukrainian women play a significant role in shaping international discourse, challenges persist in translating civil society voices into actionable government policies.

⁷ These women were particularly mentioned during FGD discussions.

⁸ Nikolayenko, O., & DeCasper, M. (2018). Why Women Protest: Insights from Ukraine’s EuroMaidan. *Slavic Review*, 77(3), 726–751. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26565656>

Among the main challenges that particularly women who serve in local government and women who were elected to the local councils as deputies in Ukraine, face are logistical ones, such as travel restrictions that hinder their participation in international forums, impacting their ability to advocate for important causes globally.⁹ For example, restrictions prevent women members of local municipal bodies from participating at international events. These constraints limit their ability to engage in global dialogue, represent their constituents effectively, establish partnerships for humanitarian aid and rebuilding of their communities, as well as address pressing issues internationally. FGD participants emphasized the need to remove these barriers to ensure equal opportunities for women in local government and international engagement.

Overall, insights from the FGDs shed light on the many challenges and opportunities women face regarding their empowerment, their representation in decision-making and positions of power, and gender equality generally in Ukraine. These issues span the political, societal, security, and humanitarian domains.

⁹ FGD participants mentioned that women serving in local government and women who were elected to the local councils as deputies can travel only with the official approval of their local government employer, such as for work and personal related matters, but the process for obtaining such approval can be challenging, especially for the deputies of the local councils which are not the employees of the local councils as they perform their duties on a voluntarily basic.



III WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE MILITARY AND SECURITY SECTORS

What challenges do Ukrainian women face in the armed forces and security services, and what current initiatives address these issues? This section presents initiatives such as Arm Women Now, which advocates female-specific combat gear to address equipment disparities, the Armed Women Hub in Kyiv, which provides support to frontline women, and the Invisible Battalion project, which focuses on combating sexual harassment.

In Ukraine, the armed forces and defense and security sectors have historically lacked gender-sensitive policies. For instance, military equipment was not tailored to women's bodies and needs, and female soldiers were forced to wear ill-fitting male's uniforms and heavy body armor, compromising their safety and comfort. Some women-led organizations have been at the forefront of solving this problem.

In 2018 the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Brave Ukraine launched the Arm Women Now initiative to advocate gender-sensitive reforms in the armed forces. Thanks to their efforts, Ukraine's Ministry of Defense today officially uses and endorses female-specific combat gear, including uniforms and undergarments.¹ This achievement has marked a step forward in recognizing the needs of women serving in the military. Furthermore, the "Arm Women Now" initiative has been promoted by the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security. The Alliance provided financial support to purchase equipment for women in Ukraine's armed forces, including more than 10,000 bulletproof vests, uniforms, boots. In addition, NATO hosted an exhibition showcasing the work of Arm Women Now, and the importance of military adaptation to gender specifics.

In addition to addressing equipment disparities, initiatives have focused on providing psychological support and humanitarian aid to women at the front line.

Military parade in honor of the Independence Day of Ukraine

Photo credits: Wikimedia spoilt.exile

1 Ministry of Defence of Ukraine (2024. May 24). "State rear operator" of the Ministry of Defense concluded 100% of the contracts for the purchase of women's military uniforms. (trans.) <https://www.mil.gov.ua/news/2024/05/24/derzhavnij-operator-tilu-minoboroni-uklav-100-dogovoriv-na/>

The Armed Women Hub in Kyiv was established to serve as a safe space for women defenders and military veterans, offering mental health assistance and distributing essential supplies, including winter clothing and other gear. Through partnerships with government agencies and the signing of memorandums of understanding, the organization aims to expand its impact beyond the armed forces to include other defense and security organizations, such as the National Guard and State Border Guard units.

Equally notable is the Invisible Battalion project, conducted by the NGO Institute of Gender Programs, which focuses on female soldiers in Ukraine.² The project has made strides in addressing sexual harassment in the military and in developing response-and-prevention strategies by conducting sociological surveys among military personnel, analyzing current legislation, and providing recommendations for legislative change.

Another valuable initiative is the online course on Gender Equality and Counteraction to Sexual Harassment in the Military Sphere.³ Launched on Prometheus, Ukraine's largest online educational platform, the course has had over 25,000 participants.

These efforts are part of a broader campaign to instill global personal security and sexual harassment prevention standards in the Ukrainian military, aligning with NATO practices and the United Nations Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda.

NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for WPS has been supporting the Arm Women Now Initiative, providing equipment for women in Ukraine's armed forces

The Invisible Battalion project has also developed a mechanism to combat sexual harassment within the military: the Instruction on Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.⁴ This mechanism is developed in collaboration with a number of CSOs and has the endorsement of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. As of August 2024, it has collected the necessary 25,000 signatures, and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine is now conducting a round of public discussion of how this mechanism should eventually look like.

The Invisible Battalion project is closely monitoring and campaigning for its implementation within the military ranks to ensure a safer and more inclusive environment for all military personnel.

² Invisible Battalion, conducted by the Institute of Gender Programs NGO (accessed 2024, March 15). <https://invisiblebattalion.org/en/home-2/>

³ The course was developed by the NGO Institute of Gender Programs as part of the Invisible Battalion 3.0 information campaign on sexual harassment in the military sphere in Ukraine, with support from the Democracy Promotion Fund of the US Embassy in Ukraine.

⁴ See Ukraine Presidency – Electronic Petitions (accessed 2024, March 8). The request to implement the already developed mechanism for combating sexual harassment and violence in the Armed Forces and to end impunity for those who commit violence in the army. (trans.) <https://petition.president.gov.ua/petition/220188>

In 2020, the Invisible Battalion conducted wide research that uncovered a range of stories, from minor incidents to severe cases of harassment and rape in the Ukrainian military. The research highlighted a lack of effective mechanisms to prevent and address sexual harassment, with survivors having no anonymous channels to report incidents.

Despite some attention to these issues, such as discussions in the media and declarations from government officials, concrete actions have been lacking. There is a national petition on the President's website advocating implementation of the Instruction on Prevention of Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination in the Armed Forces mechanism, urging both Ukrainian citizens and international supporters to contribute to the cause.⁵



IV WOMEN'S ROLE IN MEDIATION AND NEGOTIATION

Women have a potentially pivotal role in mediation and negotiation processes in Ukraine's context of conflict. While the current phase of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine is far from the negotiation or mediation stages,¹ early negotiations took place during March and April 2022. These were male dominated and included only male representatives from both sides. Since then, however, there has been a growing movement to involve more women at all stages of conflict resolution, including in postwar scenarios.

In Ukraine, according to our FGDs, women predominate as leaders in the field of mediation and dialogue facilitation. This strong female representation extends to leadership positions in mediation organizations. Mediation plays an important role in the current context, where the need for conflict management strategies in occupied and post-occupation territories is prevalent. Several current initiatives focus on promoting social cohesion and community rebuilding in the liberated territories. The FGDs mentioned initiatives such as workshops centering on conflict resolution strategies tailored to the needs of communities affected by conflict.

Beyond immediate conflict resolution, FGD participants emphasized the long-term goals of promoting dialogue and mediation within state institutions. This involves acknowledging the predominantly female gender composition of those involved in these efforts and recognizing the importance of gender diversity in conflict resolution. Ukrainian dialogue facilitators and mediators have played a crucial role in developing initiatives such as the public statement *7 Points on the War and Dialogue*.² This document outlines strategies for potential dialogue between Ukraine and Russia amidst the ongoing conflict. It emphasizes the need for conflict-sensitive approaches and highlights the complexities of initiating dialogue during active hostilities.

Ukrainian officials and ministers near the Building of Cabinet of Ministers during celebration of Day of State Flag of Ukraine in Kiev.

Photo credits: OlyaSolodenko

1 At the time of finalising this report for publication in August 2024.

2 Ukrainian Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators (2022). *7 Points On the War and Dialogue* from Ukrainian Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators. https://md.ukma.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Public_Statement_War_and_Dialogue_Ukraine_ENG.pdf

The document underscores the importance of local ownership and authentic voices in the dialogue process to ensure peacebuilding efforts match the Ukrainian context.³

There are several further initiatives and international collaborations that aim to support Ukrainian women in strengthening their mediation skills and their participation in related processes. Such initiatives include those involving the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), as described below, the European Union (EU), and the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM) Ukraine, aimed at supporting Ukrainian women in strengthening their mediation skills and participation in related processes.

For example, there are two projects, both of which are led by OSCE. One of them involved the Secretary of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and focused on dialogue building and using dialogue approach for public consultations. While the other one, which is still ongoing, with the National Agency of Ukraine on Civil Service that focuses on conflict management skills including mediation practices directed at intra-organizational conflicts, aimed at increasing cohesion and efficiency of the personnel who need to continue working in the conditions of ongoing war.

The Mediterranean Women Mediators Network fosters exchanges that provide women with valuable opportunities to share practical strategies, best practices, and lessons learned in navigating post-conflict challenges

Overall, there are many programmes and projects that offer training programs that attract mainly women participants to study mediation and dialogue⁴. These programs cover various aspects of mediation, including negotiation skills, conflict analysis, and restorative justice. Through such initiatives, Ukrainian women not only acquire the skills to become mediators but also assume leadership roles that influence mediation and dialogue practices at local and national levels.

The OSCE implements the Women's Peace Leadership Programme to promote women's leadership in mediation and dialogue in Ukraine. The program provides Ukrainian women mediators with training and networking opportunities to enhance their capacity to lead and innovate as peacebuilders and conflict resolution practitioners.⁵

Facilitating exchanges of experience among and between Ukrainian women and women from countries that have endured similar conflicts – such as with the members of the Mediterranean Women Mediators Network - holds immense potential for enhancing women's participation and leadership across various domains.

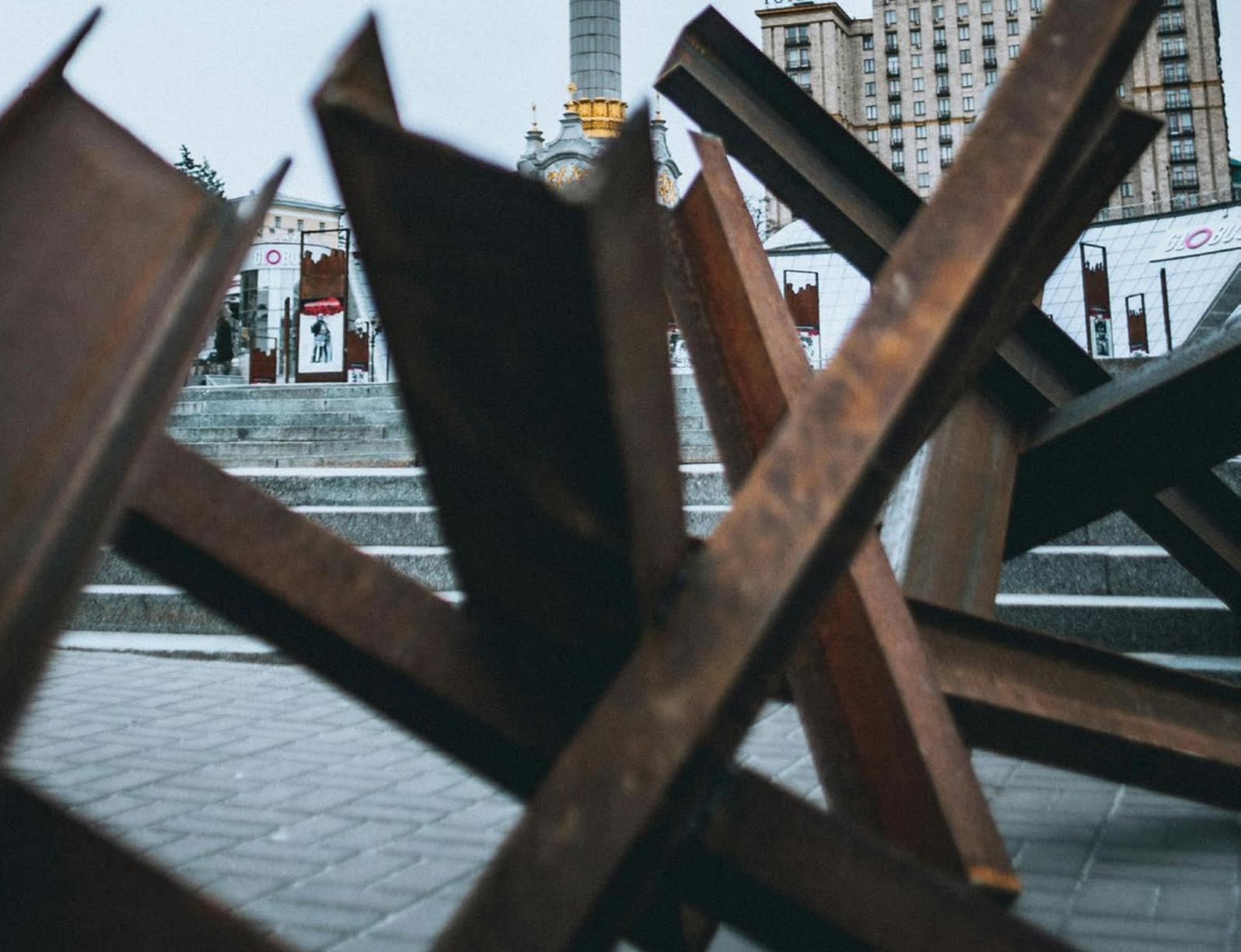
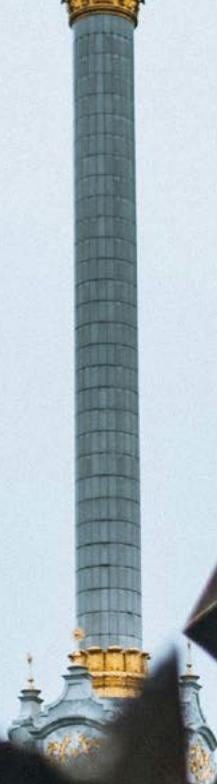
3 Kyselova, T. (2022, May 16). 7 Points on the War and Dialogue from Ukrainian Mediators and Dialogue Facilitators. Mediate.com. <https://mediate.com/7-points-on-the-war-and-dialogue-from-ukrainian-mediators-and-dialogue-facilitators/>

4 Kryshstal, A., Kotiuk, O. & Kyselova T. (2023). Civil Society Organisations in the Field of Mediation and Dialogue in Ukraine: Changes, Challenges and Trends after 24 February 2022. Danish Refugee Council. <https://pro.drc.ngo/media/zlpa2v51/organisations-in-the-field-of-mediation-and-dialogue-eng.pdf>

5 OSCE (2023, August 9). Women's Peace Leadership Programme: Irma Pidtepa, Ukraine. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/549532>; and OSCE (2023, 21 April). Women's Peace Leadership Programme: Hanna Manoilenko, Ukraine. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/541650>

These exchanges provide women with valuable opportunities to share practical strategies, best practices, and lessons learned in navigating post-conflict challenges such as displacement, economic recovery, and political engagement. They also foster solidarity, promote cross-cultural understanding, strengthen individual capacities, and help advance gender equality more generally in Ukraine and beyond.

By learning from others' experiences, Ukrainian women can adapt successful approaches to their own context and take on influential roles in rebuilding communities and advocating gender-sensitive policies. Women's robust involvement in mediation, active participation, and leadership ensure mediation processes are inclusive and reflect diverse perspectives, which are essential for sustainable peace and conflict resolution.



V ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the worsening of the humanitarian situation, gender-based violence (GBV) has increased in the country, especially conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). The people most affected are usually at-risk women – displaced women, rural women, older women, women with disabilities, Roma women – and children, older people, people with disabilities, and members of the LGBTQI+ community. Around 3.6 million people in Ukraine urgently need services that help prevent and respond to gender-based violence.¹

Although Ukrainian CSOs and international partners have actively provided support and services to survivors of GBV, FGD participants reported a gap in systemic interventions by state bodies.

During the discussions, a representative of the Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association JurFem described the organization's comprehensive approach to advancing women's rights and addressing GBV in Ukraine. JurFem operates across three main pillars:

- The "Analytical Center"² that undertakes research and advocacy to promote legislative reforms and collaborates with governmental bodies. It participates in expert groups such as those convened by the Office of the Prosecutor General to develop guidelines and protocols for law enforcement agencies in handling CRSV cases. And it undertakes legislative lobbying to close gaps in existing laws and enhance protections for survivors.

1 ReliefWeb (2024, January 2). Closing the gender gap in humanitarian action in Ukraine. [https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/closing-gender-gap-humanitarian-action-ukraine#:~:text=Around%203.6%20million%20people%20are,%2Dbased%20violence%20\(GBV\)](https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/closing-gender-gap-humanitarian-action-ukraine#:~:text=Around%203.6%20million%20people%20are,%2Dbased%20violence%20(GBV))

2 "Analytical Center JurFem", (accessed 2024, August 27). <https://jurfem.com.ua/en/analytical-center-jurfem/>

- The “Education Center”³ that focuses on capacity building for law enforcement personnel through specialized training programs to equip police officers, prosecutors, and other state actors with skills and knowledge to effectively investigate and prosecute GBV and CRSV cases. By improving the response of law enforcement agencies, JurFem aims to enhance access to justice for survivors.
- “JurFem: Support”⁴ that provides free legal aid for survivors of sexual violence and all forms of gender discrimination including CRSV, with an emphasis on strategic litigation to challenge systemic barriers and discriminatory practices. The association has initiated legal proceedings to hold perpetrators of GBV accountable and to secure justice for survivors, and it works closely with survivors to navigate legal processes and access essential support services, such as counseling and medical care.

Despite achieving positive results, during discussions the JurFem representative identified several challenges, including the persistence of stigma surrounding GBV survivors and barriers to reporting incidents. However, the association has observed a positive trend toward increased awareness and openness among survivors, facilitated by more public discussion of GBV following Russia’s full-scale invasion.

In July 2022, Ukraine ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).⁵ While acknowledging the progress made by the Ukrainian Parliament in drafting laws aligned with the Convention’s principles, JurFem’s representative emphasized the need for comprehensive legislative reforms and effective implementation measures at both the local and national levels to ensure full realization of the Convention.

Women disproportionately bear the impact of conflict-related sexual violence and demand accountability

In discussing CRSV, participants acknowledged that women disproportionately bear the impact of this form of violence and demanded accountability. Impunity persists despite international human rights law, international humanitarian law, and international criminal law providing frameworks for prevention and accountability.

CSOs face challenges in reporting cases of CRSV, primarily due to capacity constraints. There are, however, organizations on the ground that both provide support to survivors and work on collecting and recording cases of war crimes.

3 Center “JurFem: Education”, (accessed 2024, August 27). <https://jurfem.com.ua/en/center-yurfem-education/>

4 “JurFem: Support”, (accessed 2024, August 27). <https://jurfem.com.ua/en/jurfem-support/>

5 Council of Europe Office in Ukraine (2022, November 3). The Istanbul Convention entered into force on 1 November 2022. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/kyiv/-/the-istanbul-convention-entered-into-force-on-1-november-2022#:~:text=The%20Council%20of%20Europe%20Convention,ratification%20on%2018%20July%202022>

For instance, the CSO OPORA has taken proactive steps to document CRSV cases, providing crucial support where the Ukrainian state systems fall short. OPORA collects testimonies, provides legal aid, offers psychosocial support to survivors, and engages in advocacy and awareness raising on the need to address CRSV effectively. OPORA collaborates with Polish authorities to seek justice for survivors who have fled Ukraine and ensures their cases are documented and pursued outside Ukrainian jurisdiction.

Our FGDs also highlighted that six UN Security Council Resolutions specifically address CRSV. The existence of these resolutions underscores the global consensus on the need to combat this form of violence.



VI LOCALIZATION OF THE WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA

Ukraine adopted its first National Action Plan on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (NAP 1325) in 2016, and a second NAP in 2020, with a strong focus on advancing the role of women in decision-making.

By 2021, 22 regional administrations and Kyiv city had localized and adopted WPS action plans or incorporated NAP-related provisions into their wider socioeconomic programs. Further, 17 communities in Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia regions had adopted local action plans, with the support of the work of the charitable foundation «Unity» for the Future» in partnership with UN Women. And by 2021, several security sector institutions had developed and adopted sectoral action plans for the implementation of NAP 1325.

However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine made it necessary to revise and update the NAP to fit the country's new reality. In March 2023, during the 67th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67), Ukraine launched its updated NAP at a high-level event. The updated NAP recognizes that women must be actors and agents in the conflict and in the reconstruction of the country, and represented in all relevant decision-making processes, including those taking place in postwar Ukrainian society.

This adaptation of the NAP to evolving circumstances underscores the dynamic nature of localization processes and the importance of WPS NAPs remaining living documents. Amendments to Ukraine's plan reflect changing priorities, expanded target groups, and emerging challenges, thereby ensuring interventions remain relevant and responsive to the needs of affected populations. The Ministry of Social Policy in Ukraine established a task force comprising government officials, civil society representatives, and international observers to monitor implementation of the NAP. The task force has made regular assessments and progress reports to track the impact of interventions and identify gaps in service delivery.

Our discussions provided a space to analyze implementation of the WPS agenda in Ukraine and to identify successful experiences and examples. A critical aspect

The National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security recognizes that women must be actors and agents in the conflict and in the reconstruction of the country

Solemn procession with a 100-metre flag in Uzhgorod. Celebration of Ukraine's Independence Day

Photo Credits: Yanosh Nemesh

that emerged was the effective implementation of the NAP at various levels of government and governance. While national governments are required to adopt such plans, regional and local authorities are encouraged to follow suit, albeit not mandatorily as they implement these local action plans at the expense of their local budgets. The importance of local action plans lies in their ability to address the unique needs and challenges of specific communities, considering geographical, demographic, and social factors. Concrete actions at the local level are crucial to ensure successful implementation and localization of the WPS agenda.

For instance, the establishment of coordination councils comprising representatives from diverse sectors such as social services, law enforcement, healthcare, and education, and representatives of vulnerable and marginalized groups, especially those who are faced with multiply discrimination, facilitates collaborative efforts to address issues related to peace and security. These councils serve as platforms for identifying and addressing community-specific challenges, fostering cooperation between stakeholders, and implementing targeted interventions.

A concrete example can be found in Ukraine's Lviv region, where community leaders, women's groups, and government officials collaborated to develop a local action plan to address GBV and promote women's participation in peace-building. The plan includes initiatives such as setting up GBV response teams, providing training for healthcare professionals on recognizing and responding to GBV cases, and establishing safe spaces for survivors.

In the Donetsk region, local CSOs partnered with international organizations to establish community centers offering counseling, legal aid, and vocational training for GBV survivors. These centers also undertake outreach programs to raise awareness about available services and combat the stigma associated with seeking help.

Despite these successes, stronger efforts are required to address gaps in implementation, enhance coordination between different levels of governance, and secure adequate resources to sustain localization initiatives effectively. This necessitates continued collaboration between government agencies, CSOs, and international partners.

Support for local CSOs working on WPS is vital to sustain grassroots initiatives and promote lasting change. Local organizations play a key role in addressing the many challenges war-affected communities and internally displaced populations (IDPs) face. These include the limited access to essential services and resources and lack of financial support from both Ukrainian government and international sources. The amount of multipurpose cash assistance the international and national organizations provide to vulnerable populations is notably insufficient, with IDPs and war-affected individuals receiving only UAH 3,600¹ per month,

Stronger efforts are required to address gaps in implementation, enhance coordination between different levels of governance, and secure adequate resources to sustain localization initiatives effectively

1 The amount increased from 2,200 UAH in March 2024 to 3600 UAH in August 2024.

equivalent to approximately EUR 80, as mentioned during our discussions. This meager allowance falls far short of meeting basic needs and a decent standard of living for many affected individuals and families.

The Women Lead in Emergencies Program² is one of the key initiatives mentioned during discussions. The program supports the development of women-led initiatives in smaller communities across Ukraine to foster collective power and enhance women's participation in humanitarian response and governance. It also addresses the diverse experiences of women, men, boys, and girls during crises to provide comprehensive support that reflects the intersectionality of identities and its impact on individuals' access to resources and services.

The Women Lead in Emergencies Program recognizes the invaluable role local women's organizations play in providing humanitarian aid, especially in conflict-ridden regions. Despite the influx of international organizations, local initiatives spearheaded by women often struggle to secure funding and resources. Some FGD participants described initiatives near the front lines, where women work tirelessly to assist vulnerable populations but lack support because of limited funding and are overshadowed by larger international organizations.

Support available to vulnerable populations from international organizations is in many cases subject to stringent restrictions and limitations, with people often eligible to receive cash assistance only once every three months and only from a single organization at once. Although monitoring and verification processes are useful to prevent duplication of support and ensure wider distribution, they often limit the financial aid available to vulnerable individuals and families, due to decreasing international funding for this type of aid.

Some FGD participants described initiatives near the front lines, where women work tirelessly to assist vulnerable populations but lack support because of limited funding

International and national organizations also provide alternative forms of support, such as in-kind support in the form of food kits, hygiene kits, firewood & fuel and targeted cash assistance, for example, cash for winterization, agricultural and entrepreneurial grants. However, the limited availability of multi-purpose cash assistance constrains people's ability to address their most pressing needs, for example, to move from the regions near the frontline.

As our discussions also noted, this financial scarcity particularly affects women, who often bear the main responsibility of meeting the diverse needs of their families, including childcare, healthcare, and household expenses. Consequently, many war-affected people in Ukraine continue to experience financial insecurity and hardship, and there is an urgent need for increased support and resources to alleviate their plight. Full implementation of Ukraine's NAP would require solving these problems to ensure its applicability from grassroots to decision-making levels.

² More information on the programme is accessible at: <https://www.careinternational.org.uk/what-we-do/crisis-response/women-lead-in-emergencies/#:~:text=Women%20Lead%20in%20Emergencies%3A%20Breaking,participation%20in%20humanitarian%20decision%20making>



VII CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT AND YOUTH ACTIVISM

Young Ukrainians play an active role in civil society and humanitarian efforts. Many of them contribute to grassroots initiatives and promote dialogue for peace and community development despite limitations imposed by martial law, which restricts public demonstrations and organizational activities.

In response to the escalating humanitarian crisis following Russia's full-scale invasion, many Ukrainian CSOs have expanded their focus to include humanitarian assistance alongside their core missions. Organizations like Divchata and Positive Women, which initially focused on empowering women and informing them of their rights, have expanded their activities to include humanitarian aid distribution in response to the crisis.^{1,2}

Organizations like Divchata and Positive Women, which initially focused on empowering women and informing them of their rights, have expanded their activities to include humanitarian aid distribution in response to the crisis

Youth-driven initiatives are crucial in promoting dialogue, peacebuilding, and community engagement. Some are facilitated by international partners, such as the Ukrainian Danish Youth House, which has launched programs in such cities as Dnipro, Mykolaiv, and

Zaporizhzhia to educate young people on community mobilization and democratic initiatives. These programs aim to unite young Ukrainians in fostering dialogue aimed at conflict resolution.

Despite persistent gender bias and disregard for the views of younger people, young women are increasingly involved in activism and humanitarian work. Their participation in initiatives that support marginalized groups, such as women in liberated territories and those serving in the military, demonstrates a commitment to address systemic inequalities.

1 NGO "Girls" (accessed 2024, March 15). <https://divchata.org/en/>

2 NGO "Positive Women" (accessed 2024, March 15). <https://pw.org.ua/en/glavnaya-english/>

FGD participants learned of a project led by a young woman that provides hygiene and dignity items to women in the military who lack access to these essentials.

Collaborative efforts involving CSOs, government organizations, and businesses are instrumental in addressing the many challenges facing Ukrainian society. Forums and platforms that facilitate stakeholder dialogue and collaboration enable the voices of youth and marginalized groups to be heard, influencing policy decisions and shaping the direction of humanitarian efforts. The resilience and activism of Ukraine's civil society, particularly its youth, underscore the importance of grassroots initiatives in responding to crises and advocating social change.

VIII FEMINIST AND FEMALE ACTIVIST CIRCLES OUTSIDE UKRAINE

Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine over the past two years has had a profound impact on feminist and female activist circles beyond Ukraine's borders, with far-reaching implications. The crisis has sparked discussions and prompted reflection among feminists and female activists across Europe.

The Ukrainian women diaspora has actively contributed to feminist and solidarity movements across the globe. One notable initiative is the International Center for Ukrainian Victory, which was established in Poland by Ukrainian activists and members of the diaspora. This center plays a critical role in lobbying European governments for military and humanitarian aid, advocating for tougher sanctions on Russia, and organizing various campaigns to support Ukraine. Alongside this, the Ukrainian Women's Fund has mobilized resources for displaced women and supported gender-sensitive humanitarian responses in conflict zones. In the U.S., the Razom for Ukraine initiative, founded by Ukrainian expatriates, has led fundraising and advocacy campaigns aimed at providing medical aid and supporting Ukrainian civil society. Another prominent project is Mothers for Ukraine, a grassroots movement that organizes protests and lobbies for international support for Ukrainian women and children. These are only a few examples among many that demonstrate how the Ukrainian diaspora strengthens global feminist networks and advances the role of women in crisis response efforts.

Before 2022, awareness and solidarity among activists outside Ukraine regarding the conflict were limited, as were the solidarity efforts of female activists and feminist movements outside the country. However, the war has prompted a reassessment of transnational solidarity efforts, with initiatives emerging in many countries, albeit with mixed results. While some other movements, such as around the Western Feminist Manifesto, initially excluded representation from Ukraine and Central and Eastern Europe, Ukrainian feminists responded assertively to this oversight.

There has been a concerted effort in recent years to build transnational solidarity links, as evidenced by the Belarusian female activist movement that decided to support Ukraine women. In 2022, the first Belarusian woman joined the ethnic

Belarusian battalions in Ukraine.¹ Inspired by the example of Ukrainian women, who have played diverse roles in the conflict since 2014, Belarusian women have sought to contribute to their resistance effort. Despite initial challenges, including opposition from some Ukrainian battalions due to gender norms, Belarusian women have increasingly participated in various capacities, including medical roles and undergoing military training.

The spillover effect of Ukrainian resistance extends beyond direct participation in the conflict, influencing activism and mobilization efforts in other countries beyond Ukraine. Foreign activists on the ground in Ukraine, as well as those observing from afar, draw inspiration from Ukrainian experiences and strategies. They integrate lessons learned from Ukrainian initiatives, such as fundraising campaigns and social media advocacy, into their own activism efforts. This exchange of knowledge and experience underscores the interconnectedness of global feminist activism and the significance of cross-border solidarity in contemporary conflicts.

As Ukrainian women continue to play pivotal roles in the conflict, their experiences serve as a source of inspiration and learning for others worldwide

The implications of the armed conflict Russia have inflicted on Ukraine extend far beyond the country's borders, shaping feminist and activist movements across the region. The war has prompted a reevaluation of solidarity efforts and fostered greater collaboration among activists from diverse backgrounds. As Ukrainian women continue to play pivotal roles in the conflict, their experiences serve as a source of inspiration and learning for others worldwide.

1 Marples, D.R., & Lozka, K. (2022, December 5). Fighting for a future: The Belarusian regiment in Ukraine is staking its claim on democracy. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/fighting-for-a-future-the-belarusian-regiment-in-ukraine-is-staking-its-claim-on-democracy-195282>

IX GENDER-SENSITIVE AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE RECOVERY

Ukraine and the international community must adopt gender-sensitive approaches in Ukraine’s recovery efforts. While such approaches are widely discussed within feminist and activist circles, they often struggle to gain traction at official levels. The Ukrainian government defines the gender-sensitive approach as “taking into account specific social, cultural, economic, political, and other characteristics of the conditions of life and the needs of women and men”.¹

Many conferences and other events concerning Ukraine take place internationally. These events provide the opportunity to ensure the full integration of gender perspectives into processes and decisions regarding the country, including the Ukraine Recovery Conferences. Ukrainian NGOs have advocated more focus on women, youth, and marginalized groups in these conferences.²

Recent data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reveals a significant increase in official development assistance to Ukraine, rising from USD 1.3 billion in 2021 to USD 18.9 billion in 2022. However, 90 percent of this funding, equivalent to USD 17.1 billion, did not address gender equality objectives. Only USD 44 million was specifically allocated to initiatives promoting gender equality as the main goal.³

The FGDs provided insights and recommendations on how to ensure recovery processes adopt a pro-gender-equality approach.

One of the key requirements highlighted was the urgent need to reconstruct social and care infrastructure, including kindergartens, schools, and medical facilities.

1 Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy (2020). Instructions on the integration of gender approaches while developing legislative acts and regulations [in Ukrainian].

2 As mentioned by several FGD participants.

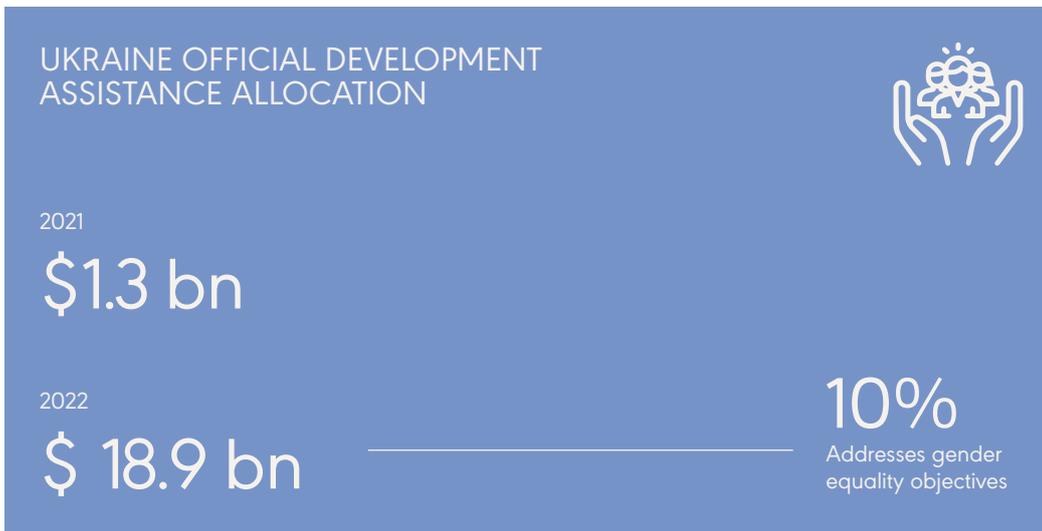
3 ReliefWeb (2024, June 13). New alliance promotes gender-responsive recovery efforts in Ukraine. <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/new-alliance-promotes-gender-responsive-recovery-efforts-ukraine>

This is not only a priority to alleviate the disproportionate burden women bear because of the crisis but also to integrate women into the labor market and prevent the feminization of poverty.

Examples mentioned illustrate the tangible impact of gender-sensitive recovery initiatives. These include the successful integration of support services in Drohobych, Western Ukraine, where a consolidated facility offers comprehensive medical and psychological care to military veterans and to GBV survivors. This integrated approach has proven effective in facilitating the reintegration of people affected by conflict-related trauma and serves as a model for broader implementation across the country.

By prioritizing gender-sensitive approaches, and by being inclusive and responsive to the specific needs and challenges women and marginalized groups face, the EU's Ukraine Facility has the potential to foster greater equity, resilience, and sustainable development across all sectors of society

Our discussions underscored the importance of addressing the complex needs of both veterans and survivors through state-supported programs. By consolidating essential services into centralized facilities, such as in Drohobych, Ukraine can ensure that people receive the holistic support necessary for rehabilitation and recovery. These initiatives not only enhance the well-being of affected populations but also contribute to the broader goal of fostering gender equality and social cohesion post-conflict. By integrating gender-sensitive approaches into policy frameworks and resource allocation strategies, Ukraine can address the many challenges conflict-related trauma pose and advance toward a more inclusive and resilient society.



In this regard, one FGD participant underscored the importance of prioritizing women's leadership and gender-sensitive programming in humanitarian response and recovery efforts alongside amplifying the voices of marginalized groups, advocating for systemic interventions, and supporting community-based initiatives. Other participants emphasized the need to leverage the support the EU provides through its financial assistance program for Ukraine. The EU's Ukraine Facility will allocate EUR 50 billion over the period 2024 to 2027 to finance the state budget,

stimulate investment, and provide technical support in program implementation. The Ukraine Facility initiative is a key opportunity to embed gender considerations into the country's broader reconstruction and rehabilitation framework. Participants proposed advocacy for the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions within the facility. This could involve direct engagement with EU representatives regarding the facility's planning and implementation phases and/or efforts to influence the Ukrainian government's recovery and reconstruction planning strategies to ensure the incorporation of gender perspectives at every level. By prioritizing gender-sensitive approaches, and by being inclusive and responsive to the specific needs and challenges women and marginalized groups face, the Ukraine Facility has the potential to foster greater equity, resilience, and sustainable development across all sectors of society.

At the last Ukraine Recovery Conference, held in Germany in 2024, UN Women in Ukraine, in collaboration with Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers, launched the Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery. This alliance unites 15 governments, international financial institutions, UN agencies, the EU, and numerous civil society and private sector partners. Alliance members have committed to support initiatives that promote gender equality, protect women, and empower marginalized groups such as displaced women, returnees, women with disabilities, military veterans, rural women, and LGBTQI+ people.

The Alliance's commitments include increasing funding for gender equality projects using the OECD Development Assistance Committee's gender policy marker, supporting women's and women's rights organizations' participation in decision-making processes, and delivering gender-responsive financial and technical assistance.

Italy will host the 2025 Ukraine Recovery Conference, providing an opportunity to fully integrate a gender perspective into reconstruction processes and decisions.

SUPPORTING UKRAINIAN WOMEN IN BUSINESS

FGD participants highlighted the importance of supporting women in business amidst the conflict. While the focus of public debates has often been on military efforts and defense, there is a pressing need to address the challenges Ukrainian women entrepreneurs face in terms of financial support, access to grants, investment, and capacity building.

Women's participation in economic activities will be strategic during the post-conflict reconstruction phase when businesses rebuild, and the economy recovers. Women often run micro- and small businesses with limited access to state or international donor financial support. While grants and funding opportunities exist, stringent criteria often limit accessibility, particularly for micro-business owners who play a crucial role in sustaining local economies.

It will also be important to address the unique needs of women entrepreneurs who had to relocate because of the war. This is likely to require support not only for their businesses but also for their families' well-being and their integration into their new communities or return to their former ones.

Efforts are underway to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusivity in economic sectors beyond traditional "women's areas" such as education and marketing. Collaboration with organizations such as UN Women and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) aim to broaden opportunities for women in nontraditional sectors, such as finance and STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). Collaboration with governments and international donors will be crucial to address gender disparities and advocate gender equality in recovery efforts.

Russian aggression against Ukraine has caused severe humanitarian, social, and economic challenges, significantly impacting women and marginalized groups across the country. This report has highlighted the resilience and advocacy efforts of Ukrainian women amidst the conflict, underscoring their critical role in conflict resolution and postwar recovery.

Key findings from our FGDs and desk research reveal that, despite progress in women's representation in Ukrainian politics and the country's armed forces, significant gaps remain in women's inclusion in decision-making processes and peace negotiations. Women's unique perspectives, especially in conflict and post-conflict situations, have proven vital in mitigating and preventing further conflicts, yet attitudinal and logistical barriers and gender-based violence continue to hinder their full participation and representation.

The discussions highlighted the critical role of local women's organizations in conflict-affected areas, emphasizing their indispensable contributions to humanitarian aid and governance. Despite their efforts, these organizations often struggle with inadequate funding and resources, overshadowed by larger international entities. Women's involvement in local governance, particularly in military administrations, also faces significant challenges, including insufficient recognition, support, and resources.

This report has highlighted the resilience and advocacy efforts of Ukrainian women amidst the conflict, underscoring their critical role in conflict resolution and postwar recovery

Effective implementation of the WPS agenda at the local level is important. Local action plans tailored to community-specific needs have proven successful, as seen in the Lviv region's initiatives against gender-based violence and the Donetsk region's support centers for survivors of sexual violence. Sustained funding and capacity-building for local civil society organizations are crucial for long-term impact.

Youth activism and civil society engagement play a pivotal role in humanitarian efforts, with initiatives like the Ukrainian Danish Youth House fostering community mobilization and democratic engagement. The conflict has also spurred transnational solidarity among feminist and activist circles, with Ukrainian women serving as a source of inspiration. Support for women in business and politics remains essential, with emphasis on financial assistance, entrepreneurial training, and gender-inclusive policies. Above all, the need for gender-sensitive recovery efforts are critical, as demonstrated by integrated support services in Drohobych, which address the complex needs of both military veterans and GBV survivors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the international community (including but not exclusive to the EU, NATO, G7) and Ukrainian government:

1. Enhance women's representation in decision-making and peace negotiations
Ensure the inclusion of women at all levels and in all areas, e.g. mediation, negotiation, and decision-making processes related to the conflict and post-war recovery. Support local efforts to engage women in leadership roles and leverage Ukraine's women's voices in international fora. Engage in advocacy initiatives on women's roles in negotiation and mediation and provide platforms for engagement. Support the participation of women who serve in local government and local councils at national and international levels, removing wherever possible logistical challenges such as travel restrictions. International partnerships and collaboration can support and amplify the voices of Ukrainian women on global platforms.
2. Strengthen gender-sensitive policies in the Armed Forces
Continue the development and implementation of gender-specific policies in the Armed Forces, such as the provision of combat gear and equipment for female soldiers. Provide comprehensive support services, including psychological support to women serving in the military. Support existing initiatives like Arm Women Now as well as the Invisible Battalion project in its efforts to address sexual harassment in the military.
3. Strengthen women's participation and leadership in mediation efforts and in conflict resolution
Promote strategies tailored to the needs of conflict-affected communities. Leverage and support initiatives to improve mediation practices within government institutions, enhancing women's participation and leadership. Facilitate exchanges of experience among Ukrainian women and women from other countries that have endured similar conflicts.
4. Combat gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence
Implement existing mechanisms to address and prevent sexual harassment and violence within the armed forces and broader society and advocate international accountability for conflict-related sexual violence. Support the full enforcement of the Istanbul Convention and the development of legal frameworks to support survivors.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Advocate, formulate, and implement policies that support women's inclusion in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction in Ukraine. Provide the necessary legal and institutional frameworks and resources to combat gender-based violence and to ensure the protection of women's rights.
- Support in localization of local Women, Peace, and Security Agenda through the adoption and implementation of the local action plans in Ukraine and the integration of gender-sensitive policies in recovery and reconstruction efforts. Provide and advocate increased funding and resources for local women's organizations and civil society organizations.
- Leverage platforms like the G7 and other global fora to highlight the importance of gender equality in peace and security efforts. Provide technical and financial support to initiatives aimed at enhancing women's participation in conflict resolution and postwar recovery.
- Amplify international funding and support for local efforts. Facilitate cross-border solidarity and collaboration among activist groups. Advocate the inclusion of gender-sensitive provisions in international recovery frameworks such as the Ukraine Facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

- Continue to advocate women's rights in Ukraine and beyond, provide essential support services, and raise awareness about the unique challenges women face in conflict zones. Collaborate with local and international partners to amplify advocacy efforts and share best practices.
- Prioritize capacity-building and long-term support for grassroots initiatives. Collaborate with local organizations to ensure that interventions are community specific and address the unique needs of women and marginalized groups.

ORGANIZATIONS REPRESENTED IN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

In addition to individual experts, representatives from the following organizations participated in the focus group discussions:

Arm Women Now
CARE International
Civil Network OPORA
Community of Democracies
DCAF (Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance)
Ghent University UNU-CRIS
Heinrich Boell Foundation, office Kyiv-Ukraine
NGO "Institute of Gender Programs"
Kremenchug Anti-Corruption Center
National University of "Kyiv-Mohyla Academy"
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies
Charitable foundation "Unity" for the Future"
NGO "Young Peacebuilders Ukraine"
OSCE Ukraine
Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association "JurFem"
Ukrainian Women's Guard
Women IN
Women's Information Consultative Center



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