



Complementary Information Note

Different impacts of the war in Ukraine on people and guidance for planning gender-responsive and inclusive interventions

The lives of people in Ukraine have been profoundly impacted by the humanitarian crisis caused by the ongoing conflict that started in 2014 and by the recent war in February 2022, causing thousands of civilian casualties, destroying infrastructure and triggering the fastest growing displacement crisis in Europe since World War II, with high impacts worldwide.

I. Gender Equality Context

In recent years, some modest progress was made towards gender equality and women's empowerment in Ukraine, which ranked 74th out of 156 countries according to the Gender Gap Index¹. Many women were still facing numerous barriers to equally participate in planning and decision-making and benefit from policies and interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified many inequalities between men and women, and exacerbated the complex situation, affecting particularly women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination, increasing the gender wage gap in the formal labour markets and the cases of domestic violence. The current crisis has further worsened the situation and compromised the gains made so far to achieve gender equality.

Demographics

Prior to the recent war, the population of Ukraine was composed of 54 percent women and 46 percent men, which translated into a large proportion of older women. The three main drivers of this gap are migration of young people, fertility rates below the replacement rate, and the high gap between women and men's life expectancy, reaching up to 11 years in favor of women². With about 20 percent of the population aged 65 and older, Ukraine has the largest percentage of older persons affected by conflict in a single country,³ constituting about 30 percent of people in need in conflict-affected areas. Data from Donetska and Luhanska oblasts show that female-headed households represented 71 percent in government-controlled areas.⁴ The COVID-19 pandemic led to restrictions on movement, primarily in areas outside of government control, and decreased livelihood opportunities, pushing already fragile and weakened health systems to a breaking point.⁵ Before the war's outbreak, it was estimated that 2.9 million people in Ukraine were already projected to need humanitarian assistance, 54 percent of whom were women, with some 55 percent living in non-government-controlled areas.⁶

¹ World Economic Forum. 2021. Global Gender Gap Report. [Cited 28 November 2022] Available [here](#).

² Population Council. 2015. Demographic Trends in Ukraine: Past, present and future. Demographic Trends in Ukraine: Past, Present, and Future - Romaniuk - 2015 - Population and Development Review - Wiley Online Library. [Cited 28 November 2022] Available [here](#).

³ Regional Gender Task Force. October 2022. Making the Invisible Visible. An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine. [Cited 29 November 2022] Available [here](#).

⁴ UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

⁵ OCHA. 2022. Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022. [Cited 28 November 2022] Available [here](#).

⁶ Ibid.

Gender intersects with other social dimensions affecting the vulnerabilities of distinct groups, including the Roma population, persons living with disabilities, women in rural communities, in displacement and conflict zones, and LGBTQI+ communities. Ukraine has more than 130 ethnic groups and many minority language groups. The Roma population represents the largest ethnic minority population, with up to 400,000 living in Ukraine, facing significant discrimination.⁷ Other groups included Ukrainian nationals with diverse ethnic backgrounds and nationals from developing countries, including international students, labour migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and stateless populations who lack civil status documentation, raising significant barriers for this population to access assistance and protection services. Limited data are still available on the number of people with disabilities, which according to the State Statistics Service was calculated at 2.7 million, representing 6 percent of the population, with over 160,000 children with disabilities. Although these data are frequently mentioned, they should be treated with caution.⁸

In May 2022 UN Women and CARE International conducted a Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) to understand and draw attention to the gender dynamics within the humanitarian crisis of Ukraine and propose recommended actions to address the gendered dimensions of risk, vulnerability and capabilities. The RGA reports an increase of inequalities, with older women and single mothers representing the majority of Ukraine's poor. According to national statistics, it is expected that the war will increase the unemployment rate, further pushing women into unprotected informal sectors of the economy. Ukraine's 2020 National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 shows that only 43 percent of internally displaced women have found employment compared to 58 percent of men.

As stated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 66 percent of IDPs are women and girls, and 37 percent are men and boys.⁹ Migrating women face many challenges at the borders, and some minority groups are unable to leave. Many vulnerable groups are left behind and cannot access essential services and resources, such as safe and accessible shelters, with a high risk of abandonment and family separation for people with disabilities. Female-headed households – who were already more food insecure than male-headed households (23 versus 13 percent) – face higher risks.¹⁰

The RGA has also revealed that women represent two-thirds of those in need of state benefits and social support. Disruptions to education are affecting 5.7 million children and mothers increasingly need to take the responsibility for homeschooling their children. Roma Population women and girls are also facing many challenges to access education and receive humanitarian assistance, due to their lack of documentation. The disruption to health services, including access to sexual and reproductive health, is affecting at least 265,000 pregnant Ukrainian women. In addition, more than 60 per cent of children born in conflict-affected areas do not have a birth certificate.¹¹ Emerging protection concerns for women and

⁷ Council of Europe. 2021. Kyiv International Roma inclusion. [Cited 28 November 2022] Available [here](#).

⁸ State Statistics Service of Ukraine. 2021. Social protection of the population of Ukraine in 2020. Statistical data. Available [here](#).

⁹ IOM. 2022. Displacement tracking matrix 31 October – 11 November 2022. [Cited 30 November 2022] Available [here](#).

¹⁰ UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

¹¹ Regional Gender Task Force. October 2022. Making the Invisible Visible. An evidence-based analysis of gender in the regional response to the war in Ukraine. [Cited 29 November 2022] Available [here](#).

girls, who face increased safety risks, including physical and sexual violence, abductions and persecution, are also reported.¹²

The RGA also reveals that women are performing crucial and multiple roles in the immediate humanitarian response to support their communities and IDPs in receiving access to critical services and humanitarian aid. They carry out most of the work to deliver assistance, including food and medication, to hospitals and local communities, and caring for children and disabled relatives. Women's leadership roles in decision-making have significantly increased at the family level but only partially at the community level in formal decision-making. Leading positions are held exclusively by men, as a requirement of wartime.¹³

In addition to disrupting agricultural production and trade, reducing investments and deteriorating land and infrastructure, the extension of the conflict may also cause significant changes in the sex and age patterns of mortality and (out) migration, with major consequences for gender equality, family dynamics and social relations, and further exacerbate the current demographic imbalance.

Food insecurity

Food insecurity was already on the rise in Ukraine prior to the war outbreak due to the COVID-19 pandemic. FAO's Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) data show that the prevalence of moderate or severe food insecurity (SDG indicator 2.1.2) among women has increased from 17.3 percent in 2019 to 28.9 percent in 2021 and among men from 13.3 to 24 percent in the last two years. While the differences between women and men are not statistically significant, the trend over time is consistent and suggest that women have been more food insecure than men over the past eight years.¹⁴ Experiences from around the world have demonstrated that war is the major driver of food insecurity and malnutrition, both acute and chronic.¹⁵

FAO and WFP reported that food insecurity situation is currently worsening: the share of people with insufficient food consumption has increased from 17 percent in August to 27.4 percent as of November 2022.¹⁶ It is estimated that the people in need in 2023 will be 11.1 million in Ukraine, out of a total estimated population 35.6mln, including about 6 million women and 5.1 million men.¹⁷

By directly constraining agricultural production, limiting economic activity and raising prices, the conflict will further undercut the purchasing power of affected populations, with consequent increases in food insecurity and malnutrition.^{18,19} In some cities, as a result of isolation, people are facing severe shortages

¹² Ibid

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ The Food Insecurity Experience Scale survey module has been collected through the Gallup World Poll individual-level surveys since 2014. The calculations were made by FAO's Statistics Division purposefully for this brief. The difference between women and men is within the margins of error (7.6%), as 2021 data are preliminary and subject to revisions.

¹⁵ FAO. 2016 . Peace, Conflict, and Food Security: What Do We Know About The Linkages? [Cited 10 March 2022] Available [here](#).

¹⁶ WFP. 2022. HungerMap LIVE : Ukraine insight and key trends. [Cited 28 November 2022] Available [here](#).

¹⁷ Food Security Cluster. 2022. People in Need and Severity Scale, Ukraine 2023. [Cited 28 November 2022] Available [here](#).

¹⁸ FAO.2022. The importance of Ukraine and the Russian Federation for global agricultural markets and the risks associated with the current conflict. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

¹⁹ WFP.2022. WFP Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries. External Situation Report. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

of food, water and energy supplies.²⁰ Entrenched inequalities imply that women and girls often eat less and last, and their nutritional needs may be side-lined during conflicts. When food is scarce, families increasingly resort to negative coping mechanisms to survive. Moreover, with a 22 percent gender pay gap and 32 percent pension gap, women-headed households, which already represented 71 percent of the total households in the government-controlled areas prior to the current escalations, are more vulnerable to the conflict.^{21,22}

Work burden and access to services

In 2020, the proportion of employed women and men in Ukraine was respectively 51 percent and 62 percent²³. A 23 gender pay gap and 32 percent gender pension gap made women more vulnerable to the crisis. They represented 72 percent of social protection recipients and their access to such assistance was at risk after the start of the war.²⁴ The strain on social protection will be stronger in the coming year. The ratio of those who pay single social contributions and pensioners is already one to one, that is, critical. Taking into account the war, the outflow of Ukrainian refugees and the rise of unemployment, the real picture is even worse.²⁵ Gender roles are also quickly changing, and more people are becoming unemployed. Men are primarily joining the armed forces, while women need to take up new roles and multiple jobs to make up for the lost family income. Many women are left to take care for their families on their own, either due to family separation or because their husbands are unemployed, conscripted or deceased. Men's care work has also shifted, and they are now more involved in unpaid domestic work and emotional care work, supporting family members. Gendered division of volunteering roles are also observed, with men more engaged in defense and security activities, while women lead the assistance to vulnerable populations and support the military forces. An increasing number of young men are engaging in volunteer activities compared to before the war. Most IDPs are using their savings and seek jobs in the host communities, where the job markets were limited even before the war.

The main reasons for job losses are related to displacement, business closure, damage and destruction of infrastructure and logistics, mobility concerns to access the place of employment, shelling and other physical security threats. Available data show that IDPs are the most affected by job loss, with women and children representing most of the displaced people. IOM data shows that the proportion of women with a monthly income of less than 165 USD increased from 18 percent before the war to 65 percent after the start of this conflict, compared to a change from 6 to 57 percent for men. Displaced women inside Ukraine and in the neighbouring countries are increasingly interested in vocational training to expand their livelihood opportunities that fit the changing context.

²⁰ UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

²¹ Ibid.

²² UN Women. 2022. Women flee and show solidarity as a war ravages Ukraine. [Cited 14 March 2022] Available [here](#).

²³ Yana Tkachenika. June 2020. Gender Equality. Women who manage. [Cited 11 November 2022] Available [here](#).

²⁴ UN Women. March 2022. Women flee and show solidarity as a military offensive ravages Ukraine. [Cited 11 November 2022] Available [here](#).

²⁵ Razumkov Center. November 2022. Pension system: Can Ukrainian pensions be saved? [Cited 30 November 2022] Available [here](#).

Ukrainian women are primarily responsible for food security and nutrition within their household and are mostly involved in unpaid care and domestic work, resulting in their “double” or “triple burden”. Women spend an average of 24.6 hours per week on domestic chores, compared to 14.5 hours for men.²⁶ Unpaid work now includes care work, domestic work and volunteering. The recent increase in food insecurity and water and energy scarcity, is also increasing the risk of domestic violence for women and girls, due to heightened tensions in the household and communities. Women’s care burden has increased significantly with the lack of education facilities and open institutions, their engagement in volunteer and humanitarian efforts, and men’s enrolment in the military forces.

The crisis has also diminished rural people's access to economic opportunities, nutritious food and water, and increased the workloads of those remaining in the affected areas. The disruption of infrastructure and the lack of mobility have posed a significant risk to women and girls, who constitute more than 72 percent of social protection recipients,²⁷ reducing their access to healthcare, social services, and social assistance, such as cash and asset transfers.

Violence against women and girls

Some 3.7 million people are estimated to need GBV prevention and response services in Ukraine, representing about 10 percent of the population²⁸. Displaced women and children have to rely on informal and unvetted sources of shelter that poses a potential security risk, while many displaced men face challenges to find a shelter as priority is given to women and children. The lack of public toilets and WASH facilities, and the need for women in rural areas to travel long distances to access fuel and water or wait in long queues exposes them to higher protection risks.²⁹ In addition, sexual trafficking has been on the rise among refugees. As the war continues and millions of Ukrainians, especially women and children, transition to border nations, potential traffickers are using the same digital spaces where refugees are looking for assistance to spread misinformation or pose as well-meaning volunteers to house those fleeing the conflict.³⁰

For millions of women and girls, including those who have lived in the conflict in eastern Ukraine, gender-based violence (GBV) is a severe problem. An increasing number of women and girls are victims of sexual violence particularly in the occupied and the surrounded (blocked) territories, but also cases are reported against men and minors. Survivors of GBV, especially in rural areas, face many challenges to access protection against domestic violence and services. Due to military activities, survivors of domestic violence face increased risks as they are forced to continue to share the same space with perpetrators for extended periods of time in highly stressful situations. Parents are particularly concerned with child protection, especially for the physical safety and mental health of boys and girls, both in the short and in the longer terms.

²⁶ FAO. 2021. Ukraine National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods. Available [here](#).

²⁷ UN Women. 2022. Women flee and show solidarity as a war ravages Ukraine. [Cited 11 November 2022]. Available [here](#).

²⁸ OCHA. 2022. UKRAINE Cluster Status: Gender-based violence (GBV). [Cited 11 November 2022] Available [here](#).

²⁹ UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis in Ukraine. [Cited 10 March 2022] Available [here](#).

³⁰ The Hill. June 2022. How bad actors are using tech platforms to sexually exploit, traffic Ukrainian women. [Cited 30 November 2022] Available [here](#).

There is also a general perception by affected people that limited attention is still given to GBV, compared by issues related to survival, life and health, and many more efforts are required to raise awareness, set up protection measures and make available essential services.

IDPs and Refugees

In March 2022 OCHA reported that over 10 million people were forcibly displaced by the war and more than 3.7 million fled Ukraine to neighboring countries, out of which 90 percent are women and children,³¹ while most men aged 18–60 are required to stay behind under the martial law.³² According to data of the International Organization for Migration, women represent 60 percent of the adult internally displaced population compared to 40 percent of men. Since the start of the war, over 6.5 million people who were forced to leave their homes are still displaced inside Ukraine, and more than half of them were displaced in the last six months. Meanwhile, almost 6 million people have returned to their homes, including over a million from abroad. It is also estimated that more than 7.9 million Ukrainians have fled to European countries, including 4.7 million registered for temporary protection or similar national mechanisms.³³

Internal displacement and restriction on movements hinder people's access to food, water, essential services and assistance, especially in rural and remote areas. GBV is a pressing reality for IDP women and girls amidst displacement and increased military presence in a country with a high prevalence of violence. According to recent monitoring reports, the most vulnerable IDPs include children, women, girls, minority groups, persons with disabilities and the elderly. Persons with disabilities, including children, face increasing challenges to access shelter and are at elevated risk of abandonment and family separation. Elderly people face more difficulty evacuating and need help to get food and water.³⁴ On the other hand, adult men face risks related to abduction, conscription, and the right to seek asylum.³⁵

According to the RGA report, displaced men and women often lack information on locally available services in places of displacement, whether they are provided by humanitarian actors or local authorities and might be unaware of their rights in terms of humanitarian aid and participation in decision-making and programming.

II. Possible actions for a gender-sensitive and inclusive response

In response to the crisis, it is crucial that policy-makers, planners and the humanitarian and development assistance community identify and address the specific needs of men, women, girls and boys belonging to different socio-economic, ethnic and age groups, in order to design gender-responsive and inclusive interventions. It will also require considering the distinct roles of men and women as food producers, farm managers, processors, traders, wage workers, innovators and entrepreneurs. Special attention should

³¹ United Nations. 2022. One month of war leaves more than half of Ukraine's children displaced. [Cited 31 March 2022]. Available [here](#).

³² UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis in Ukraine. [Cited 10 March 2022] Available [here](#).

³³ IOM data. [Cited 30 March 2022]. Available [here](#).

³⁴ Help Age International. 2022. Older people on the edge of survival in eastern Ukraine. [Cited 11 March 2022] Available [here](#).

³⁵ Protection Cluster. 2022. GPC Protection Messages: Ukraine. [Cited 10 March 2022]. Available [here](#).

also be given to recognize the skills and high potential of women and youth as agents of reconstruction and resilience builders and create new opportunities to enhance their livelihoods, foster their agency, and equally engage them in decision-making, programming and in peace-building processes.

Responses to the crisis in Ukraine could include:

- 1. Collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age and disability-in order to produce the evidence base for gender and age-responsive planning and mitigation measures, and to monitor the gender-related impacts** of new policies, strategies and investments linked to agriculture and rural development, food and nutrition security. This will also imply to conduct gender-sensitive vulnerability and needs assessments to identify and address the specific constraints of women and men to access resources, agricultural inputs, services and local institutions.
- 2. Undertake protection risk analysis** among affected and most vulnerable women and men belonging to different socio-economic, ethnic and age groups, and adopt special protection measures to make sure that interventions do not inadvertently put women, girls or other groups at risk of GBV or discrimination. This will imply to design gender-responsive protection and mitigation strategies and livelihood rehabilitation programmes, establish complaint and feedback mechanisms, and raise awareness around FAO's Zero Tolerance towards Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Policy. Possible interventions could be to provide mobile and remote GBV services to reach the most isolated and rural communities, to ensure services are accessible to all groups and set up mechanisms to document and investigate cases of conflict-related sexual violence. It is also important to establish Accountability to Affected People (AAP) mechanisms, including GBV cases management and reporting channels and grievance mechanisms that are locally accepted and trusted.
- 3. Scale up gender- and shocks-responsive social protection measures** (including in-kind assistance, food packages and essential hygiene products) to support affected populations, in order to alleviate poverty and absorb the shocks, when markets are not functioning or prices of essential products increase, safeguard their productive assets and avoid harmful coping strategies, such as selling off assets and reducing food intake. This could involve expanding the coverage of existing social protection programmes or introducing new ones to reach the poor and vulnerable populations that currently cannot access them; and using available delivery mechanisms of national social protection systems to give humanitarian assistance to Ukrainian refugees and those from other countries who are in Ukraine. Social assistance programmes could also include the provision of temporary employment, cash transfers, small grants or agricultural inputs to support informal, part-time seasonal workers, women and youth to manage risks, taking into account their greater care responsibilities and limited mobility. Special efforts are also needed to support older people and people living with disabilities and ensure their access to appropriate assistance. Support the government to continue delivering social support payment schemes to people living in most vulnerable situations.
- 4. Tailor food security assistance to the specific needs of women and children**, including adequate and appropriate nutritional food for older people, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, children under the age of five, and people with disabilities. It will also require planning food delivery modalities in consultation with women and most vulnerable groups, taking into account issues of

safety, mobility concerns, remote and isolated communities, and equal access to delivery information.

5. **Set up financial and advisory services targeting the economic activities of women and youth** and support the creation of women self-help and youth groups to increase their resilience capacities. This could imply to establish relief funds and provide extension services to support women-run business in value chains that are still operational and new potential chains.
6. **Support the productive capacity of men and women farmers during and after the conflict** by ensuring equitable access to the productive resources, agricultural inputs and services required for the next production season. This will imply equipping farmers, including elderly and people with disabilities, with the knowledge and resources required to produce and consume nutritious foods during the next three months to prevent negative coping strategies; and provide short-cycle vegetable seeds, including potatoes, a key staple of the Ukrainian diet, to improve food security and nutrition and enhance income-generating opportunities. It will also imply to identify new opportunities for displaced women and women to access vocational training and new livelihood opportunities to help them overcome unemployment situations and seek new income-generating chances.
7. **Establish inclusive and active consultations with affected women, men, youth and local actors in the programmatic response**, information and data gathering, from needs assessments and targeting to monitoring and evaluation. This involves organizing consultations with women and youth and their formal and informal groups and organizations, including rural women and community leaders, to plan interventions that are needed, relevant, safe and culturally appropriate for all people. It will also imply to invest in the leadership and technical capacities of women, youth and most vulnerable groups in order to increase their engagement in planning and decision-making and create new economic and business opportunities for them. Special efforts should also be made to engage women and youth in negotiation tables at local and national levels, and to incorporate the gender perspectives in peace and security building efforts, protecting women and girls from any form of GBV during and after the conflict.

To increase the impacts of interventions towards reducing inequalities and discrimination, it is suggested to coordinate with other international and national organizations, humanitarian actors and interagency clusters working towards gender equality, and to partner with local women's organizations and committees working with different minority groups.