

*Complementary Information Note*

## **Gender-related impacts of the Ukraine Conflict**

### **Entry points for gender-responsive and inclusive interventions for Ukraine crisis**

Since 2014 the ongoing conflict has been affecting people's lives and driving humanitarian needs in eastern Ukraine, particularly in the Donbas region. The recent war in Ukraine is posing additional risks on civilians, particularly women and children, as is predicted to become the largest humanitarian emergency in Europe since World War II.

#### **I. Gender Equality Context**

In the last few years, Ukraine has made modest gains on reducing gender inequalities, ranking 74<sup>th</sup> out of 156 countries according to the Gender Gap Index.<sup>1</sup> However, these achievements were already under threat after eight years of conflict in the east of the country, and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The current crisis will add to this complex situation and compromise any gains that have been made to achieve gender equality and empower women.

#### **Demographics**

Ukraine has more than 130 ethnic groups and many minority language groups; and an unusual demographic profile with more women (54 percent) than men (46 percent). The gap was driven by three factors: migration of young people, fertility rates below the replacement rate and the high gap between women and men's life expectancy, which reaches up to 11 years in favor of women.<sup>2</sup> Older people constitute a highly vulnerable group in Ukraine and represent about 30 percent of the people in need in the conflict-affected areas, including Donetska and Luhanska, and most of them are women.<sup>3</sup>

Gender intersects with several other social dimensions affecting the vulnerabilities of distinct groups, including the Roma population, people living with disabilities, women in rural communities, in displacement and conflict zones, and LGBTQI+ communities. If the military operations continue for an extended time, in addition to the anticipated disruption of agricultural production and trade, the reduced investments and the deterioration of land and infrastructure, there may be significant changes in the sex and age patterns of mortality and (out) migration, with important consequences for gender equality, family dynamics and social relations. This would exacerbate the demographic imbalance already present.

#### **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

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<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum. 2021. Global Gender Gap Report. [Cited 11 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>2</sup> Population Council. 2015. Demographic Trends in Ukraine: Past, Present, and Future. [Cited 16 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>3</sup> UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine. [Cited 31 March 2022]

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.<sup>4</sup>

Experiences from around the world have demonstrated that the war is the major driver of food insecurity and malnutrition, both acute and chronic.<sup>5</sup> FAO and WFP reported that food insecurity situation is currently worsening. 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.<sup>6,7</sup> In some cities, as a result of isolation, people are facing severe shortages of food, water and energy supplies.<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9,10</sup>

#### **Work burden and access to services**

As many parts of the world, Ukrainian women are primarily responsible for food security and nutrition within their household. They take on a disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work, resulting in a “double” or “triple burden”. Married women in Ukraine spend an average of 24.6 hours per week on domestic chores, compared to 14.5 hours for married men.<sup>11</sup> Increasing food insecurity and water and energy scarcity, as a result of the crisis, may place women and girls at higher risk of domestic violence due to heightened tensions in the household and communities.

The crisis will also diminish rural people's access to economic opportunities, nutritious food and water, and increase the workloads of those remaining in the affected areas. The disruption of infrastructure and lack of mobility pose a significant risk to women and girls, who constitute more than 72 percent of social protection recipients,<sup>12</sup> reducing their access to healthcare, social services and social assistance such as cash and asset transfers. Furthermore, according to UNFPA, about 80,000 women will give birth in the

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<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> FAO. 2016 . Peace, Conflict, and Food Security: What Do We Know About The Linkages? [Cited 10 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>6</sup> 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](#).

<sup>7</sup> WFP.2022. WFP Ukraine and Neighbouring Countries. External Situation Report. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>8</sup> UN Women and CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine. [Cited 31 March 2022]

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> UN Women. 2022. Women flee and show solidarity as a war ravages Ukraine. [Cited 14 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>11</sup> FAO. 2021. Ukraine National gender profile of agriculture and rural livelihoods.

<sup>12</sup> UN Women. 2022. Women flee and show solidarity as a war ravages Ukraine.

next three months in Ukraine — many of whom are left without access to critical maternal health care as the conflict continues to disrupt essential services.<sup>13</sup>

### **Violence against women and girls**

Violence against women and girls is a widespread and persistent human rights violation during conflict. For millions of women and girls, including those who have lived in the shadow of conflict in eastern Ukraine, gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious problem. According to a 2019 UNFPA study, 75 percent of women in the country declared to have experienced some form of violence since age 15, and one in three suffered physical or sexual violence.<sup>14</sup> As history has repeatedly shown, conflicts increase the exposure of women and girls to war crimes, including arbitrary killings, rape and trafficking. Rural women and girls survivors of GBV in Ukraine face additional obstacles in accessing specialized assistance and protection.

### **IDPs and Refugees**

OCHA estimates that there are about 12 million people currently in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine.<sup>15</sup> As the affected populations seek refuge in neighbouring countries, the number of refugees and internally displaced populations (IDPs) around the world is increasing, putting a pressure particularly on Poland (which has received 2.3 million Ukrainian refugees) and poorer European states, including Romania (more than 600,000 refugees) and Moldova (more than 380,000).<sup>16</sup> UNHCR estimates that about 90 percent of the 3.7 million people fleeing Ukraine are women and children,<sup>17</sup> as men aged 18-60 are forced by the Martial Law to stay and fight for their country.<sup>18</sup>

Prior to the current war, there were almost 1.5 million people displaced within Ukraine from the previous conflict, of whom almost 60 percent were women and girls. It is estimated that additional 6.5 million people are currently internally displaced.<sup>19</sup> More than 20 percent of displaced households include at least one person living with disability.<sup>20</sup> 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 high prevalence of violence. According to recent monitoring reports, the most vulnerable IDPs include children, women, girls, minority groups, persons with disabilities and older people. Persons with disabilities, including children, face increasing challenges to access shelter and are at high risk of abandonment and family separation. The elderly people have more difficulty in evacuating and need help

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<sup>13</sup> UNFPA. 2022. Ukraine: Conflict compounds the vulnerabilities of women and girls as humanitarian needs spiral. [Cited 30 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>14</sup> UNFPA. 2020. Ukraine steadfast in tackling gender-based violence, despite pandemic-related increases. [Cited 16 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> OCHA. 2022. Ukraine Flash Appeal. [Cited 31 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>16</sup> UNHCR Data. [Cited 30 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>17</sup> United Nations. 2022. One month of war leaves more than half of Ukraine's children displaced. [Cited 31 March 2022]. Available [here](#).

<sup>18</sup> CARE. 2022. Rapid Gender Analysis in Ukraine. [Cited 10 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>19</sup> IOM data. [Cited 30 March 2022] Available [here](#).

<sup>20</sup> OCHA. 2022. Ukraine: Humanitarian Impact Situation Report. [Cited 30 March 2022] Available [here](#).

to get food and water.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, adult men face particular risks related to abduction, conscription and the right to seek asylum.<sup>22</sup>

## II. What needs to be done?

In response to the crisis, it is crucial that policy-makers, planners and the humanitarian and development aid community address the specific needs of affected men, women, girls and boys from different socio-economic, ethnic and age groups, and consider their key roles as food producers, farm managers, processors, traders, wage workers, innovators and entrepreneurs.

It is also essential 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 engage them in the decision-making process and in building back their societies.

Possible responses to the crisis in Ukraine include:

- 1. Collect and analyse sex, age and disability-disaggregated data 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 assessments to analyse the specific constraints of women and men to access resources, agricultural inputs, services and local institutions.
- 2. Undertake protection risk analysis** among the affected and most vulnerable women and men of 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 vulnerable 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.
- 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 refugees and asylum seekers. Social assistance programmes could also include the provision of temporary employment, cash transfers, small grants or agricultural inputs to support informal, part-time

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<sup>21</sup> Help Age International. 2022. Older people on the edge of survival in eastern Ukraine. [Cited 11 March 2022] Available [here](#)

<sup>22</sup> Protection Cluster. 2022. GPC Protection Messages: Ukraine. [Cited 10 March 2022]

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.

- 4. 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.
- 5. 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.
- 6. 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, accessible, safe and culturally appropriate for all people.
- 7. Coordinate with other international and national organizations, humanitarian actors and inter-agency clusters working towards gender equality, and partner with local women's organizations** and committees working with different minority groups. This will imply setting up Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) mechanisms that include GBV cases management and reporting channels and grievance mechanisms that are locally accepted and trusted.
- 8. Include women and girls in the peacebuilding and peace managing processes.** The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 adopted in October 2000 ([S/RES/1325](#)) on Women, Peace and Security reaffirms women's important role in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, humanitarian response and post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>23</sup> Special efforts will be made to engage women and youth in planning and negotiation tables 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.

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<sup>23</sup> United Nations. 2000. Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security. [Cited 11 March 2022]. Available [here](#)