



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY YOUNG WOMEN AFFECTED BY THE WAR IN UKRAINE

Kyiv, Ukraine, May 2022

Photo: Alex Lourie

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The civil society organization “Internews Ukraine”, supported by UN Women, developed the “Challenges Encountered by Young Women Affected by the War in Ukraine” assessment in the framework of the project “EU Support to the East of Ukraine: Recovery, Peacebuilding and Governance”, funded by the European Union as part of the United Nations Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme (UN RPP). The UN RPP is implemented by four United Nations agencies including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Programme is supported by 11 international partners: the European Union, the European Investment Bank and the Governments of Canada, Denmark, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

This publication would not have been possible without the participation of brave young women affected by the war in Ukraine in intragenerational dialogues, surveys, focus group discussions and interviews, sharing their insights, experiences, concerns and recommendations.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil society organization
GBV	Gender-based violence
IDP	Internally displaced person
NGO	Non-governmental organization
UAH	Ukrainian hryvnia
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council resolution
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acronyms and abbreviations	1
Executive summary	2
1. Background	3
1.1. Objectives of the assessment	4
1.2. Assessment methodology	4
1.3. Ethical and safety	4
1.4. Limitations of the assessment	5
1.5. Structure of the report	5
2. Leadership and participation	5
3. Protection and safety	6
4. Economic well-being and access to services	6
5. Communication and access to information	7
6. Conclusions	8
7. Recommendations	9

© 2022 UN Women. All rights reserved.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

Prepared by: UN Women

Design: NGO Internews Ukraine

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women and men experience war differently due to their gender. A growing body of evidence shows that the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine since February 2022 has been increasing the risk of violence against women and girls, including of conflict-related sexual violence.^{1,2} Forced relocation has a disproportionate socioeconomic impact on women, limiting employment opportunities, increasing unpaid work at home and, consequently, reducing income, lowering the quality of life and extending the dependency on cash and social benefits, among other challenges. At the same time, women are not a homogenous group; accordingly, the experiences, needs and aspirations of war-affected women representing different age groups should be recognized. For young women affected by war, age, gender and conflict intersect, rendering them particularly vulnerable.³ Yet women should not be perceived only as a vulnerable 'group' and/or victims (of violence, trafficking and other risks).⁴ Women play multiple roles in times of war, becoming heads of households, taking on even more care responsibilities, working as volunteers, learning new skills and contributing to peacebuilding and the recovery of local communities.⁵

In Ukraine, UN Women, jointly with government partners and civil society organizations (CSOs), supports women's equal representation and meaningful participation in peace and security efforts, translating the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda from a normative framework into policies and practice. With the aim to support inclusiveness, UN Women has been applying an intersectional approach, working towards increasing the opportunities for and participation of young women, especially those affected by the war, in the implementation of the WPS agenda at the national, regional and local levels, in line with UN Security Council resolution 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security.⁶

To better understand and assess the challenges faced by young women affected by the war in Ukraine and understand their perspectives, the CSO "Internews Ukraine" in cooperation with UN Women Ukraine conducted an assessment among 244 young women from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions in the framework of the United Nations Recovery and Peacebuilding Programme between 11 February and 27 April 2022. Two different data sources were used: information from intragenerational dialogues conducted between 11 and 13 February in Donetsk and Luhansk, and data generated by the qualitative survey conducted between 29 March and 27 April with war-affected young women from various regions of Ukraine.

Key findings:

- Young women are actively engaged in volunteering efforts, aiding people affected by the war, yet 97 per cent of surveyed respondents believe that young women are excluded from local decision-making processes that affect their lives. Gender-based stereotypes pertaining to the role of young women in the family and in society, the high burden of domestic work and the lack of support in favour of their participation in decision-making were raised as obstacles hampering the meaningful participation of young women in decision-making processes and preventing their potential from being unleashed.
- Young women do not feel safe because of the ongoing military hostilities and additional concerns related to the high risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Of the survey participants, 87 per cent of young women respondents believe that the Russian invasion in Ukraine has exacerbated violence against women and girls in Ukraine, and 45 per cent of young women indicated that they are afraid to pass by large groups of men in public spaces for fear of sexual assault or unwanted verbal sexual remarks. Reconfirming that sexual harassment in public spaces is a common form of violence affecting young women,

24 per cent of surveyed young women stated that since the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, they have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces in the form of unwanted verbal sexual remarks or jokes/stories of a sexual nature that were insulting or offensive.

- Young women's economic vulnerability has increased significantly since the escalation of the war in Ukraine, with 47 per cent of surveyed young women either completely or partially losing their monthly income. Furthermore, at the time when the survey was conducted, only 27 per cent of surveyed women eligible for social benefits had managed to receive their social benefits since the escalation of the military hostilities.
- The hampered access to Internet and mobile telephone connections negatively impacts the personal safety decision-making of young women affected by the war, as well as limits their engagement in local decision-making and volunteering activities and their access to humanitarian aid, social benefits, education and employment opportunities. Moreover, as exposed by the survey, the lack of support circles in host communities and the discrimination against young women IDPs based on their migratory status and language spoken can act as obstacles to their social inclusion and integration into the host communities.

General recommendations

- Engage young women affected by the war in peace, security and recovery efforts at all levels; raise awareness on their contributions to the recovery and resilience-building of the country; and promote their leadership and participation in decision-making.
- Raise awareness on various forms of gender-based violence (GBV) against women and girls, including on sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in private and public spaces, as well as on the access to and availability of specialized services (such as psychosocial, health-related and legal services).
- Prioritize GBV prevention and response during the war to minimize risks and ensure that law enforcement and other justice sector actors are responsive.
- Support economic empowerment programmes specifically targeting young internally displaced women and young women affected by the war to support their livelihoods and prevent GBV and social exclusion.
- Ensure the availability of alternative childcare services during the war, including for internally displaced children, and promote equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men (if the latter are present) to reduce the burden of unpaid work and time poverty that is depriving young women of accessing education and employment opportunities.
- Enhance young women's access to technology and the Internet to ensure their access to information, protection, education and employment.

1 UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HRMMU), Update on the human rights situation in Ukraine, 24 February – 26 March 2022. Available at <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/hrmmu-update-human-rights-situation-ukraine-24-february-26-march-2022>.

2 UN Women Ukraine, Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine, 4 May 2022 (UN Women and CARE International, 2022). Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/05/rapid-gender-analysis-of-ukraine>.

3 United Nations Security Council, Youth and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General (2020). S/2020/167. Available at <https://undocs.org/S/2020/167>.

4 GSDRC, "Gender in fragile and conflict environments", 2015. Available at <https://gsdrc.org/topic-guides/gender/gender-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-environments/>.

5 Ibid.

6 The resolution defines 'young people' as those between the ages of 18 and 29.

- Implement awareness-raising campaigns aimed at combating existing gender, age, language and ethnic stereotypes, strengthening social cohesion between the host communities and internally displaced persons (IDPs), preventing discrimination based on various grounds, and promoting gender equality, respectful relationships, tolerance and solidarity.

1. BACKGROUND

Women and men experience war differently due to their gender. Along with children and the elderly, women represent the majority of primary casualties of war.⁷ Women and children represent the majority among displaced people—more than 90 per cent among refugees and more than 60 per cent among IDPs are women (and children).⁸ Forced relocation has a negative impact on women, limiting employment opportunities, increasing unpaid work at home and, consequently, reducing income, lowering the quality of life and extending the dependency on social benefits.

Women and girls are at high risk of being targeted directly during war because of their gender⁹ and at significantly increased risk of physical and sexual violence and abuse.¹⁰ A growing body of evidence shows that the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has been increasing the risk of violence against women and girls, including of conflict-related sexual violence.^{11,12}

At the same time, women are not a homogenous group of people. Their unique experiences, needs and aspirations intersecting with age, disability, ethnicity and other characteristics should be recognized and taken into account. For young women affected by war, age, gender and conflict intersect, rendering them particularly vulnerable.¹³ Young women who leave their homes owing to conflict and violence usually lose everything—from their basic livelihoods to their access to education and health services.¹⁴ In many instances, they also lose the protection of their families and communities, which places them at an even greater risk.¹⁵ Young women are also more prone to gender-based violence in private and public spaces. Violence and harassment in public spaces reduce women and girls' freedom of movement and their ability to participate in school, work and public life. It limits both their access to essential services and their enjoyment of many opportunities, negatively impacting their health and well-being.¹⁶ A UN Women study carried out in 2020 in the conflict-affected east of Ukraine observed a clear correlation between the proximity to the contact line, active military actions and increased military presence and the high risk and occurrence of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against young women in public spaces.¹⁷ However, women should not be perceived only as vulnerable and/or victims of violence. In reality, women play multiple roles in times of war, becoming heads of households, taking on more responsibilities, acting as volunteers, learning new skills to contribute to protecting and restoring local communities, and contributing to recovery and peacebuilding. However, the absence of women, including young women, from decisions related to humanitarian action and the recovery, peacebuilding¹⁸ and conflict resolution efforts may consolidate the biased gender and age stereotypes, contributing further to their exclusion and marginalization in society.

The United Nations Security Council adopted the landmark resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) on 31 October 2000. The resolution reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security.¹⁹ Resolution 1325 (2000) urges all actors to increase the participation of women and take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict.²⁰ Applying a youth lens to the WPS agenda aims at

progressively and proactively addressing young women's age-specific needs and experiences.²¹ At the same time, UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security²² marks a shift in the understanding of who young people are and in recognizing the positive role that young people can play in preventing and resolving conflict, countering violent extremism and building peace.²³ Considering gender in Youth, Peace and Security interventions can help prevent a new generation from replicating the same patterns and patriarchal power structures that limit gender equality, instead tapping into the contribution of young women towards building more equal and stable societies.²⁴

UN Women in Ukraine, jointly with its government partners and civil society, supports women's full and equal representation and meaningful participation in peace and security efforts, translating the WPS agenda's normative frameworks into policy and practice. With the aim to support inclusiveness, UN Women has been applying an intersectional approach, working towards increasing the opportunities for and participation of young women, especially those affected by the war, in the implementation of the WPS agenda at the national, regional and local levels, in line with UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security.

UN Women uses a human-centric framework, recognizing the evolving concept of human security with a shifting focus from the security of States to the security of individuals, emphasizing the accountability of duty bearers for human rights violations and a multidimensional response to war and its aftermath.²⁵ A human-centric approach provides a comprehensive, realistic picture of security, one that recognizes that access to health, education, shelter, economic opportunity, transparent governance and justice are all essential to an individual's well-being and prosperity.²⁶ Gender-sensitive implementation of human security, particularly in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction efforts, can improve the lives of women and girls by ensuring access to resources and opportunities, securing agency and empowerment, and protecting human rights.²⁷

7 MOAS, "Gender and forced migration". Available at <https://www.moas.eu/gender-forced-migration/>.

8 UNHCR, Operational Data Portal, "Ukraine Refugee Situation". Available at <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>.

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 HRMMU, Update on the human rights situation in Ukraine.

12 UN Women Ukraine, Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine, 4 May 2022.

13 United Nations Security Council, Youth and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 UN Women Ukraine, Multi-site scoping study on sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces in Eastern Ukraine (Kyiv, 2020). Available at https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/10/multisite-scoping-study-on-sexual-harassment-against-women-in-public-spaces-in-ukraine_europe.

17 Ibid.

18 GSDRC, "Gender in fragile and conflict environments".

19 OSAGI, "Landmark resolution on Women, Peace and Security". Available at <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/>.

20 Ibid.

21 United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, Women Peace and Security (WPS) & Youth Peace and Security (YPS): Complementarities of the two agendas. Available at https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/WPS-YPS%20complementarities_%20Final.pdf.

22 United Nations Security Council, Resolution 2250 (2015) [on Youth, Peace and Security]. S/RES/2250 (2015). Available at [https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250\(2015\)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2250(2015)).

23 Youth4Peace, "About the Youth, Peace & Security Agenda". Available at https://www.youth4peace.info/About_YPS_Agenda.

24 Ibid.

25 Inclusive Security and the Agency for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Localization of Women, Peace, and Security Agenda: Case Study of Six Local Governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Available at <https://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Localization-of-Women-Peace-and-Security-Agenda.pdf>.

26 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Human Security Unit, Human Security in Theory and Practice (United Nations, 2009). Available at <https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/HU/Publications%20and%20Products/Human%20Security%20Tools/Human%20Security%20in%20Theory%20and%20Practice%20English.pdf>.

27 Inclusive Security and the Agency for Gender Equality, Localization of Women, Peace, and Security Agenda.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF THE ASSESSMENT

To better understand the challenges and experiences of young women affected by the war in Ukraine, an assessment has been conducted by the CSO “Internews Ukraine”, supported by UN Women within the framework of the United Nations Recovery and Peace-building Programme.

The objectives of the assessment were to:

1. Identify the challenges and perspectives of young women affected by the war in Ukraine.
2. Formulate recommendations for the Government, civil society, humanitarian actors and donors aimed at addressing the identified challenges of young women affected by the war in Ukraine.
3. Inform the ongoing and future programming of UN Women Ukraine pertaining to advancing the WPS agenda in conjunction with UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security

1.2. ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

In total, 244 war-affected young women²⁸ participated in the assessment between 11 February and 27 April 2022. Two different data sources were used for this assessment: (i) information derived from intragenerational dialogues; and (ii) data generated from the qualitative survey.

i. Intragenerational dialogues

To understand the age-differentiated challenges encountered by young women affected by the war in Ukraine, intragenerational dialogues with 109 young women from the war-affected regions of Donetsk and Luhansk were conducted between 11 and 13 February 2022. It is important to mention that the intragenerational dialogues took place before the large-scale invasion of Russia in Ukraine, while the online survey and the subsequent focus group discussions and interviews were conducted during the ongoing escalation of military hostilities. For this reason, only young women from pre-escalation war-affected Donetsk and Luhansk regions participated in the intragenerational dialogues. Two WPS experts facilitated the online intragenerational dialogues framed around the challenges encountered by young women from war-affected Donetsk and Luhansk pertaining to their meaningful participation in local decision-making processes and civic initiatives, protection and safety, and economic well-being and access to services.

ii. Qualitative survey

The qualitative survey was conducted between 29 March and 27 April 2022 and included an online survey coupled with focus group discussions and interviews outlined around the meaningful participation of young women affected by the war in local decision-making processes and civic initiatives and their protection, safety, economic well-being and access to services, communication and information.

a. Online survey

Given the security situation in the country after the escalation of military hostilities resulting from the Russian invasion of Ukraine after 24 February 2022, the survey was conducted online between 29 March and 7 April 2022. The online survey was based on self-selection through an open invitation to participate. The questionnaire was disseminated to young women through women’s organizations, with a total of 120 respondents participating in the online survey. Of the surveyed young women, 43.3 per cent were displaced within the country, while 12.5 per cent were temporarily relocated outside the country (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Distribution of surveyed young women, by age group and migration status

		Surveyed young women	
		Number	Share
Age group	18–20	38	31,7%
	21–25	39	32,5%
	26–29	43	35,8%
	Total	120	100%
Migration status	Internally displaced persons (relocated within Ukraine)	52	43,3%
	Refugees (relocated outside Ukraine)	15	12,5%
	Residing in their home communities	53	44,2%
	Total	120	100%

b. Focus group discussions

The focus group discussions took place between 21 and 24 April 2022. The objectives of the focus group discussions included gaining an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by young internally displaced women pertaining to their participation in decision-making processes, safety and protection, economic well-being, and access to services, communication and information. Ten young internally displaced women between the ages of 18 and 29 participated in the focus group discussions. Considering the security situation in the country and the resulting travel limitations, the focus group discussions were conducted online.

c. Interviews

Four in-depth telephone interviews were conducted between 24 and 27 April 2022 to gain additional insights on the challenges and experiences of young internally displaced women residing in IDP collection centres.

1.3. ETHICAL AND SAFETY ASPECTS

The data were collected in line with existing ethical standards. Correspondingly, the safety, privacy and confidentiality of the women respondents were ensured.

The collection, storage and analysis of the assessment’s empirical data are in line with ethical standards and ensure the protection of the respondents’ rights to voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. All respondents were informed about the goal and tasks of the assessment, the anonymity and confidentiality of the process, their right to voluntary participation and their right to cease their participation at any moment.

The questionnaires contain no personal data that would allow for the identification of the respondents. With the same purpose, all persons involved in the process of data collection and analysis signed a non-disclosure agreement under which they committed not to disclose or pass to third persons any information about the respondents that has become known in the course of this assessment.

The members of the assessment team were trained to understand the ethical and safety principles, and they provided information on specialized services to women respondents who were in need of support.

²⁸ UNSCR 2250 (2015) defines ‘young people’ as those between the ages of 18 and 29.

1.4. LIMITATIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT

The results of the assessment should be interpreted considering the following limitations of the qualitative survey:

- The sample size is not representative for different groups of young women.
- Only young women with access to the Internet and a telephone were targeted/interviewed.
- In-depth interviews were conducted only with young internally displaced women residing in IDP collection centers.
- There were different time frames for the data collection: pre-war for the intragenerational dialogues and during the war for the qualitative survey.

The assessment focused on the participation and protection pillars of UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security. As part of the protection pillar—and considering that, according to the evidence stemming from a UN Women 2020 study,²⁹ sexual harassment in public spaces is a particular issue impacting war-affected young women in Ukraine—experiences of sexual harassment were assessed through the online qualitative survey without collecting data on the respondents' experiences pertaining to other types of gender-based violence. Data on their economic well-being and their access to services and information were collected to assess the enabling factors contributing to the enhanced protection and participation of young women in decision-making processes.

1.5. STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The assessment report is structured in seven chapters, as well as an executive summary with the major findings of the assessment. The conclusions and recommendations of the assessment are presented at the end of the report.

2. LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

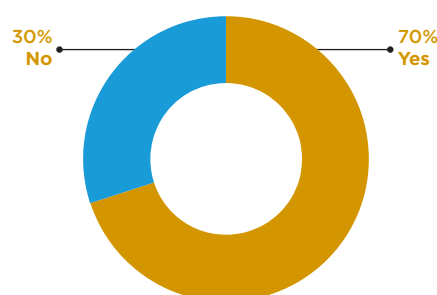
Increasing the full, equal representation and meaningful participation of women and youth at all levels of decision-making, including in conflict prevention, recovery and peacebuilding, is a key priority for UN Women's efforts in supporting the WPS agenda, in line with the priorities of the National Action Plan for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) in Ukraine.³⁰

According to the evidence generated by the online survey under this assessment, 97 per cent of respondents believe that young women are excluded from local decision-making processes that affect their lives. The intragenerational dialogues revealed that young women have limited advocacy, leadership and public speaking skills, as well as a narrow understanding of how decision-making processes are taking place and how they can be influenced. Young women stated that often, even when they get access to public decision-making processes, their perception is that their opinion is not heard or valued and that they are being led rather than leading. Additionally, participants in the focus group discussions indicated a series of obstacles hampering their active engagement in local initiatives, such as the high burden of domestic work imposed on women and the existing stereotypes that young women lack the experience and knowledge needed to participate in local decision-making processes or that women cannot work under high pressure and stress. Another issue flagged by young women is that they lack support and guidance. The intragenerational dialogues disclosed that local peer support groups for young women are rarely available in their communities and that only a few organizations work specifically with young women, providing them a safe space in which to raise the issues they face, exchange information and experiences, discuss their common concerns and support one another. Moreover, one of the flagged issues was the lack of support from women representing older age groups, who often advise younger women

to "prioritize their husbands and children" instead of working on their civic initiatives.

To showcase the experiences and leadership efforts of women during the war in Ukraine, 19 per cent of survey respondents have been leading awareness-raising initiatives on their social media platforms and via direct messaging. While responses related to the equal representation and participation of young women in decision-making have shown that there is significant space for improvement and inclusion, the online survey also revealed that 70 per cent of young women respondents have been actively involved in some form of volunteering, aiding people affected by the war in their communities (Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Share of surveyed young women engaged in volunteering to aid people affected by the war (n = 120)



The level of women's involvement in volunteering increases with age. If the share of involvement among young women aged 18–20 is 58 per cent, then among women aged 26–29, it is 86 per cent. Another observation is that 36 per cent of women engaged in volunteering were the ones who have initiated and led those initiatives. The share of women who have initiated and led volunteering activities also increases with age (18 per cent among those aged 18–20 versus 56 per cent among those aged 26–29).

«I volunteer as an interpreter for an NGO that provides daily updates on the situation in Ukraine».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

As for the types of support provided to people affected by the war, the results of the online survey indicate that 30 per cent of surveyed young women have been engaged in the provision and delivery of food and non-food items to respond to the immediate needs of women and men affected by the war, while 28 per cent supported displaced persons in finding accommodation. Additionally, according to the online survey, young women residing in their home communities have been involved in the provision and distribution of humanitarian aid to a larger extent (28 per cent), while only 2 per cent of surveyed internally displaced women have engaged in this kind of initiative in their host communities.

«I have received 80 kilograms of clothes, which I donated to the centre for IDPs in Uzhhorod. We are thinking about establishing a charitable fund to provide them with legal and medical aid».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

«In my home community, we have provided humanitarian aid to more than 300 IDPs. Also, I have submitted a project for financial support. With the funds received (UAH 200,000), we have equipped the IDP centre with micro-waves, dishes, bedding, pillows and blankets».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

29 UN Women Ukraine, Multi-site scoping study on sexual harassment.

30 Ukrainian National Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 for the Period 2021–2025.

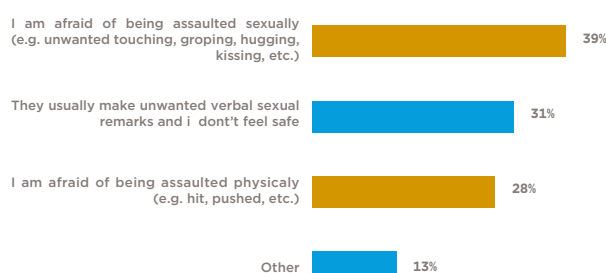
Volunteering during the war in Ukraine provides young women with opportunities to exercise and demonstrate their leadership and decision-making skills in a very complex and frequently life-threatening environment. Their experiences, knowledge, skills and leadership qualities should be recognized, and all efforts should be made to build and utilize them in the process of recovery and reconstruction of the country.

3. PROTECTION AND SAFETY

Addressing violence against women and girls has been a concern and top priority for the Government and for women's CSOs in Ukraine for the past couple of years. Ukraine signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as the Istanbul Convention) and discussed its ratification. According to a 2019 study, 75 per cent of women in the country stated that they had experienced violence since the age of 15, with one in three having experienced physical or sexual violence.³¹ A UN Women study carried out in 2020 in the war-affected east of Ukraine observed a clear correlation between the proximity to the contact line, active military actions and increased military presence and the high risk and occurrence of sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence against women and girls in public spaces.³² Displacement, high levels of violence, militarization and the breakdown of social networks and infrastructure leave women and girls more vulnerable to gender-based violence in public and private spaces. Particular groups of women, such as IDPs, refugees, women with disabilities and ethnic minorities, are at higher risk. A growing body of evidence shows that the escalation of hostilities in Ukraine is increasing the risk of violence against women and girls, including of conflict-related sexual violence.^{33,34}

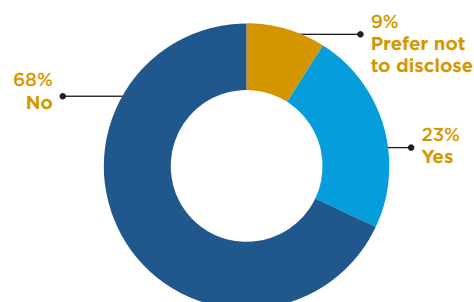
The online survey indicates that 61 per cent of young women respondents do not feel safe since the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine. According to their migration status, 60 per cent of surveyed women residing in their home communities and 52 per cent of women IDPs residing in their host communities do not feel safe, while 86 per cent of surveyed women who have relocated outside the country do report feeling safe. Around 56 per cent of surveyed women believe that the military attacks are the main threat to their safety: they fear for their lives, including their physical and psychological integrity. Some 29 per cent of respondents stated that they are concerned about the high risk of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape and human trafficking. Additionally, 45 per cent of surveyed young women indicated that they are afraid to pass by large groups of men; of those reporting this fear, 39 per cent said it is because of the risk associated with sexual assault, while 31 per cent are concerned about potential unwanted verbal sexual remarks (Figure 3.1). During the intragenerational dialogues, young women stated that the increased military presence in the war-affected communities makes young women feel unsafe in public spaces due to frequent, unwanted attention from the military men, often amounting to sexual harassment.

Figure 3.1: Share of surveyed young women who are afraid to pass by large groups of men, by type of concern (multiple responses) (n = 120)



Every fifth respondent stated that since the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, she has experienced sexual harassment in public spaces in the form of unwanted verbal sexual remarks or jokes/stories of a sexual nature that were insulting or offensive (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Share of surveyed young women who have experienced sexual harassment in public spaces since the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine (n = 120)



In terms of awareness of the available specialized services for victims/survivors of gender-based violence, including sexual violence, 91 per cent of respondents stated that they would contact the police; 55 per cent, healthcare facilities; and 42 per cent, CSOs providing services to victims of violence.

Of the online survey respondents, 87 per cent believe that the large-scale Russian invasion exacerbated gender-based violence against women and girls in Ukraine. Three quarters of respondents correlate the perceived increased incidence of gender-based violence with the increased military presence in Ukraine. Other flagged factors are the lack of government attention to violence against women and girls, hampered access to specialized psychosocial and legal aid services, and non-responsive police force during the war.

«I didn't know who to contact, who to complain to, where to go. I was afraid to go outside because there were armed people on the street. There was absolutely no way to reach anyone».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

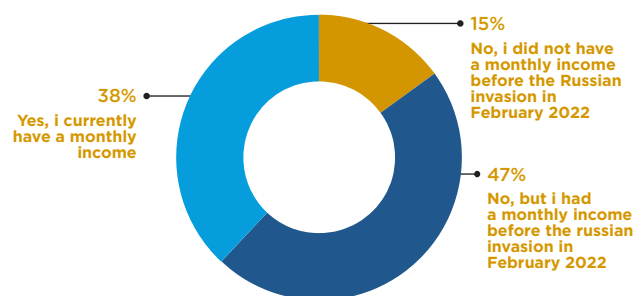
4. ECONOMIC WELL-BEING AND ACCESS TO SERVICES

Even before the escalation of the war in Ukraine, the proportion of employed women was only 51 per cent, and the gender pay gap stood at 23 per cent.³⁵ Since the beginning of the war, employment rates and access to livelihoods and gainful employment in both the private and public sectors have dramatically decreased for women and men all over Ukraine. The socioeconomic impact of the war is affecting women disproportionately, considering that they rely more on social services and have less economic recovery opportunities.

According to the data stemming from the online survey, only 38 per cent of respondents had a monthly income at the time when the survey took place, and almost half of respondents (47 per cent) had lost income due to the Russian invasion in February 2022 (Figure 4.1).

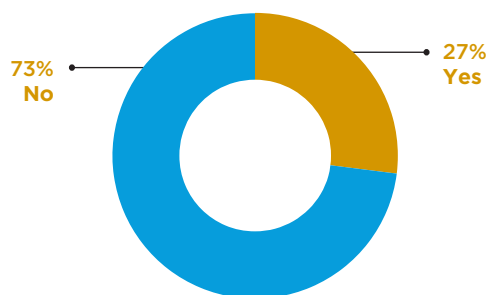
31 OSCE, Well-being and Safety of Women: Ukraine – Results Report (2019). Available at <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/440312>.
 32 UN Women Ukraine, Multi-site scoping study on sexual harassment.
 33 HRMMU, Update on the human rights situation in Ukraine.
 34 UN Women Ukraine, Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine, 4 May 2022.
 35 UN Women Ukraine, Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine: Secondary Data Review, 29 March 2022 (UN Women, 2022). Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/04/rapid-gender-analysis-of-ukraine-secondary-data-review>.

Figure 4.1: Share of young surveyed women who currently have a monthly income (n = 120)



Only 27 per cent of respondents eligible for social benefits from the State (such as IDP allowances, childcare, pensions, disability support or any other form) were able to receive their social benefits at the time when the survey was conducted (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2: Share of surveyed young women eligible for social financial support who have benefited from it since the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine (n = 120)



Moreover, 70 per cent of surveyed young women stated that they are in need of humanitarian assistance. Of them, however, 32.5 per cent previously received some form of humanitarian aid. Moreover, 63 per cent of surveyed women declared that they have unhampered access to their bank accounts and cash.

During the intragenerational dialogues, young women identified the heavy domestic work imposed on them during the war as one of the main obstacles hampering their access to education and employment and, as a consequence, impacting their economic well-being.

Half of the participants in the focus group discussions were enrolled in education institutions. The participants stated that after the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, they have had access to education but that these education services are being provided online. At the same time, they have mentioned that issues with Internet access are impacting their access to online education. The respondents also indicated that their education institutions provided them with information about available psychological services. Moreover, participants with kindergarten-age children reported that their children are not attending education institutions because they are closed due to the war, thereby increasing their domestic workload and leaving almost no time for education or for finding even a part-time job. The same issues were raised by participants with school-age children currently engaged in online education.

«Online education is hard for a little child, for teachers and parents. It is torture helping with homework [while] cooking and cleaning at the same time. I have no time for myself».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

In total, 95 per cent of the participants in the focus group discussions stated that they did not access psychological services because

doing so was not a priority issue for them. The most important thing was to satisfy their basic needs like the provision of shelter and food. Most of the participants did not look for any available psychological support services, nor did they receive information about the availability of such services. One participant said that she receives psychological support at her university. At the same time, young women noted that there is a lot of stigma and discrimination against people who access psychological services, which in turn discourages people from accessing this kind of support.

«In my community, it is humiliating to visit a therapist».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

5. COMMUNICATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Women's access to digital and information technology in times of war can be life-saving. The availability of information pertaining to the security situation, evacuation channels and humanitarian aid can play a critical role. Access to information technology can also have a healing impact on women traumatized by war by providing them with the means to preserve contact with family and friends. Additionally, information technologies represent a mandatory technical requirement to maintain or acquire access to online education or remote employment.

During the focus group discussions, participants stated that they are accessing official channels of the Ukrainian Government, the President's official web page and official Ukrainian media channels to receive information pertaining to the security situation in the country and in the localities where they reside.

«There is a lot of misinformation on the Internet. I need more secure information. I have to check the information and its nature [myself]. Since I have relocated to Lviv, I feel safer physically here, and I have better access to information. Ongoing informational campaigns are very helpful for me, especially the ones that aim to raise awareness on the available legal services or humanitarian aid».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

Moreover, young women IDPs noted that they are checking the security information for both their home and host communities. A weak or lack of an Internet connection contributes to their receiving outdated information, which affects their personal safety-related decision-making.

«Because we don't have a stable telephone or Internet connection, I can't get the necessary information on time. Sometimes I receive information that is no longer relevant for me, because it was received late due to the lack of access to the Internet. In the same way, people I meet on the street often provide information that may not be correct or is outdated».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

At the same time, participants noted that they also actively use social media to search for and share information, namely through Facebook, Viber and Telegram.

Every third respondent does not have reliable access to the Internet. The share of those who have access to the Internet is higher among those who kept their jobs (83 per cent) and almost half that among those who lost or did not have a job. In addition, 37.5 per cent of respondents do not have regular and reliable access to a mobile telephone connection. Likewise, the share of those who have access to a mobile telephone connection is higher among those who kept their jobs (86 per cent) and almost half that among those who lost or did not have a job.

According to the results of the online survey, a major factor influencing the extent of women's engagement in the provision and distribution of humanitarian aid is the availability of a regular and reliable mobile telephone connection. The involvement of survey respondents with a regular and reliable telephone connection is three times higher than of those that indicated that they do not have constant access to a mobile telephone connection (40 per cent versus 13 per cent). Additionally, during the focus group discussions, young women with an unreliable Internet connection stated that their engagement in volunteering was limited to providing support to their relatives and neighbours in need. They were not able to engage more actively in volunteering because of the lack of access to information about volunteering opportunities. On the other hand, young women IDPs with access to the Internet indicated that because they had Internet access, they were able to help other IDPs by facilitating the provision of humanitarian aid and engaging in informational campaigns aimed at collecting humanitarian aid for people in need.

The evidence generated by the online survey also indicates that only 9 per cent of surveyed women with no regular Internet access, compared to 37 per cent of women with an Internet connection, received social benefits from the State to which they are entitled. The availability of a mobile telephone connection and the Internet are factors that also influence young women's access to humanitarian aid. Specifically, 60 per cent of those who do not have regular access to a mobile phone connection and 65 per cent of those who do not have a regular Internet connection are in need of humanitarian aid but did not receive it. Furthermore, during the intragenerational dialogues, young women stated that unreliable access to electricity and the Internet impact their access to remote work and education opportunities.

According to the results of the online survey, young women extensively rely on their social support circle in both their home (76 per cent) and host (60 per cent) communities. Moreover, 84 per cent of survey respondents stated that they have social connections or a support circle that they can rely on in the communities where they currently reside.

«An important factor in choosing a place for relocation was having a friend in this place. We were offered help with food, medication and clothes».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

At the same time, the social support circles of young internally displaced women in their host communities are mostly limited to their families. This finding was also confirmed by the participants of the focus group discussions. Other connections that participants mentioned are their neighbours in the locations where they live and some friends from their home communities who relocated to the same city.

«I have a close friend. She and her family help me with legal support—[and] medication, clothes and everything else».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

Participants of the focus group discussions also stated that their migration status, particularly the fact that they are IDPs from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions and/or the fact that they speak Russian, often causes discriminatory and accusatory attitudes of host communities' residents towards them.

«There is tension between IDPs and the locals. In the centres for IDPs, there are signs that read 'We speak Ukrainian here'; and I see that locals want IDPs to follow these rules. Also, the landlords have very high standards and reject IDPs who try to rent a flat. This may lead to social tension».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

«A man in a café accused me of [supporting] the war because I am from the Donetsk region. Also, I have heard in the café how people were accusing residents of the Donbas for supporting Russia».

Young woman IDP (focus group participant)

6. CONCLUSIONS

Leadership and participation:

Young women affected by the war in Ukraine are predominantly absent from local decision-making processes. Their exclusion is linked to a variety of factors, such as their lack of understanding of local decision-making processes, the high burden of domestic work imposed on them, and the existing stereotypes regarding their role, potential and contribution in the family, community and society as a whole.

At the same time, young women affected by the war in Ukraine are actively involved in and leading volunteering initiatives, aiding people affected by the war in their communities. The engagement of young women affected by the war in the provision and delivery of humanitarian aid is more sizeable in the case of women residing in their home communities, where they have stronger support circles and more social connections.

Moreover, a contributing factor to the limited engagement of women in local decision-making processes is the lack of support and guidance. Young women need safe spaces for peer support and communication, as well as to receive support from women representing older age groups.

Another conclusion stemming from the evidence generated by this assessment is that constant and reliable telephone and Internet connections are a critical requirement for ensuring access to information and the subsequent engagement of young women in local initiatives.

Protection and safety:

Since the escalation of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, young women do not feel safe because of the ongoing military hostilities that represent a threat to their lives, including their physical and psychological integrity, and because of the additional concerns related to the high risk of sexual and gender-based violence.

The perceived exacerbation of gender-based violence is associated with the increased military presence, lack of attention to violence against women and girls, hampered access to specialized psychosocial services and legal aid, and non-responsive police force. The access to protection and justice, with the police as an entry point, is even more important considering that young women identify the police as the primary GBV service provider.

The increased military presence in the war-affected communities makes young women feel unsafe in public spaces due to frequent, unwanted attention from the military men, often amounting to sexual harassment. The rate of sexual harassment in public spaces among the surveyed women is high, reconfirming that sexual harassment in public spaces is a common type of violence affecting young women.

The personal safety decision-making of young women is very much dependent on their access to information pertaining to the security situation in the country and in communities where young women affected by the war reside. Thus, there is a clear correlation between the access to telephone and Internet connections and the safety of young women affected by the war.

Economic well-being and access to services:

Young women's economic vulnerability increased significantly since the escalation of the war in Ukraine, with many women losing their monthly income and/or having hampered access to social benefits and humanitarian aid to maintain their livelihood.

Increased domestic work imposed on women during the war, especially on those with kindergarten-age children who are not attending education institutions because they are closed and school-age children engaged in online education, is another major obstacle restricting young women's access to education and employment and, as a consequence, impacting their economic well-being.

Young women affected by the war prioritize their basic needs such as the provision of accommodation and food, neglecting their psychological well-being. There is a lack of awareness pertaining to the availability of psychological services in the host communities of IDPs. At the same time, young women revealed that there is a lot of stigma and discrimination against people who access psychological services in their communities, which discourages people in need of such assistance from accessing it.

Communication and access to information:

Access to Internet and mobile telephone connections is critical for ensuring that war-affected young women have access to information. Accordingly, hampered access to Internet and mobile telephone connections negatively impacts the personal safety decision-making of young women, as well as limits their engagement in local decision-making and volunteering activities and their access to humanitarian aid, social benefits, education and employment opportunities.

Young women extensively rely on their social support circles in both their home and host communities. At the same time, the social support circles of young internally displaced women in their host communities are mostly limited to their families.

Discrimination against young internally displaced women based on their migration status and geographical origin (eastern Ukraine), as well as based on the Russian language many of them speak, can represent an obstacle to their social inclusion in the host community and can have a negative effect on their mental health as well as their labour and social contributions.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing on the evidence provided by the current assessment, good practices in implementing the WPS agenda as well as UNSCR 2250 (2015) on Youth, Peace and Security, and the perspectives provided by young women who participated in this assessment, the recommendations below are provided to the Ukrainian Government, donors, United Nations agencies and CSOs aimed at addressing the identified gender-, age- and war-differentiated needs of young women affected by the war in Ukraine.

Leadership and participation:

- Engage young women affected by the war in peace, security and recovery efforts at all levels.
- Develop the capacities of young women affected by the war on policymaking, governance, recovery, peacebuilding, evidence-based advocacy and leadership.
- Raise awareness on the contributions of young women affected by the war to the recovery and resilience-building of the country to combat gender- and age-based stereotypes, and promote young women's leadership.

- Create safe spaces for women affected by the war to support intra- and intergenerational dialogues in order to continuously assess the needs of women from a variety of backgrounds, advocate for the adoption of measures aimed at responding to those needs, strengthen the cohesion and cooperation between women from different age groups, and enhance the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels.
- Support women's and youth organizations that are working on advancing gender equality and addressing issues affecting women, including grass-roots organizations established at the community level.
- Include young women affected by the war in the assessment, implementation and monitoring of programmes to constantly and more appropriately define young women's challenges and needs and ensure their meaningful involvement.
- Integrate measures aimed at advancing the Youth, Peace and Security agenda into the national, regional and local policies on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 (2000) on WPS.
- Increase funding for the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security agenda in conjunction with the WPS agenda.

Protection and safety:

- Raise awareness on various forms and types of GBV against women, including on sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence in private and public spaces, as well as on the availability of specialized services.
- Prioritize GBV prevention and response during the war to minimize risks and ensure that law enforcement and other justice sector actors are responsive, and ensure that specialized psychosocial and health services are available and accessible.
- Develop the capacities of law enforcement and other justice sector actors on preventing and responding to GBV by applying a survivor-centred approach and engaging in community-based GBV prevention initiatives.
- Enhance the access to justice of GBV survivors and at-risk women by legally empowering them through the provisions of legal aid, as well as by equipping them with knowledge about their rights, the legal procedures and the available protection mechanisms.
- Support community-based initiatives aimed at providing protection for GBV survivors and women at risk of such violence and at strengthening accountability to the needs of women.
- Work with men and boys to prevent GBV, including sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence.

Economic well-being and access to services:

- Ensure that humanitarian aid is delivered using gender and intersectional lenses and considering the implementation of outreach strategies to women with poor or no access to telephone and Internet connections.
- Ensure the availability of alternative childcare services during the war, including for internally displaced children; and promote equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, with the aim of reducing the burden of unpaid work and time poverty that is depriving young women of accessing education and employment opportunities, as well as participating in social and community activities.

- Ensure the accessibility, quality and availability of rights-based, gender-responsive and inclusive justice and psychosocial services, considering the age-, gender- and war-differentiated needs of women, including by developing and implementing community-based services to complement the disrupted or overstretched public services.
- Raise the awareness of young women affected by the war about the availability and confidentiality of psychological services aimed at reducing trauma and ensuring psychological rehabilitation.
- Support economic empowerment programmes specifically targeting young internally displaced women and young women affected by the war to support their livelihoods and prevent GBV.

Communication and access to information:

- Ensure that young women affected by the war have access to information pertaining to public security and the availability of humanitarian aid, social benefits, and employment and education opportunities, as well as available protection services.
- Enhance young women's access to technology and the Internet to ensure their access to information, protection, education and employment, as well as promote their leadership and participation.
- Implement awareness-raising campaigns aimed at combating existing gender, age, language and ethnic stereotypes, strengthening social cohesion between the host communities and IDPs, preventing discrimination and promoting gender equality, respectful relationships, tolerance and solidarity.