Executive Summary

The recovery and reconstruction of post-war Ukraine offers an opportunity to address many of the country’s long-standing inequalities between men and women. Despite the consequences of Russia’s full-scale invasion since 2022, the Government of Ukraine (GoU) has demonstrated that women’s rights and gender equality remain a priority, through the adoption of gender responsive policies and legislation in 2022-2023. It is crucial that these policies and legislative commitments are translated into action to deliver a gender equal and inclusive society. Implementation of Ukraine’s recovery agenda should match this political goodwill and ensure a transformative gender responsive approach which not only applies to the rebuilding of physical infrastructure but expands to all socio-economic spheres including social protection, labour force participation, care economy, education representation in political decision making, peace building, security and defense, as well access to quality services such as legal aid, psychological, sexual and reproductive health etc. Recovery plans at all levels of government (national, regional/oblast and municipal/hromada) can be developed, implemented and monitored, using existing gender responsive planning and budgeting tools, and participatory approaches, based on quality data, including gender and age disaggregated data, reflective of community needs and informed by the knowledge and expertise of women and women led organizations.

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine has caused massive disruption of socio-economic activity, damage to infrastructure, environment, and livelihoods of Ukrainian people. It has increased gendered challenges, including worsening inequalities and discrimination, compounding vulnerabilities, and increasing cases of violence against women and girls. As of August 2023, approximately 6.2 million refugees have fled abroad from Ukraine since the beginning of the invasion. A majority of the 5.1 million have been displaced internally within Ukraine are women1, with significant health, employment, shelter, education for their children, and sexual and gender-based violence protection needs. As of May 2023, women accounted for 61% of those displaced and out of the 17.5 million people in need of assistance, 56% are women and girls.2 As access to infrastructure and services is reduced, women’s unpaid care burdens are increasing in their families and communities. Women’s unemployment is rising, while an estimated 60,000 women are in the armed forces, with some 5,000 fighting on the front lines.

In March 2023, the second Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA2) estimated that recovery and reconstruction would cost $411 billion3, with costs increasing since then. With the support of its international partners, the GoU has begun to carry out reconstruction and recovery efforts. In the last quarter of 2023, the government is planning to engage in an ambitious recovery planning process including the development of the Ukraine Plan under the Ukraine Facility financed by the European Union (EU), a revised State Strategy of Regional Development (2021-2027), Regional Recovery and Development Plan and National Sectoral Strategies. A third RDNA is also in the pipeline.

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Even though the international armed conflict continues, with new attacks destroying lives and civilian infrastructure every day, and some 18 million Ukrainians are in need of humanitarian assistance, people and affected communities are simultaneously working persistently on recovery and reconstruction. Ukraine has the potential to recover and rebuild in a way which leaves no one behind, reduces all forms of inequality and fosters cohesion by planning and budgeting of an inclusive, people-centered, rights-based and gender-responsive recovery, in line with the GoU’s international and national commitments. Recovery and reconstruction can rely on and strengthen existing institutional systems for gender responsive governance in Ukraine. The use of existing law, strategies and procedures for, as well as new and innovative ones, can be maximized to support a recovery process that is inclusive, gender responsive, amplifies the localization agenda, is fully transparent and participatory, including women, displaced persons, host communities, veterans, disabled, and other groups that are often left behind.

Introduction:
Ukraine Recovery Planning

Only a few months after the start of Russia’s large-scale aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, the Government of Ukraine and its international partners began planning for the country’s recovery. Ukraine has been under attack since 2014 and by 2021 largely succeeded in overcoming the deep financial and economic crisis caused by the occupation of Crimea and continual armed conflict in eastern regions. The Government of Ukraine implemented recovery and development policies focused on state reform, European Union and Euro-Atlantic integration, and meeting Sustainable Development Goals, including to advance gender equality, women’s access to rights and empowerment. In 2022-2023 the scale of the destruction and the recovery project has become much bigger, with the potential to impact more of the population, and at a much deeper level. Ukraine’s recovery planning since summer 2022 has continued to evolve and broaden. In Lugano, July 2022, the National Recovery Council presented the National Recovery Plan which outlined Ukraine’s initial vision for recovery (until 2032).4 It identified 15 priority national programmes across a variety of policy areas. The “Lugano Declaration” includes a guiding principle on “gender equality” which stated that “The recovery process has to be inclusive and ensure gender equality and respect for human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights. Recovery needs to benefit all, and no part of society should be left behind. Disparities need to be reduced”.

The second Ukraine Recovery Conference in London in June 2023 brought attention to the strength and significant role of private sector in supporting Ukraine to “Build Back Better” working alongside a broad coalition of governments, international organizations, and civil society.6 At the London conference, the UN in Ukraine advocated for a community-based recovery approach that Leaves No One Behind. However little attention was paid to issues of gender equality at the conference and it was not successfully used as an opportunity to identify ways for the recovery to reduce inequalities or advance women’s empowerment. In 2024 a third Recovery conference is planned to be held in Germany. Despite the disproportionate effect that the war is having on women, and the role that women are playing in the response, at the large scale international recovery conferences and in the National Recovery Plan 2022 there has been little attention to how recovery and reconstruction can promote gender equality and women’s empowerment, or alternatively, further deepen inequality and exclusion.7

The GoU-EU-UN-World Bank Rapid Damage & Needs Assessment 2, released in March 2023, documented the impact of the first year of war and estimated the total needs for recovery exceeding US$411 billion. This assessment, produced before the Kakhovka Dam disaster, indicated the highest needs in transport (22%), housing (17%), energy (11%), social protection and livelihoods (10%), mine action (9%), and agriculture (7%), and informed the Government of Ukraine’s 5 priority areas for recovery – demining, energy infrastructure, housing, critical and social infrastructure and services, economy and jobs. Gender equality was not adequately mainstreamed in the RDNA2 and how the specific needs of women and girls will be met in the 5 priority areas is not elaborated upon.

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4 https://www.urc-international.com/urc2022-recovery-plan
5 62c68e41bd53305e8d214994_URC2022 Lugano Declaration.pdf (webflow.com)
6 https://www.urc-international.com/
While the international development and donor community, together with the Government of Ukraine, commit significant resources in the five priority areas, with a focus on the reconstruction of physical infrastructure, it is essential to recognize that physical and intangible assets are not gender neutral. They are perceived and used differently by women, men, girls, and boys due to the differentiated roles and responsibilities that cultures and societies assign to different genders. The quality and condition of all forms of infrastructure affects the lives and livelihoods of men and women differently. Therefore gender concerns should be included in all phases of infrastructure rehabilitation including project design, impact assessments, prioritization, financing, implementation and monitoring.

As the Government of Ukraine and partners are (in Fall 2023) developing the Ukraine Plan under the Ukraine Facility financed by the European Union (EU); a revised State Strategy of Regional Development (2021-2027); regional recovery and development plans and national sectoral strategies, there are clear entry points to increase attention to gender equality and women’s empowerment which should now be acted on.

Ukraine’s commitment to gender equality and women’s empowerment

The World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Reports for 2020, 2021 and 2022 show that despite legislative advancement and international commitments, gender inequality persists in Ukraine. While the 2020 report ranked Ukraine in 59th place, Ukraine was ranked 81st out of 156 countries in 2022. The 2021 Gender Inequality Index ranked Ukraine 103rd out of 156 countries on women’s political participation, with a slight improvement in 2022 (to position 100).

Despite the war, the Government of Ukraine has demonstrated that women’s rights and gender equality remain a priority. Over several years, Ukraine has made important international commitments and developed national policies in support of gender equality. In 2022, Ukraine passed into law key texts that provide the normative basis for a gender responsive recover. The country ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention); updated the National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 to reflect new wartime challenges including the challenges of recovery; passed the first-ever gender-responsive State Strategy on Regional Development 2021-2027 (SSRD 2021-2027) with its stand-alone Operational Goal 5: “Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men,” adopted a gender sensitive Law on Regional Policy; and legislated the new State Strategy for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men by 2030 and the operational plan for its implementation. These key texts were accompanied by a series of by-laws and regulations to support their implementation.

The State Strategy for Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men until 2030, approved in August 2022, is especially important for recovery planning. The Strategy lays the framework for gender responsive governance in law, institutions and policy making and specifically calls for: gender mainstreaming in humanitarian aid and post-conflict recovery; women’s participation in recovery processes, including decision-making at all levels from national to community level and; building capacity of civil servants on gender mainstreaming in recovery processes. The strategy further identifies four overarching objectives, their operational goals, and activities. The objectives include: i)The national mechanism for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men functions effectively and has the capacity to support the formation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of gender equality policies in various spheres of public life and at all levels; ii) Women and men are free from violence, including violence related to hostilities and armed conflicts, have equal access to justice, and participate equally in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery iii) Women and men enjoy equal rights and opportunities for human development in the field of education, health care, social protection, culture, and sports ; iv) Women and men participate equally in various spheres of economic activity, benefit from the results of sustainable economic development, and have equal access to all types of economic resources.

Svitlana Spazheva, Head of the Pokrovsk Community in Dnipropetrovska Oblast talks to the audience about supporting a community close to the front line and gender-sensitive budgeting. “A Vision for Gender Responsive Recovery in Ukraine” side event at the Ukraine Recovery Conference
However the CMU resolution which passed the State Strategy for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men by 2030 states that changes to local programs on ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men, based on the approved strategy, shall be implemented only after the termination or abolition of martial law. This time frame is unpredictable. Similarly, there is no defined budget attached to the State Strategy’s implementation. Previous studies by UN Women and others have found that the level of domestic finance available for gender equality since 2016 is vastly inadequate to implement the country’s key laws and strategies to advance the gender equality agenda. The situation remains the same today, underlining the need for including gender concerns in the calculations and prioritization of projects under Ukraine’s recovery.

While the challenges in the country are considerable and cannot be underestimated, given the fluid context of an ongoing and evolving invasion, Ukraine’s recovery and reconstruction provides significant opportunities to build back better, more equal, and in an inclusive manner that strengthens good governance, the rule of law, gender equality, sustainable socio-economic development, environmental sustainability and human rights for the benefit of all people in the country, including those most vulnerable and marginalized. Data collected and analyzed by civil society show that there are currently over 180 recovery and reconstruction initiatives in Ukraine. It is imperative that new and existing initiatives on restoration of Ukraine from the consequences of the war integrate gender dimensions.

**Recommendations for a gender responsive recovery in Ukraine**

The narrative and actions surrounding the recovery and reconstruction agenda can encompass an all of society, human-centred approach which upholds the commitments made through gender responsive legislation at the global, regional, national, and local levels. If Ukraine’s recovery is not only centred on infrastructure development but expands to all socio-economic spheres including social protection, labour force participation, care economy, political participation, representation in decision making, peace building, access to quality services including legal aid, psychological, sexual and reproductive health etc, it can lay the foundation for equality and sustainable peace and development. This policy brief provides the following general recommendations on how to plan for and implement a gender responsive recovery based the use of gender equality planning and budgeting tools and supporting inclusive participation in decision making and monitoring, in accordance with existing legislation and Ukraine’s international commitments to advance gender equality. To ensure that post crisis reconstruction of Ukraine is gender responsive, the Government of Ukraine in partnership with development actors, international financial institutions, private sector, research institutions, civil society and others should consider to:

- **Uphold commitments to advance gender equality.** All actors involved in the recovery and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine must demonstrate accountability by ensuring that the gender equality commitments made through their existing or new strategies, policies and plans are translated into action;

- **Collect and analyze quality data** on target groups with distribution by gender and other characteristics at the stages of design and implementation of recovery and reconstruction initiatives. Collection and analysis of data through a gender dimension will provide an evidence base to provide targeted recovery needs, including differentiated services needed by women and men based on age, disability status, place of residence, ethnic and social origin, citizenship, property condition and other applicable characteristics. Considering this, all assessments conducted to inform recovery initiatives by all actors in all sectors including nation-wide, multi-sectoral post disaster needs assessments must ensure that a gender analysis is provided and evidence/data are used for policy making and implementation;

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15 UN Women, Advancing Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Ukraine Through Effective Development Cooperation and Finance, 2021, p.51-52

16 https://ednannia.ua/images/A_study_of_recovery_initiatives_in_Ukraine.pdf
• Conduct gender impact assessments of draft regulatory acts being designed and passed to determine how they address gender inequality to inform initiatives on recovery and reconstruction prior to their adoption and implementation;
• Conduct gender audits of government institutions and organizations involved in the recovery and reconstruction process to ensure that the institutional structures, mechanisms and procedures ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men while identifying existing problems;
• Compile gender profiles of the territorial communities and/or regions based on gender disaggregate data to inform the design and implementation of sustainable reconstruction projects in a manner which addresses pre-existing gender gaps and inequalities exacerbated by the war;
• Integrate gender-sensitive quantitative and qualitative performance indicators in monitoring and evaluation frameworks of recovery and reconstruction initiatives to help determine the effectiveness, short term and long-term consequences of implementation of programs and projects on different groups of women and men, allowing for corrective measures to be taken at appropriate stages of implementation;
• Complement existing data gaps with quality Citizen Generated Data (CGD) which is timely, comparable, and verifiable to inform the design and implementation of reconstruction initiatives especially at the local levels, including through partnerships between relevant government authorities, development partners and civil society organizations;
• Guarantee equal representation of men and women including those among vulnerable groups and ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making processes related to recovery and reconstruction initiatives at all levels of government and within the private sector. Ensure that women participate equally in all levels of government and elections, including through implementing existing legislative gender quotas;
• In line with the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 National Action Plan, ensure women’s inclusive participation and decision making in all peacebuilding and sustaining efforts which are crucial in the recovery process of Ukraine including gender responsive reintegration of veterans into civilian life, security sector reform, gender-transformative transitional justice including reparation for survivors of conflict related sexual violence among others;
• Ensure a consistent and unified coordinated approach to avoid duplication and to foster complementarity. Gender technical expertise should be available across sectors and task forces, through gender focal points or dedicated resources. Foster collaboration to advance gender responsive recovery and reconstruction across a range of initiatives from advocacy work at the local, national and international levels to the design of micro and macro level reconstruction programs in partnership with civil society organizations;
• Support capacity building in gender responsive planning and budgeting of government institutions at all levels and of women’s rights organization to take part in recovery’s design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases, and ensure that civil society and legislators can provide oversight;
• Promote transparency, fairness and inclusive public participation in the application and approval processes of recovery and reconstruction initiatives including through open data portals such as DREAM. Apply Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in the recovery’s budget process. Ensure a minimum of 15 per cent of funding to reconstruction and recovery are allocated to projects that promote women’s empowerment, in line with existing UN commitments. Monitor that sufficient resources are targeted towards social infrastructure development in areas such as healthcare, education, livelihoods and social protection, to support women’s full participation an equitable and sustainable recovery for Ukraine and to finance implementation of the country’s gender equality commitments at all levels of government;
• Apply relevant gender markers, including IASC Gender with Age Marker, UN System gender Marker-UNDP and DAC gender equality policy marker-OECD to ensure that gender specific needs are identified and used to design targeted recovery interventions and reconstruction initiatives, advancing inclusivity and non-discrimination. Track financial allocations to enhance the accountability of the international development partners and government;
• Incorporate gender responsive recovery and reconstruction into the government’s strategies and processes of EU integration. This will ensure that the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in post-war Ukraine is fast tracked and at par or exceeds the EU minimum standards. As part of the EU accession process the capacities to understand, analyze and address the gendered impact of corruption should be strengthened;
• Integrate all socio-economic and political aspects envisioned for a post-war Ukraine as part and parcel of the recovery and reconstruction agenda. The narratives surrounding the agenda must move beyond the rebuilding of physical infrastructure and encompasses an all of society, human-centred approach which upholds the commitments made through legislation at the national, regional, and local levels including those pertaining to the equality between men and women;
• Develop long-term projects on social infrastructure development, which aim to create favorable conditions for balancing work and family responsibilities, to provide support to working women with children and other groups of workers that have family responsibilities (e.g. those who give care to elderly family members or persons with disabilities);
• Urge private sector actors to adhere to existing codes of conducts of advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in the workplace, marketplace and community such as the Women Empowerment Principles
which will ensure that recovery and reconstruction initiatives especially those designed and implemented through Public Private Partnerships provide equal opportunities of women and men including equal access to procurement opportunities for women owned businesses, particularly those from vulnerable groups directly and indirectly affected by the war;

- **Promote Gender-responsive procurement in the public sector** by developing gender-responsive standards for suppliers, facilitating data collection on women’s enterprises and gender-responsive enterprises, creating business development services for women’s, advocating legal frameworks that promote women’s entrepreneurship and decent work enterprises, and supporting institutional capacity building in relevant purchasing organizations;

- **Support the participation of women’s rights women led civil society organization in the recovery process** through long term, flexible financing including to support the organizations’ capacity building and institutional development. Improve women’s access to financing to participate in all forms of political and economic life.

**Further Readings:**

4. The Association Agreement with the European Union provides for an obligation to ensure equal opportunities for women and men in employment, education, training, economy, society, and decision-making (Section V «Economic and Sector Cooperation», Chapter 21 «Cooperation in the field of employment, social policy and equal opportunities», Articles 419, 420). https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/984_011#Text
60. The report “Procurement’s strategic value” (2022, UN Women) presents the business case for gender-responsive procurement, defined as the sustainable selection of services, goods, or public works from women-owned or women-led enterprises and/or those having gender-responsive policies and practices for employees and supply chains. URL: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/04/procurements-strategic-value

61. The “Gender-responsive procurement guidance note” (UN Women, UNGC) helps companies implement the WEPs. This publication offers companies guidance on the following factors to consider when transforming procurement process within an enterprise and across departments: people, policy, practice, communication, knowledge, and stakeholder management. URL: https://www.weps.org/resource/gender-responsive-procurement

62. The toolkit “Gender-responsive Public Procurement” (2022, EIGE) is designed for contracting authorities at all levels (national, regional, and local), including EU institutions, bodies, and agencies; it is also designed to be useful to policymakers and practitioners working towards gender equality and gender mainstreaming, at both the EU and the national levels. URL: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/grpp

63. The Gender Issue Guide “Urban Planning and Design” (2012, UN-Habitat) is aimed to is to: increase understanding of gender concerns and needs in urban planning and design; develop staff and partners’ capacity to address gender issues in select human settlement areas; and support institutionalization of the culture of gender mainstreaming and gender equality through the implementation of gender-sensitive projects/programmes and the monitoring of gender mainstreaming progress. URL: https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/Gender%20Responsive%20Urban%20Planning%20and%20Design.pdf

64. The Gender Issue Guide “gender Responsive Urban Economy” (2014, UN-Habitat) is aimed to support city, regional and national authorities to implement improved urban planning policies and strategies that will promote inclusive and equitable economic development; enhance municipal finances; and support the creation of decent jobs and livelihoods, particularly for youth and women. URL: https://unhabitat.org/gender-responsive-urban-economy

65. The report “Infrastructure for gender equality and the empowerment of women” (2020, UNOPS) forms part of a broader effort to shift the paradigm to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into all stages of the project life cycle, beginning with design. URL: https://content.unops.org/publications/UNOPS-Infrastructure-for-Gender-Equality-and-the-Empowerment-of-women.pdf

66. The Guide on Integrating gender into infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific in vertical structures (2019, UN Women, UNOPS) provides specific ‘how-to’ guidance together with checklists across the project lifespan in five subsectors (detention facilities, educational facilities, health facilities, public administration facilities, and police and border posts), with context-specific Asia and Pacific regional information and case studies to showcase what socially-inclusive and gender-equitable infrastructure designs look like in reality. URL: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2019/03/ap-BLS19062_TR_WEB.pdf

67. The Guide on Integrating gender into infrastructure development in Asia and the Pacific in transport and roads (2019, UN Women, UNOPS) provides specific ‘how-to’ guidance together with checklists across the project lifespan in four subsectors (roads, non-motorized transport and pedestrian infrastructure, transport systems, and ports), with context-specific Asia and Pacific regional information and case studies to showcase what socially-inclusive and gender-equitable infrastructure designs look like on the ground. URL: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2019/03/ap-BLS19062_V5_WEB.pdf


