



# CHAMPIONING GENDER EQUALITY AMIDST THE WAR IN UKRAINE

## AN UPDATE ON UN WOMEN'S WORK IN 2023



Photo: UN Women /Andriy Akat'iev.

### Introduction

Women and men, girls and boys, in all their diversities, have been profoundly impacted by over two years of full-scale war in Ukraine. The humanitarian crisis continues to escalate, with varied and uneven gendered impacts. 56 per cent of the 4 million officially registered IDPs are women, and women make up 93 per cent of the 4.6 million people returning to Ukraine and seeking to re-integrate into society. As of December 2023, at least 14.5 million people (one-third of the population) need humanitarian aid, of which 56 per cent are women and girls.

Whilst Ukraine has made notable progress towards greater gender equality in recent years, significant challenges remain. Gendered roles and responsibilities are changing, in some cases exacerbating pre-existing inequalities and in other cases minimising gender gaps and challenging gender norms. High unemployment rates for women, an increase in unpaid care work, heightened risks of gender-based violence, and a lack of gender balance in political decision-making, are key challenges to ensuring a gender-responsive recovery. Women from vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities, older women, and Roma women face additional barriers to accessing essential support. While women are playing a key role in the humanitarian response and recovery efforts, more needs to be done

to ensure that they can equally and meaningfully participate in planning and decision-making on humanitarian response and recovery.



Photo courtesy of Veteranka.

NGO partner «Ukrainian Women Veteran Movement» providing aid after the Kakhovka dam destruction in Kherson, June 2023.

## UN Women in Ukraine

UN Women is present in Ukraine since 2016 working for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls, women's empowerment and the achievement of gender equality in development, the access to human rights, and humanitarian action. In Ukraine, UN Women exercises its triple mandate – normative support, UN system coordination, and operational activities – to mobilize urgent and sustained gender-responsive actions to mitigate the impact of Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine.

### UN Women in Ukraine:



**Main office  
in Kyiv**



**Field office  
in Dnipro,**  
covering conflict  
affected eastern  
regions



**55  
professional  
staff**



**20 national  
experts**  
providing technical  
assistance to  
government



**20 million**  
total budget for  
2023

### UN Women's activities in Ukraine are focused on three key thematic areas:



**Humanitarian  
response**



**Women, peace,  
security (WPS)**



**Gender-responsive governance**  
including support to gender-responsive recovery  
and reforms for European Union integration

UN Women's activities in Ukraine are focused on three key thematic areas: Humanitarian Response; Women, Peace, and Security (WPS), and Gender-Responsive Governance, including support to gender-responsive recovery and reforms for European Union integration. In Ukraine, UN Women also serves as the Secretariat of the **Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund**, which provided \$8.5 million to women-led organizations in 2023.

In 2023, UN Women focused on strengthening **community-based early recovery**, including support to gender responsive planning where women activists and women-rights organizations participate meaningfully in decision making on priorities and plans. UN Women provides the tools and support needed for women to access services, finance, employment, markets and entrepreneurship.



# KEY GENDER EQUALITY RESULTS TO WHICH UN WOMEN CONTRIBUTED IN 2023

## Thematic Area One: Humanitarian Response

As the full-fledged war in Ukraine entered its second year, UN Women contributed to significant progress in 2023, positively impacting the lives of women and girls in Ukraine.

- Over 100,000 women and girls, across Ukraine received support to cope with the war's negative effects and contribute to recovery.

- Women and girls' needs and priorities were recognized as specific and diverse in key humanitarian and recovery strategies and plans.

UN Women provided life-saving humanitarian aid (evacuation, food, shelter, hygiene kits, emergency livelihoods, gender-based violence (GBV) services, and non-food items), and strengthened women's meaningful participation in governance, leadership, and decision-making. UN Women contributed to this result through important partnerships with civil society organizations and government at all levels.

UN Women worked with partners to integrate the needs and priorities of women and girls into humanitarian and recovery strategies and plans, such as the Ukraine Plan for establishing the Ukraine Facility, the revised State Regional Development Strategy (2021-2027), and National Strategy and Action Plan on Elimination of the Gender Pay Gap till 2030. Women's needs were also included in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) and the third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3). UN Women collected recommendations from women's civil society groups, and coordinating inputs from government, civil society, and UN agency partners.



Launch of the "Dream and Achieve" program in Warsaw, Poland, September 2023. The program trained 80 Ukrainian women refugees and IDPs in entrepreneurial and digital skills for launching or improving online businesses.

Photo: UN Women/Olena Ryabinkina.

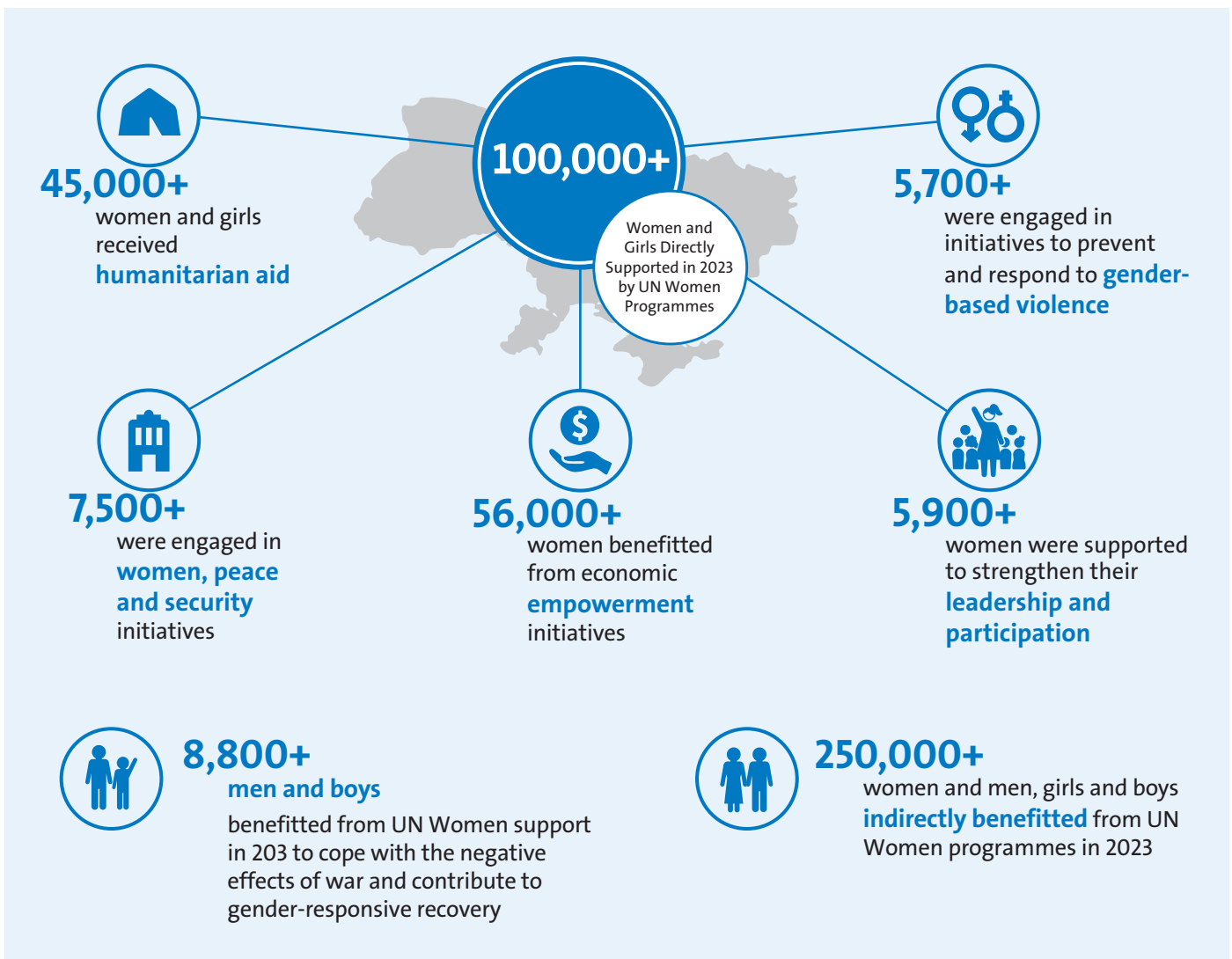


Photo courtesy of Zaporuka Foundation.

Nataliia Onipko, Founder and President of the Zaporuka Foundation, a UN Women CSO partner, provided humanitarian aid to over 2500 IDP women and girls with support from UN Women.

**Nataliia Onipko, Founder and President of the “Zaporuka Foundation”, UN Women CSO partner:** “The role of women’s organizations is essential to determine humanitarian priorities. Even before the war, women in Ukraine were very active in civil society, and their engagement has only grown stronger since the invasion. Being part of the community, they have the legitimacy and trust among vulnerable groups such as women who are more likely to seek psychosocial support and help from a local women-led center or shelter than larger organizations. Indeed, women’s groups serve as our eyes and ears in the community, allowing us to see problems and hear voices that we otherwise would not see or hear. As such, they should be at the heart of our efforts to respond to the humanitarian crisis.”



### Specific Humanitarian Results:

- More than 45,000 war-affected women and girls accessed humanitarian support.

By partnering with 40 local women’s organizations, UN Women provided food and hygiene products, psychological support, legal aid, emergency cash assistance, evacuation



Photo: UN Women

Volunteer 68, an NGO partner and WPHF grantee, evacuates women with limited mobility from frontline villages in the Kharkiv region and provides humanitarian care.

support, medical help, and referrals to social services. Among the 45,000 women and girls, priority was given to those from vulnerable and marginalized groups such as rural women, Roma women, women with disabilities, and internally displaced women. More than 39,000 received support through CSOs who benefited from \$8.5 million in funds from the Women, Peace, and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) in 2023.

- Specific and varied needs and of Ukraine’s women and girls were highlighted in key humanitarian strategies and action plans

UN Women transitioned to a full member of the Humanitarian Country Team and led the growth of the Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group to a group of 350 members. Collaboration on gender equality issues in the UN and NGO humanitarian response significantly increased. UN Women facilitated better inclusion of LGBTQI+ and women’s voices in humanitarian response planning. This included a dedicated chapter in the Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP) on “Intersectionality, Gender, and Disability” and gender and age disaggregated data and analysis in the 2023 Multi-Sector Needs Assessment. Humanitarian clusters and working groups also integrated gender dimensions into their work. These steps helped the humanitarian system better calibrate its response to the needs and priorities of women and girls in all their diversity.



Photo courtesy of CSO “Fight For Right”, Kateryna Teriakova.

CSO “Fight For Right”, WPHF partner in Ukraine, hosting the recreational retreat “Development program for women and girls with disabilities”.



- **Women and their organizations meaningfully participated in humanitarian planning and response.**

UN Women collaborated with the Office of the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator (RC/HC) in Ukraine, Denise Brown, to ensure that the UN system considered the needs and priorities of women and girls in the UN's humanitarian response. This included a dialogue between women's NGOs and the UNCT in February to enhance coordination on gender equality and women's empowerment, and a dialogue between the RC/HC and women's groups in the front-line community of Kramatorsk (Donetsk Region), with disabled women and with Roma women. Discussions covered joint actions in humanitarian response, combatting gender-based violence, supporting displaced families, preventing trafficking, and assisting women in frontline communities. Emphasis was placed on

the crucial involvement of women, especially from vulnerable groups, in decision-making regarding Ukraine's humanitarian response.

At a dialogue on 14 July Roma-women-led CSOs conveyed the severe challenges and discrimination that they face, worsened by the Russian invasion. They requested better access to humanitarian aid, social protection, health care, education, employment, and gender-based violence response, as well as greater involvement in decision making on recovery. The session led to strengthened UN coordination and more extensive programming in support of the Roma community.

UN Women conducted capacity development workshops for CSOs on Gender in Humanitarian Action, Humanitarian Ethics and Principles, the Application of IASC Gender Standards, and Result-Based Management for women's rights organizations to more accurately report on the results they achieved and advocate for the interests of women and girls in the humanitarian response.



Photo: UN Women/Dmytro Korotnev

*Dialogue between UNCT with RC/HC and representatives of Roma women organizations in Kyiv, July 2023.*



Photo: courtesy of "Sumnakuno Petalo".

**Christina Bilous, head of the "Sumnakuno Petalo" Roma community organization:**  
"In Ukraine, there is still a problem of non-acceptance of the Roma community as part of Ukrainian society. We need to show our civilization, solidarity, respect for human rights, affection for European values if we want to win this war and ensure the development of our country."

*Christina Bilous, head of the Roma community organization "Sumnakuno Petalo".*



## Thematic Area Two: Women, Peace and Security

Amidst the large-scale war, the need for the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda is greater than ever. UN Women supported government institutions, especially in the defense and security sector as well as law enforcement institutions at all levels, to more effectively address conflict related sexual violence and to facilitate women's leadership roles in their institutions. As part of local National Action Plan 1325 (NAP) implementation, UN Women encouraged women's participation in the design and implementation of community based early recovery plans where women's needs are prioritized.

### Some WPS Results:

- **The revised 1325 NAP was implemented by several Government institutions and their efforts were better tracked through the roll out of a new monitoring tool.**

UN Women supported the Government Commission for Gender Equality Policy and the Ministry of Social Policy (MoSP) to collect WPS data and consulted with civil society partners and local authorities to monitor NAP implementation. Several national forums and dialogues bringing together the administration and women CSOs at all levels were organized. Supported by UN Women, the Ministry of Social Policy drafted and designed a new NAP

1325 monitoring and data collection tool for the amended NAP 1325. Security and law enforcement institutions updated their sectoral action plans, conducted institutional gender audits and improved their awareness of how to implement the WPS agenda, including on preventing discrimination and harassment in the workplace. The National Police, Ministry of Interior Affairs, Office of the Prosecutor General and State Emergency Service learned how to adopt a survivor centric approach to support survivors of gender-based violence, including conflict related sexual violence. 4701 members of the security and justice actors (police, investigator, juvenile crime officers, SES first line responders, especially medical and mental health workers, judges, prosecutors, lawyers) were trained by UN Women in 2023.

- **Women in local communities organized and advocated for further progress in localizing the WPS agenda, including recovery planning.**

With the support of the Ukrainian Women's Fund, UN Women provided training to 83 local women's groups to enhance community resilience and advocate for gender responsive recovery policies. A total of 32 sub-grantees received funding that enabled them to promote gender equality in 17 war affected communities in Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Chernihiv, and Kirovograd. In 2023, 11 women's self-help groups supported by UN Women registered as NGOs, participated actively in local WPS working groups and supported local authorities in designing localized 1325 action plans. UN Women provided



National Forum "National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325: Implementation at the National and Local Levels in the Context of War" in Kyiv, June 2023.

a series of capacity building workshops for local authorities, which resulted in the development of ten local action plans (LAP) that incorporated priorities identified by women's groups. Six LAPs were approved by the local councils. With the support of UN Women, four regional action plans were also updated to better reflect war-time priorities. Similarly in Poltava and Dnipro, UN Women trained 100 women activists on how to contribute to community recovery committees with inputs on gender equality and women's rights and safety. The 100 activists formed 10 women's groups that continued to raise awareness on GBV prevention and to advocate for women's needs to be integrated in local plans and budgets. UN Women's trainings on effective community mobilization and advocacy across Ukraine are helping women activists better engage local leaders on gender equality issues for inclusion in recovery efforts.

- Awareness on gender-based violence, especially conflict related sexual violence (CRSV), improved and the response is better coordinated.

UN Women provided strategic and technical capacity to national authorities to prevent and respond to CRSV, in line with the Government of Ukraine – UN Framework of Cooperation and its Implementation Plan, supporting improved coordination among Government entities, better use of survivor centered approaches amongst responders, the spread of technical expertise among relevant Government entities, and monitoring of the Implementation Plan. This resulted in a more coordinated and professional response to CRSV which



Photo: courtesy of Slavic Heart Charity Foundation.

Discussion on how to strengthen women's activism to prevent and respond to gender-based violence with NGO partner "Slavic Heart", October 2023.

focuses explicitly on survivors' needs and rights. To help survivors access justice, UN Women supported members of parliament and the Ministry of Social Policy in drafting **two legal texts** to establish a system a reparations and compensations expected to pass into law in 2024.

UN Women also contributed to the coordination and delivery of high-quality services to survivors of gender-based and domestic violence in target communities of Dnipropetrovsk and Poltava Regions. In September, UN Women and Slavic Heart Charity Foundation initiated a roundtable series with representatives from local government, police, social welfare, education, health, and other institutions, which concluded with recommendations for enhanced coordination in responding to gender-based and domestic violence.



Photo: UN Women/Anton Tkachenko.

Conference bringing together the Prosecutor General and the police to improve coordinated responses to gender-based violence with NGO partner Jurfem. Kyiv, November 2023.



## Thematic Area Three: Gender-Responsive Governance

UN Women supported the government to ensure that women's needs and priorities were well integrated into key strategies, policies, and plans, and meet its international and national commitments to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE).

### Examples of governance results:

- **Women's needs and priorities are better addressed through key legislation, strategies, policies, and plans developed in 2023, that hold government accountable for implementing GEWE commitments.**

UN Women supported eleven institutions of the National Women's Machinery and line ministries<sup>1</sup> with gender equality expertise to ensure that gender equality issues are mainstreamed in strategies and policies, in line with recommendations from the CEDAW Committee (2022). UN Women compiled data and research to improve evidence-based decision-making by the government, coordinating with UN agencies, and civil society.

The needs of women and girls were successfully integrated in key texts, such as the Ukraine Plan to be financed by the Ukraine Facility, the third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA3), and the updated State Strategy for Regional Development for 2021-2027. After years of advocacy and following Ukraine's inclusion in

the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC), the Cabinet of Ministers approved the **Strategy on Closing the Gender Pay Gap** (along with its Plan of Action), which aims to improve legislation on equal pay, counteract workplace discrimination based on gender, and facilitate the combination of family and professional responsibilities.

Following Ukraine's ratification of the Istanbul Convention, gender advocates have been improving Ukrainian legislation on gender-based violence accordingly. As a first step among numerous future legal amendments, separate kinds of gender-based violence were identified as separate administrative offences. Sexual harassment and stalking were added to the draft Law on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence to align with the Istanbul Convention, approved by the Parliament in the first reading in 2023.

UN Women contributed to these laws and policies by providing technical and substantive inputs to the texts. In several instances this involved contracting gender experts provided to the ministries responsible for preparing the policy documents and draft laws.



*Discussion of the status of the implementation of the National Strategy for Bridging the Gender Pay Gap until 2030 in Kyiv, October 2023.*

Photo: courtesy of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister on European and Euro Atlantic Integration, Government Commissioner on Gender Equality Policy, Governmental Office of European and Euro Atlantic Integration Coordination, Ombudsperson Office, Ministry of Social Policy, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Communities, Territories and Infrastructure Development, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Agency of Civil Service, State Statistics Service

- **Women leaders participated in and influenced decision-making processes at all levels.**

To ensure that women’s needs and interests are integrated in planning and budgeting for Ukraine’s recovery, UN Women cooperated closely with the Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy and Women’s civil society organizations in advocacy and the provision of expert advice.

UN Women, with the Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, the Government of the UK, EBRD and women CSOs, held a side event at the **London Recovery Conference** attended by over 300 persons. UN Women drafted a policy brief on gender responsive recovery for Ukraine. The office worked with the UNCT to ensure that the new UN Early Recovery Trust Fund’s terms of reference includes gender markers and targets. UN Women supported women led civil society with technical expertise on gender responsive recovery planning at a workshop in the Fall and facilitated women’s CSOs’ provision of inputs into the development of strategic texts, such as the Ukraine Plan. To ensure that recovery efforts are guided by gender data, UN Women

advocated for the inclusion of a sub-chapter on gender equality in the Third Rapid Disaster Needs Assessment report (RDNA3) with the World Bank and brought together UN agency gender expert to collect the gender data and draft the sub-chapter.

UN Women ensured that all key laws, policies, strategies, and plans described above were underpinned by recommendations from women’s civil society, shared with duty bearers through **81 multi-stakeholder consultations and dialogues**. Women human rights defenders (WHRD) were included in several key working groups and platforms to develop legal frameworks and strategies. This included the involvement of local women in regional and local government processes – a key achievement to promote gender equality in Ukraine’s localization effort. For example, WHRD were included in the Platform for Gender Responsive and Inclusive Recovery and the Working Group on Revision of the Law on Equal Rights and Opportunities, established under the Government Coordination Commission on Gender Equality Policy headed by the Deputy Prime Minister on European and Euro Atlantic Integration.



*Vision for Gender Responsive Recovery side event at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in London, June 2023.*

Photo courtesy of EBRD.



- More than 56,000 women were economically empowered, through livelihood recovery support, skills development, and access to employment.

In 2023, UN Women's increased its work on women's economic empowerment, including the policy work on narrowing the gender pay gap described above. UN Women also supported women entrepreneurs with a wide range of capacity development trainings, mentorship programs, and networking events. Women Empowerment Congress to list of initiatives we supported after "Women for The Future," "Women's Entrepreneurship Satellite Expo 2023" and the "Women's Entrepreneurship Expo" created platforms for hundreds of women entrepreneurs to showcase skills, connect with employers, and strengthen partnerships between the private sector, government, and civil society. As a result, women increased their economic opportunities.



Photo courtesy of CSO «Rural Women».

*Empowering rural women: supporting small businesses and fostering economic independence.*

With UN Women's support, business leaders understood the benefits that the private sector can gain from women's greater involvement. Private sector and state-owned businesses, actively developed their capacity and commitment to implementing and advocating for gender equality. Companies demonstrated strong commitments for GEWE through the implementation of the **Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs)**, with six companies which implemented nine internal gender policies; eight companies passing WEP self-assessments, and one company developing a Gender Action Plan. These are key steps, part of the WEPs commitments to advancing gender equality through organization structures and value chains.

Sixteen civil society organizations were also supported to promote women's economic empowerment. They organized different initiatives benefitting at least 2,800 women, including training programs for re-skilling and setting up, developing small and medium size businesses. As a result, 231 women secured new jobs, established businesses, or strengthened existing ones, significantly boosting their engagement in Ukraine's economy.



Photo: UN Women/ Khrystyna Burchyn.

*Ukrainian media company "Burda Media Ukraine" signs the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) at the Women's Economic Empowerment Congress. Lviv, December 2023.*

## Gender-Responsive Governance

**16** new strategies, policies and/or action plans with a focus on gender equality were adopted in 2023 with UN Women's support.

**400+** data producers and users have strengthened capacities in the collection, analysis, dissemination, and use of gender statistics.

**81** dialogues and stakeholder processes promoted government engagement with civil society and partners for gender equality and women's empowerment.

## Future efforts

In 2024, UN Women will continue to prioritize the needs of women and girls during the crisis caused by the war, in close cooperation with women's civil society organizations, government and other partners. As part of our new Strategic Note 2025-2029 to be developed in 2024, a new strategy will be developed to better reflect how UN Women will support the needs and priorities of women and girls in Ukraine, across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus with a focus on advancing gender responsive governance, the WPS agenda, and women's economic empowerment.



Photo: UN Women/Slava Karpenko.

*UN Women Connect Conference which brought together 30 CSOs to discuss vision for strategic partnership. Lviv, November 2023.*

## THANK YOU!

UN Women is grateful to the incredible efforts of our humanitarian and development partners in 2023.

A special thank you goes to the women's civil society organizations, continuing to work tirelessly to ensure the needs and priorities of women and girls are met. You have all been incredible partners during this challenging time, going above and beyond for your communities and country.

Thank you also goes to the Government of Ukraine for its ongoing dedication to gender equality. UN Women is especially appreciative of the strong partnership with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Office of the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy for their strong leadership in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women in Ukraine.

UN Women's response to the full-fledged war and ongoing efforts to advance gender equality and women's empowerment in Ukraine is made possible by the generous financial contributions from the Governments of Austria, Japan, Norway, Poland, Sweden, as well as the European Union and the Women Peace and Humanitarian Fund. Thank you also goes to the twelve UN Women National Committees working hard to raise funds, promote women's rights, and secure worldwide visibility for women and girls in Ukraine and affected countries in the region.

