

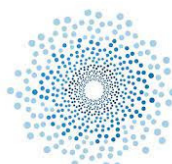
Mapping and Analysis of Peacebuilding Initiatives in Ukraine

2022



gnwp

Global Network of
Women Peacebuilders



ЦЕНТР
РОЗВИТОК
ДЕМОКРАТІЇ

 Austrian
Development
Agency

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This publication was created with the support from the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), in the framework of the project "Local communities build and sustain peace: Strengthening women and youth participation in building sustainable peace in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kenya, Moldova, South Sudan, Uganda, and Ukraine."

Authors: Global Network of Women Peacebuilders, Democracy Development Center

Editors: Panthea Pourmalek, Shawna Crystal and Sophia Farion

Layout: Caroline Allman



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Understanding the Social, Political, Economic and Security Context in Ukraine	5
Barriers to the Full Political and Economic Participation of Women	8
Understanding the Impact of COVID-19 on Women, Peace and Security	9
Recommendations	11

INTRODUCTION

As part of the project "Local Communities Build and Support Peace: Strengthening the Participation of Women and Youth in Building Sustainable Peace in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kenya, Moldova, South Sudan, Uganda and Ukraine," the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), in partnership with the Democracy Development Center (DDC), and with the support of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), has conducted an analysis of the actors and peacemaking initiatives in Ukraine.

The purpose of this mapping of peacebuilding actors and initiatives in Ukraine is to gain a better understanding of the existing context on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), including organizations and activities, at the national and local levels in order to establish broader partnerships.

The review provided an opportunity to identify women's peace and security challenges in Ukraine. It also shed light on women's and women-led organizations' work to address some of these barriers, the solutions they propose to address community problems and the obstacles to carrying out their peacebuilding work.

The areas that have been explored in depth in the mapping of peacebuilding initiatives are:

- Barriers and opportunities for women's political participation in peacebuilding;
- Barriers and opportunities for women's economic empowerment; and
- The impact of COVID-19 on women's security and participation.

In total, 109 people participated in the survey, including 103 women and 6 men. Women activists and representatives of women's civil society organizations (CSOs) constituted the majority of those surveyed. Geographically, 24 of the organizations and individuals surveyed operate in the city of Kyiv and Kyivska oblast, 24 in Kharkivska oblast and 7 each from CSOs in Donetska, Luhanska and Khersonska oblasts. Other oblasts represented in the respondents include Chernihivska, Lvivska, Zhytomyrska, Chernivetska, Zaporizka and Mykolayivska.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CONTEXT IN UKRAINE

There has not been significant improvement in the social, political, economic and security context of Ukraine since 2020. Ongoing trends persist, including women performing the majority household work and suffering disproportionately from job loss, increasing domestic violence and a strained healthcare system.

The economic situation continues to deteriorate as the government curtails the support systems available to the poorer populations, such as subsidies for utility bills. Furthermore, declining international support due to government inconsistency has exacerbated Ukraine's economic instability and national insecurity.

What are the main peace and security issues that local communities — especially local women — face?

Respondents provided a variety of answers to this question. Most notably, the following:

1. Lack of allocated financial resources in oblast and local budgets.

Across Ukraine, oblasts have varying levels of funding and international assistance to support implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Much of the funding currently channeled to Ukraine's peacebuilding activities — particularly training on peacebuilding, human security, conflict resolution and development of leadership and dialogue

skills — is concentrated in the Eastern Zaporizka, Donetsk and Luhanska oblasts. Although oblast action plans have been approved in most of Ukraine's oblasts, few have sufficient resources to implement them without international grants.

Exceptions to this lack of allocated funding are Lvivska, Luhanska and Donetsk oblasts, which allocated funds from their oblast budgets for the implementation of their respective oblast action plans on WPS in 2021 and 2022. Elsewhere, limited funding for implementing United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 is a challenge in other oblasts — such as Cherkaska, Chernivetska, Khersonska, Kharkivska, Kirovohradska, Ternopilka, Ivano-Frankivska and Zakarpatska oblasts.

2. Varied levels of knowledge on the WPS agenda across Ukrainian NAP target groups.

According to a UN Women survey, women respondents from Zaporizka, Donetsk and Luhanska oblasts were less knowledgeable on key topics of WPS as women from other oblasts. These topics include human security, transitional justice, gender-based approaches in local strategies and action plans, and women's rights. Based on DDC's experience holding WPS workshops in Ukraine, there is little demonstrated interest from local and provincial government authorities in participating in and increasing their government's knowledge on WPS.

Government representatives do not prioritize engagement with CSO-led gender initiatives and events.

3. Ineffective healthcare system reforms.

Issues related to recent healthcare reforms have contributed to a general feeling of insecurity among the Ukrainian population. In particular, respondents cited inaccessibility and medical practices that exacerbate physical and economic insecurity. For example, it was noted that doctors regularly prescribe medications that must be purchased out of pocket, rather than those that can be reimbursed through the country's National Health Service.

Surveys show that many patients are afraid to complain about this or demand compensation, especially while being treated. During the pandemic, when all in-patient departments were adapted for the treatment of COVID-19 patients, the population was forced to pay for their care solely through their own funds, which many could not afford. This dynamic, as well as a lack of medical insurance in Ukraine, has created mass anxiety about disease and illness.

4. Limited access to education.

Reforms by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine have forced parents to consider how or if their children will be able to access quality education. The reform proposes three levels of education: primary (grades 1-4), basic secondary (grades 5-9), and specialized secondary (grades 10-12).

For specialized secondary, local councils may decide to build schools called lyceums in settlements with a population of 50,000 or more. These lyceums, however, would be far from most residences to commute, and there has been no proposal for how to provide accommodations for the children who would attend them.

Additionally, during the pandemic lockdown, a lack of reliable internet connection made online school inaccessible to many rural and economically disadvantaged children. Even for the few families with average wealth, it was too costly to provide each child with a separate gadget for online learning.

"I have four children. The two older ones are 1 year apart. If we decide to study at a lyceum, and it will be the closest for us in Kherson, which is 90 kilometres away. We live in a village, it will be necessary to rent an apartment for them to live in, because there are no modern dormitories for school children. We cannot afford it. Therefore, in the future, my children will not be able to enter higher education institutions. So why go to school now?"

-A mother from the village of
Volodymyrivka

5. Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Combating sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is a state priority, yet lacks due attention across all levels of government. At the national level,

Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers passed Resolution No. 145 on 24 February 2021, approving the State's social program for the prevention and counteraction of domestic violence and gender-based violence until 2025.

The program outlines the development of standard practices, the creation of 450 specialized support services and first aid offices in healthcare facilities, as well as other measures for injured persons. However, there are doubts about the ability of this new program to be implemented, given the significant amount of funds that would need to be pulled from local budgets, which already have insufficient resources to maintain existing infrastructures.

Of those at risk for SGBV, rural women are among the most vulnerable. Local areas lack the financial and human resources to provide protective and responsive services, such as temporary shelters, reporting offices and more. Additionally, in small rural communities, stigmatization and social pressures keep many women in dangerous situations. As one woman explains, "It is better to endure than to be ashamed of the whole village." For women who do speak up and report instances of violence to local police, their claims often get dismissed or deprioritized.

Prior to decentralization, however, there was much more oversight of women's safety. Social services centers for families and youth were commonly operated under each district state administration, which consistently monitored families at risk of violence.

In addition to these issues, Ukrainian women-led CSOs identified several other key factors contributing to insecurity:

- Inequitable or controversial resource distribution
- Hybrid warfare, Russian propaganda and intimidation
- Limited access to internet connection, particularly in remote areas
- Disruptions to the national energy sector

EXISTING PEACEBUILDING AND SECURITY ACTORS AND INITIATIVES

The mapping exercise asked respondents if they know of existing peacebuilding and security initiatives as well as the actors implementing those initiatives, such as government, civil society or other stakeholders.

At the national level, WPS issues currently fall under the mandate of several Ministries:

- The Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine under Minister Maryna Lazebna, in charge of Ukraine's National Action Plan (NAP) on WPS;
- The Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories under Minister Oleksii Reznikov; and
- The Ministry for Veterans' Affairs of Ukraine under Minister Yulia Laputina.

Under the President, security coordination is the responsibility of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine. In recent years, the government also formed the Governmental High Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy. This position

contributes to strengthening the coordination of gender equality implementation. The current Commissioner is Kateryna Levchenko.

On 28 October 2020, Ukraine's Cabinet of Ministers adopted the country's second National Action Plan (NAP) on UNSCR 1325 for 2020-2025. The NAP was developed with the extensive involvement of civil society, local activists and peacebuilders from all over the country, in collaboration with government officials tasked with implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. Overall, throughout Ukraine, 20 out of a total 25 oblasts — in addition to various communities in Donetsk and Luhanska — have adopted WPS oblast action plans.

At the local level, in addition to CSOs, some of the actors facilitating peace and security include:

- Local executive power (representatives of regional state administrations);
- Head of the territorial community
- Council members of the local community;
- Public formations;
- Religious leaders and clergy members;
- Local influential leaders, moral and traditional authorities; and
- Local media practitioners.

BARRIERS TO THE FULL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

Women, particularly young women, face several challenges to their full and meaningful participation in political, social and economic life. While women in Ukraine are making efforts to participate more actively in politics, they continue to face many barriers. In the 2020 local elections, roughly 140,000 women candidates ran, and almost 16,000 women entered local politics as council members and heads of amalgamated territorial communities. Nevertheless, only 234 out of 1,469 communities are headed by women.¹

Furthermore, during the elections, no women candidates were successfully elected to the mayor of a city.

Comparatively, prior to Ukraine's process of decentralization, around 50% of village and settlement councils were headed by women. The decrease in women's political representation, as a result of policy changes during decentralization, has been exacerbated by women's experiences of intimidation, pressuring and manipulation. In several cases, women have been coerced to

¹ Місце жінки в політиці: Що змінилося? | Громадський Простір. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.prostir.ua/?focus=mistse-zhinky-v-politytsi-scho-zminylosya>

give up their powers as council members, leading to the gradual reduction of women in local decision-making bodies.²

At the local level, political party dynamics have been another source of tension, particularly within local authorities. The last elections were held in observance of recent electoral reforms, which altered requirements for candidates' party affiliation. This led to the election of council representatives from 5-7 parties, which has caused internal tensions over conflicting party interests and differing opinions on community development. As a result, residents have begun to feel the impacts of a divided local government. Many now consider the current authorities to be incompetent decision-makers, a fault that could be particularly consequential in the event of a threat, such as escalated Russian aggression.

These impacts are especially difficult on local women. Local authorities' ineptitude has further placed the burden of (largely unacknowledged) community development and management on women. According to entrepreneur Tetyana Yakovleva (Skadovsk), representatives of state services at the local level are contributing to widespread concerns of insecurity, especially as it relates to police, taxation and state sales service, among others. While these authorities are meant to help citizens, including women, develop businesses and support the local economy, many shirk this responsibility while simultaneously attributing women's achievements to themselves.

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

In May 2020, the Ukrainian government approved an Economic Stimulus Program which sought to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.³ While the plan included national security contingencies for conflict, it failed to adequately consider human security needs, especially gendered aspects. During winter and spring of 2021,

COVID-19 lockdown measures limited opportunities to gather for peacebuilding work. Any activities that did occur were conducted online, but as pandemic restrictions continued there was mass Zoom fatigue observed amongst participants.

² Виртосу, І. (2021, February 17). Жінки в політиці: Старі перешкоди та нова нормальність. ZMINA. <https://zmina.info/articles/zhinky-v-polityczy-stari-pereshkody-ta-nova-normalnist/>

³ Government approved the Economic Stimulus Program to overcome the consequences of COVID-19 epidemic with revision. (2020, May 28). Communications Department of the Secretariat of the CMU. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/uryad-zatverdiv-z-doopracyuvannyam-programu-stimulyvannya-ekonomiki-dlya-podolannya-naslidkiv-epidemiyi-covid-19>

When the Ukrainian government launched its initial vaccination campaign, it was met with several obstacles. Heavy reliance on digital tools, coupled with the online spread of misinformation and anti-vaccination rhetoric, hindered the campaign's efficacy and contributed to low vaccination rates (just above 10%),⁴ especially among healthcare workers and teachers. To increase vaccination numbers, the government implemented first punitive measures, such as requiring vaccination to use public transportation,⁵ and then incentives, including paying UAH 1,000 (about USD 35) to those with full vaccination status.⁶ However, to receive the payment required access to a smartphone application called Diya, putting the poor, elderly, rural populations and others with limited access to phones or internet at a notable disadvantage.

Access to vaccines was also limited by location. For those living in the occupied areas of Crimea and the Donbas (parts of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts), Russian authorities restricted passage through crossing points, causing long lines for entry and vaccinations on either side of the demarcation line. The Ukrainian participants of the official trilateral contact group on Ukraine repeatedly reported that the Russian side of various crossing points had blocked their work.⁷

⁴ Голова Бюро ВООЗ в Україні: В Україні реально можна вакцинувати понад 70% населення. (2021, September 17). Інтерфакс-Україна. <https://ua.interfax.com.ua/news/interview/768469.html>

⁵ Prime Minister: Regions must ensure the immunization infrastructure capacity to provide 1.5 million vaccinations a week. (2021, October 20). Communications Department of the Secretariat of the CMU. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/premyer-ministr-regioni-mayut-zabezpechiti-spromozhnist-infrastrukturi-dlya-vakcinaciyi-abi-robiti-15-mln-shcheplen-za-tizhden>

The COVID-19 pandemic further compounded the vulnerabilities faced by women. In particular, the young women surveyed highlighted increasing experiences of SGBV. They noted growing instances of male teachers demanding sexual services from female students to avoid punishment for missing online lessons, even for those who lacked internet or technological access to attend remote classes. These violent patriarchal dynamics, combined with high rates of harassment and rape in school dormitories, have made successful educational attainment for young women and girls particularly challenging since the start of the pandemic.

Following the COVID-19 lockdowns, young women and girls also suffered high rates of SGBV in their homes and social lives. Many reported feeling overwhelmed by gender expectations, including being required to stay home to take care of younger siblings, increased responsibility for household work and fewer opportunities to find employment. The respondents additionally emphasized fears of cyber insecurity and a lack of adequate knowledge and resources on how to protect themselves online. With a growing reliance on technology for social interaction, young women have been experiencing rising pressures to engage in cyber sex and pornography for money, unauthorized distribution of personal photos and information and more.

⁶ Funding in the amount of UAH 1,000 will be paid to all vaccinated on virtual payment cards through the Diya, says Denys Shmyhal. (2021, November 17). Ministry of Health of Ukraine. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/koshti-v-rozmiri-1-tis-grn-budut-viplacheni-usim-vakcinovanim-na-virtualni-platizhni-kartki-cherez-diyu-denis-shmigal>

⁷ Росія заблокувала роботу гуманітарної групи у ТКГ – Гармаш. (2021, September 14). Укрінформ. <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3315705-rosia-zablokuvala-robotu-gumanitarnoi-grupi-u-tkg-garmas.html>

RECOMMENDATIONS

To promote women's participation in peace processes and policymaking:

- Include women and women-led CSOs meaningfully and substantively in planning and organization with government representatives, including through collaboration on trainings, dialogue and discussion platforms;
- Conduct capacity-building and training for women and girls on skills development, economic empowerment and leadership; and
- Offer educational opportunities for women to learn about women's rights, gender inequality, politics, entrepreneurship and other key topics.

To combat sexual and gender-based violence:

- Engage the security sector, including police and military, in addressing gender stereotypes and rising gender-based violence; and
- Provide comprehensive sex education for women and girls, including trainings on recognizing and identifying abuse, cybersecurity and more.

To promote women's mental and physical wellbeing:

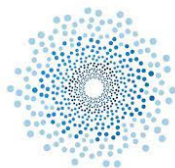
- Ensure women's safe and effective access to legal and mental health resources;
- Offer women and girls self-defense courses; and
- Engage women and young women in dialogues to share their stories and experiences and build solidarity.

6

7

gnwp

Global Network of
Women Peacebuilders



ЦЕНТР
РОЗВИТОК
ДЕМОКРАТІЇ



Austrian
Development
Agency