



## IN BRIEF

# WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN UKRAINE DURING RUSSIA'S INVASION



**Ukrainian women's economic situation has worsened since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, but there is strong potential and acute need for women's entrepreneurship and employment, which deserves national and international support including through re-skilling, increased access to care, the closure of the pay gap and the transformation of gender stereotypes.**

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation in 2022 has caused a humanitarian crisis, widespread death and displacement, and over US\$152 billion in direct damage.<sup>1</sup> Following a 29 per cent recession in 2022 due to the invasion, Ukraine's economy achieved 4.8 per cent growth in 2023 and a projected rate of 3 per cent growth in 2024. However, durable recovery is significantly undermined by continued attacks on energy and infrastructure, and the negative effects on business confidence and investment. Ukraine is further burdened by immense reconstruction needs, estimated to be at least US\$486 billion over the next decade, and fast expanding public debt.<sup>2</sup> The war has reduced income levels, exacerbated poverty and had severe impacts on the labour market. Without international support, an additional 3 million Ukrainians would likely be living below the poverty line.<sup>3</sup>

The effect of the war on women and the economy has received little attention to date. UN Women, in collaboration with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration and the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, therefore commissioned a research study to identify challenges, barriers and opportunities for women's participation in the wartime economy in Ukraine. The study, *Challenges of Empowering Women in the Labour Market and Entrepreneurship in the Context of Full-Scale War and Gender-Responsive Recovery of Ukraine*, was conducted by the Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms (UCSR) from January to June 2024 with funding by the Government of Sweden.

<sup>1</sup> World Bank. 2023. [Ukraine – Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA3\) – February 2022–December 2023](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> World Bank. 2024. [Country Overview for Ukraine](#). October.

The UCSR study involved desk research, 9 focus group discussions with 63 participants, 11 in-depth interviews and 2 questionnaires that reached 76 women entrepreneurs, with an objective to develop recommendations for the government, civil society and international partners to expand women's economic and social opportunities and shape Ukraine's recovery from the war in a gender-responsive way. The full study will be available on the UN Women Ukraine and the UCSR's website.

**This briefing on the UCSR study finds that women's economic situation has worsened since the start of the full-scale invasion and war. However, there are important opportunities to support women's economic empowerment, even as the war continues:**

1. Less than half of Ukraine's women work and a greater percentage of men are formally employed than women.
2. Sectoral differentiation in employment between women and men has increased.
3. The unpaid care burden on women is growing and preventing women from entering or re-entering the paid workforce.
4. Women are willing to retrain for new employment and should be supported to do so.
5. Women are setting up more new businesses than men and, if trends continue, the share of entrepreneurs who are women will be equal to the share of men.
6. The government of Ukraine and civil society organizations are supporting women's economic empowerment but capacities are crucially lacking at the local level.

**1. Less than half of Ukraine's women work and a greater percentage of men are formally employed than women.** Since Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, women's economic empowerment in Ukraine has significantly worsened. The majority of people who left Ukraine or who are internally displaced, are women—with men being subject to military conscription. As of August 2024, 58 per cent of the 3.7 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ukraine were women.<sup>4</sup> According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as of September 2024, there were 6,725,300 refugees from Ukraine around the world.<sup>5</sup> Data from neighboring European countries suggest the majority of refugees are women, with women making up 62 per cent of the beneficiaries of temporary protection in European Union (EU) countries as of August 2024.<sup>6</sup> The women outside of Ukraine are predominantly of productive working age, which is likely to have an impact on women's decreased participation in formal employment in Ukraine.

Less than half of Ukrainian women work. Labour force participation of women has been decreasing since 2007–2009<sup>7</sup> and was 47.8 per cent for women in 2021 according to the ILO, compared to 62.9 per cent for men. Similar inequality between women and men was visible in 2021 with 42.9 per cent of women employed compared to 56.9 per cent of men.<sup>8</sup> The State Statistics Service of Ukraine has not published official employment rates since the war due to martial law. But a recent nationwide sample survey of the socioeconomic status of households showed a decrease in the employment rate of women aged 15 to 70 to 48.7 per cent in 2023 (compared to 49 per cent in 2021).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> IOM. 2024. [Ukraine — Internal Displacement Report — General Population Survey Round 17](#). (August 2024)

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR. n.d. [Ukraine Refugee Situation](#). Last updated 24 September 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Eurostat. [Beneficiaries of temporary protection at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex - monthly data](#)

<sup>7</sup> ILO data extracted from <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics#>

<sup>8</sup> ILO data extracted from <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/country-profiles/>

<sup>9</sup> The socioeconomic status (SES) survey was conducted from December 2023 to February 2024 by the Ukrainian Center for Social Reforms and the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, at the request of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine and with the support of UNICEF.

During the war, women have apparently also dropped out of formal employment and taken on more informal jobs. The share of women in formal employment has also declined according to unofficial figures: before the war, the share of women in the total number of formally employed persons was 52.7%; in 2022, it dropped to 50.8%, and in 2023 to 49.8%.<sup>10</sup> Yet women's informal employment has risen from 16.2 per cent in 2021 to 18.8 per cent in 2023.<sup>11</sup> These negative trends are apparently leading to a rapid and dramatic increase in the gender pay gap: while in 2021, women earned an average 18.6 per cent less than men, a 2023 study by the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine estimates that it had risen to 41.4 per cent.<sup>12</sup>

Lack of data including official labour force surveys makes it challenging to assess the problem of unemployment among women. According to the IMF, the overall unemployment in 2021 was 9.8 percent, rising to 24.5 percent in 2022 and estimated to reach 14.5 percent in 2024.<sup>13</sup> As explained in the UCSR study, official data from the State Employment Service (SES) cover only registered unemployment, while the total unemployment among women is much higher as they work in the informal sector and do not always register for unemployment. The number of registered unemployed women decreased from 670,300 in 2021 to 348,000 in 2023. This is also due to numerous factors including the migration of women and a decrease in the permissible periods of stay in the SES and the amount of unemployment benefits.<sup>14</sup> At the same time, women's share among all unemployed persons registered by the SES increased in 2023 to 72 per cent.<sup>15</sup>

## **2. Sectoral differentiation in employment between women and men has been exacerbated by the war.**

A significant contributor to inequality in Ukraine's labour market between women and men is the wide differences in where they work. They are engaged in different sectors of the economy, and if they do work in the same sector, they usually work in different professional groups. They have different qualifications and are treated differently based on them. According to the UCSR study, the share of officially employed women in better-paid and more complex economic activities has significantly decreased in the transportation and warehousing, information and telecommunications, defence and public administration sectors. These factors increase the gender pay gap, limit access to jobs for women and affect their employment duration and prospects for employment in higher value-added industries.

In Ukraine men are more engaged in certain sectors of the economy—construction, mining, transport, metallurgy and energy—where there is job growth due to wartime needs. A labour force survey conducted in 2023 by the Razumkov Centre showed considerable discrimination in these sectors, where men have created a working culture that women find difficult to adapt to, where they cannot advance their careers or develop professionally. Focus group discussions for the UCSR study found that a common stereotypical belief is that a male team will not accept a woman leader or co-worker, who may be treated as less capable or less knowledgeable, and that women may face physical and sexual threats in the workplace. The UCSR study found employers are still biased against hiring women in these sectors.

Over the past decade, the legal framework for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the workforce has significantly improved in Ukraine, but stereotypes about the gender roles of women and men in labour persist. The women surveyed for the UCSR study reported that it is still much more difficult to gain access to positions and professions in traditionally male-dominated industries than in the labour market as a whole. Thus, a long-term policy strategy is needed to address gender stereotypes in the labour market, combined with immediate measures that will support women in the world of work.

<sup>10</sup> Based on data from the State Statistics Service and the Pension Fund of Ukraine.

<sup>11</sup> Based on data from the Pension Fund of Ukraine and the SES survey.

<sup>12</sup> The average salary for men in 2023 was estimated taking into account cash benefits. Estimates were calculated by the Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine based on modelling data from the Pension Fund of Ukraine and other relevant sources of information for 2021 and 2023. However, different figures have been used to report on the wage gap. In Ukraine's National Report (May 2024) on the results of a comprehensive review at the national level on the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action for 2020 to 2024, the Government of Ukraine quotes a 2023 Razumkov Centre survey which reported a 33 per cent wage gap, with women earning UAH 10,312 versus UAH 15,377 for men (p. 19).

<sup>13</sup> IMF data extracted from

<https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/LUR@WEO/UKR>

<sup>14</sup> The Law of Ukraine "On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Reforming the Employment Service, Social Unemployment Insurance, Promoting Productive Employment of the Population, including Youth, and Implementing New Active Labor Market Programs" of 21.09.2022, No. 2622-IX

<sup>15</sup> This is primarily due to the reluctance of men to register as unemployed, as registration required them to provide a note on their military registration.

Even before the war, Ukraine needed to attract more women to employment, including to jobs traditionally considered men's work. There has been some expansion of employment opportunities in these jobs, and women have become more in demand and more competitive in the labour market. It has been reported and anecdotal evidence suggests that some employers and workplaces are becoming more welcoming to women and removing some of the barriers to their workforce participation, but some employers are slow to change. In interviews and focus group discussions, women noted that gender sensitivity in the workplace, support from their immediate supervisors and a friendly corporate culture are key elements that help them integrate into work spaces where men predominate.

**3. Negative repercussions of the unpaid care burden on women prevent women from entering or re-entering the paid workforce.** Women in Ukraine have always borne the burden of unpaid care, and this has now only worsened due to school closures, high demand for volunteer work and the absence of men.<sup>16</sup> The World Bank reported that women spend over 16 hours per week more than men on unpaid domestic work,<sup>17</sup> and the potential cost implications in Ukraine of women's increased unpaid childcare work since February 2022 is US\$72.5 billion.<sup>18</sup> While men's unpaid work has more than doubled since the start of the war and there has been a noticeable increase in fathers' participation in childcare,<sup>19</sup> women still have the primary responsibility for domestic and care work. This has significant implications for their labour market participation and income generation.<sup>20</sup>

Women's employment opportunities are significantly impacted by marital status and the presence of small children. When women's unpaid household work increases, it turns into a barrier in their access to the labour market, their ability to work full-time and to

realize their professional goals. The USCR research shows how the presence of young children in a family can lead to discrimination by the employer in hiring and providing access to career development. Discrimination is also a challenge inside the family where traditional social norms discourage men from taking on more unpaid care duties. Older women who leave employment to take care of family members face the additional problem of ageism if wanting to re-enter the labour market.

The additional time that women spend on raising children compared to men results in a shortage of skills, knowledge and employability. According to the 2023 sociological study by the Razumkov Centre, women reported that they are unable to return to work due to a lack of an extensive network of preschools and dissatisfaction with services, including childcare for children under 3 years, the limited opening hours of kindergartens and the lack of extended daycare at schools.<sup>21</sup> The UCSR study described access to children's care services as already inadequate before 2022, and according to the Razumkov Centre study, 45 per cent of economically inactive women reported that the situation has since worsened, and 17 per cent reported a significant deterioration in access to social services including child education and care.<sup>22</sup>

In the face of a smaller population due to the war, an ageing population and labour shortages, Ukraine needs labour to maintain or accelerate growth. Economically inactive women, older women, women returnees and those considering returning from abroad represent a significant potential reserve. The reasons for them not participating in the labour force should be addressed, including improvements in public infrastructure around childcare and redistributing care within the family to lessen women's burden. In the long run, women's desire and opportunity to work is likely to increase with the provision of fairer wages (reducing the gender gap in wages) and more opportunities (reducing the gender gap in representation in various economic sectors).

<sup>16</sup> Vox Ukraine. 2022. '[Unpaid work, gender equity and health: how can Ukraine benefit from time-use data?](#)'. 20 December.

<sup>17</sup> Calculations are based on data from UNDP. 2023. [Ukraine: Human Impact Assessment](#). June.

<sup>18</sup> Calculations are based on *ibid.* and 2021 data from the State Statistics Service of Ukraine. The calculations are based on the following formula: number of hours of additional unpaid work per week x hourly rate (using compensation rate for foster carers in Ukraine) x number of weeks since the start of the war x number of affected people = potential cost implications due to increase in unpaid work.

<sup>19</sup> UNFPA. 2023. [The Role of Men in Parenthood During the Full-Scale War](#). August.

<sup>20</sup> World Bank. 2023. [Ukraine - Third Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment \(RDNA3\): February 2022–December 2023](#) (English). Washington, DC: World Bank Group: 78.

<sup>21</sup> Results of the survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service from 28 September to 4 October 2023.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

**4. Women are willing to retrain for new employment in new areas.** Women are generally inclined to learn and retrain for new professions and accumulate skills, but current opportunities have deteriorated significantly. The study, *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors*, shows that only 27.7 per cent of women (compared to 32.3 per cent of men) insist on working in their current profession. Instead, the majority of respondents are ready to learn a new profession or specialty (67.3 per cent of women vs 65.8 per cent of men),<sup>23</sup> while 15.3 per cent of unemployed women say they lack skills and competencies required by employers when looking for jobs.<sup>24</sup>

Women are eager to take advantage of the State Employment Service (SES) system of training vouchers as well as retraining courses and educational hubs sponsored by enterprises and or civil society organizations. In 2023, more than 18,000 Ukrainians received SES vouchers: 72 per cent of them were used by women. The specialties preferred by women are psychology, healthcare, education and social work. Meanwhile, women are increasingly choosing to study to become drivers in public transport, security guards, tractor drivers, turners, electric and gas welders, and deminers.<sup>25</sup>

A study by GIZ reported that almost a fifth of women surveyed are ready to acquire new professions, knowledge, skills and abilities during the war. A share of 62.5 per cent of women are ready to learn 'on the job' at a new workplace, 9.3 per cent are ready to enrol and study at a college or university at their own expense, and 16 per cent are ready to enrol and study at a free college or university. The main motivations for learning new skills are a lack of money (39.9 per cent) and the advent of attractive jobs (36.9 per cent). The lack of jobs in their current profession and specialty was mentioned by 17.7 per cent of respondents.<sup>26</sup>

**5. Beyond employment, women's entrepreneurship has strong potential in Ukraine.** More women are starting their own businesses, preferring entrepreneurship to paid employment. Since 2023, the number of sole proprietorships established by women has increased. According to official statistics, women opened almost 59 per cent of sole proprietorships in Ukraine in 2024 compared to 51 per cent in 2021. The share of women entrepreneurs among all entrepreneurs rose from 46.4 per cent in 2021 to 47.5 per cent in 2024.<sup>27</sup> It was reported that women's entrepreneurship is supported more in urban than rural areas. UCSR's research show that while some women entrepreneurs (17 per cent) feel unsupported by family and friends, most see their businesses as a good alternative to employment (78.3 per cent). For a majority, 56.5 per cent, it is a way to earn more than a salary and *all* the survey respondents said their business is a tool for self-realization. A share of 13 per cent said it is the only way to earn money to provide for their families. The causes behind this increase in women's entrepreneurship deserves further study, but some of the consequences are already being felt.

Women entrepreneurs are demonstrating an interest in developing socially responsible businesses, based on gender equality, where management supports staff capabilities, work-life balance and career development. Some 43 per cent of the women entrepreneurs surveyed for the UCSR study said they personally ensure there is no harassment of women in the company, and another third say they support equal opportunities for women and men. A share of 90 per cent of women entrepreneurs who employ both women and men adhere to the concept of equal pay for work of equal value.

Women entrepreneurs are also serving as role models to combat gender stereotypes about women's capacity and capabilities to work. According to the UCSR study, women are more likely to hire other women, so women's entrepreneurship in Ukraine is also a way to create new jobs for women. Meanwhile, 50 per cent of women entrepreneurs surveyed said that business complicates family relationships and the organization of household duties, but it creates more opportunities for the flexible organization and distribution of responsibilities during the day.

<sup>23</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*.

<sup>24</sup> Results of a survey conducted by the Razumkov Centre's sociological service from 28 September to 4 October 2023.

<sup>25</sup> Espresso. 2023. "[Support for women in business and employment: The Ministry of Economy described the programmes available in Ukraine](#)". 23 November.

<sup>26</sup> Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, 2024. *Skills for the Labour Market: Needs Assessment and Skills Mapping in Priority Recovery Sectors (2023–2024)*.

<sup>27</sup> Number of registered individual entrepreneurs as of 1 January 2024, by gender. [www.ukrstat.gov.ua](http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua).

**6. Government has made strong commitments to supporting women’s economic empowerment, but capacities are limited at the lower levels of government, and civil society can be an important ally.** In 2023–2024, the Government of Ukraine drafted and approved the Ukraine Plan, its comprehensive reform and investment strategy until 2029. It is based on the vision of a gender-equal Ukraine as a strong European country and a magnet for foreign investment. The Ukraine Plan can serve gender equality by making all proposed programmes and reforms gender-sensitive, strengthening them with mechanisms to identify violations and implementing necessary sanctions.

The Government has encouraged international partners to do more to support women’s empowerment. This was done at the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC) held in Berlin in June 2024, where the Governments of Ukraine and Germany and UN Women supported the launching of the Alliance for Gender Responsive and Inclusive Recovery of Ukraine: a coalition of 15 donor governments, major international financial institutions and numerous partners from civil society and the private sector, who committed to increasing their support for gender-responsive recovery in Ukraine.<sup>28</sup>

Strong gender equality laws and policies exist in Ukraine, but interviews and group discussions carried out by the UCSR revealed the lack of effective supervision and control over compliance with these laws, policies, regulations and requirements. Ukraine is making significant progress in meeting its commitments to the provisions of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and has laws that promote gender equality, for example, the law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” and the law “On Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence.” UCSR in-depth interviews found, however, that there is a lack of mechanisms for supervision and monitoring of gender equality measures and sanctions for non-compliance and that if the laws or frameworks stipulate practical programmes, funding is lacking.

While higher levels of government and management have demonstrated openness and a commitment to gender equality, the study found less commitment and capacity to advance gender equality at lower levels of decision-making and implementation. Representatives of small territorial communities show the least understanding of and interest in gender equality and its basic principles. At times, they do not implement national gender equality policies, lack competent gender equality specialists, and the heads of territorial communities note that they need further education and training. Only one third of the heads of territorial communities are women. This significantly affects any decisions made on policies and projects related to gender equality and their sensitivity to gender.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play a significant role in implementing programmes in Ukraine related to gender equality and women’s economic empowerment. Their work at the local level strengthens their understanding of local contexts and needs and their expertise and networks can be further leveraged for closer cooperation with the private sector and government to support women’s economic empowerment, women’s entrepreneurship and women’s involvement in Ukraine’s recovery from the war.

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<sup>28</sup> United Nations Ukraine. 2024. “[Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery in Ukraine Launched with strong support of governments, UN agencies, private sector and civil society](#)”. Press Release. 12 June.

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## Main recommendations

Based on the above findings of the UCSR study, UN Women makes the following recommendations. Implementing the recommendations will require cooperation from multiple stakeholders, which include the Government of Ukraine, local and regional authorities and all other relevant governmental bodies, international organizations, donors, businesses, trade unions, employers' associations, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, the media and others.

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### The main recommendations are:

#### 1. Ensure that employment laws and policies more thoroughly address and respond to discrimination in the workplace.

The Labour Code provides protection against discrimination, but according to the European Commission more can be done to align Ukrainian legislation with EU legislation on non-discrimination in employment.<sup>29</sup> Sanctions against discrimination are not enforced.<sup>30</sup> The UCSR study reported that discrimination against women occurs upon entry to the workforce (recruitment and hiring) and once in the workforce (conditions of employment, treatment in the workplace and opportunities for advancement). While legislation obliges employers to take measures to prevent and protect against sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence, direct requirements or procedures for prevention and protection are lacking. Ukraine should ratify ILO Convention 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.<sup>31</sup>

#### 2. Develop more incentive programmes for companies to employ women with equal pay.

In September 2023, the Government of Ukraine adopted the National Strategy for Closing the Gender Pay Gap until 2030 and approved an Action Plan for 2023–2025. As the primary source of inequality between men and women in the workplace is the segregation of women and men in different sectors and in different positions within sectors, concrete measures are needed to reduce the gender gaps. Initiatives such as government- and NGO-supported retraining programmes for new professions, particularly those in high demand due to the war, have helped women to enter and thrive in the workforce.<sup>32</sup> As part of the above Strategy, in September 2024, the Ministry of the Economy, supported by UN Women, launched the “Of Course You Can” campaign to improve public awareness of the gender pay gap and promote action. Private companies are encouraged to sign onto the global Women Empowerment Principles (WEPS) which help empower women in the workplace.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> European Commission Staff Working Document, Ukraine 2023 Report: 109.

<sup>30</sup> In August 2022, Ukraine approved rules of procedure on penalties for non-compliance with anti-discrimination legislation. The Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights (ombudsperson), as the main body for combating discrimination, has limited capacity to enforce its mandate in employment and social policies. Moreover, the power of labour inspectors is limited under martial law, and there seem to be few cases on employment discrimination brought to the courts. European Commission Staff Working Document, Ukraine 2023 Report: 110.

<sup>31</sup> European Commission Staff Working Document, Ukraine 2023 Report: 111.

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<sup>32</sup> Ukraine, National Report on the results of a comprehensive review at the national level on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) in 2020–2024, May 2024: 5.

<sup>33</sup> More on the WEPS is available here: <https://unglobalcompact.org/take-action/action/womens-principles>

### **3. Promote women’s entrepreneurship through mentorships, training, business development support, grants and low-interest loans for women.**

As found in the UCSR study, women are ready and willing to start their own businesses. Detailed research carried out on the needs and challenges faced by Ukrainian entrepreneurs by Abt Britain and the Kyiv School of Economics recommended various ways to support them. For women entrepreneurs, this includes the organization of more targeted training programmes, access to separate credit lines, opportunities to take part in public tenders (and gender-responsive procurement), the development of business associations and more information campaigns to tackle discrimination and stereotypes. Specialized support programmes are recommended for women with disabilities, women veterans, IDPs and rural women.<sup>34</sup> The UCSR study reported women being more open to participating in grant projects and more likely to consider getting money for business development through existing government and international support programmes. There is therefore a need for more public and private investment in training, mentorship, business development support and access to credit lines, guarantees and insurance for women entrepreneurs.

**4. Apply gender-responsive budgeting to public revenue and expenditure management systems at the national, regional and local levels, especially for budgeting of recovery.** The UCSR study identifies a lack of funding to enforce laws prescribing gender equality. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) is a useful tool to ensure that public finance systems adequately support gender equality initiatives in public administration. GRB can encourage economic recovery and workforce development initiatives to take women’s needs into account. When gender gaps are identified or highlighted through the application of GRB, government institutions can target available resources to support sustainable, inclusive development and recovery.

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<sup>34</sup> The study recommends that bank and financial institutions receive benefits (including tax benefits) for the provision of targeted credit products for women entrepreneurs and that the state provide guarantees on these loans. Abt Britain and Kyiv School of Economics. Jan 2024. “Needs of and Challenges Faced by Ukrainian Female Entrepreneurs in the conditions of Full-Scale War.” Report developed under the UK Good Governance Fund project “Business Revitalization in Ukraine.”

**5. Encourage international donors, especially members of the Alliance for Gender Responsive and Inclusive Recovery, to apply and report on the use of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) Gender Marker.** Recent OECD data show that, while official development assistance to Ukraine jumped from US\$1.3 billion in 2021 to US\$18.9 billion in 2022, 90 percent—or US\$17.1 billion—of this funding did not include any gender equality objectives. Only US\$44 million, a mere 1 percent, was allocated to efforts to advance gender equality as the principal objective.<sup>35</sup> The OECD-DAC Gender Marker can measure the extent to which international financial support for Ukraine’s recovery is allocated to projects and initiatives that directly promote gender equality and the needs of Ukraine’s women in all their diversity.

**6. Expand the provision of quality and safe early childhood, elder and disability care services by government and private sector institutions to reduce the care burden on women.** If women are to join the workforce and be part of formal employment in Ukraine, measures are needed to reduce the unequal burden of care for their households, including care for children, the elderly and disabled family members. The main reason for unemployment in 2021 for women aged 15 to 60 was domestic and family responsibilities (53 per cent).<sup>36</sup> Ukraine has passed legislation to provide maternity, paternity and parental leave, but this should be paid and made mandatory for both parents, and the state has more to do to develop and finance preschool education and alternative forms of childcare and aged care, and to encourage employers to implement family-friendly policies.

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<sup>35</sup> United Nations Ukraine. 2024. “[Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery in Ukraine Launched with strong support of governments, UN agencies, private sector and civil society](#)”. Press Release. 12 June.

<sup>36</sup> State Statistics Service of Ukraine. 2022. [Statistical Yearbook of Ukraine 2021](#). Kyiv.



**7. Develop a long-term public communications campaigns and school-based gender-transformative curricula to promote social norm change towards gender-equal opportunities in employment and gender-equal roles in care work.** A discriminatory culture that holds strong beliefs in gender stereotypes is the core barrier to women's economic empowerment. It prevents women and girls from reaching their full potential in any career or job they choose. It prevents women from working at all, due to the still prevalent belief, revealed by the UCSR study, that they should be wholly responsible for the care of households. These beliefs are held by men, women, boys and girls and a cultural shift is needed to change such social norms. The study notes the important role that the media can potentially play and the fundamental role that schools already play in shaping and shifting gender norms and perceptions of gender roles in society.

**8. Promote science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education for girls.** Women have been historically underrepresented in STEM fields, which tend to be higher paid and considered of higher value. Many of the fastest-growing job sectors are in STEM fields and in male-dominated professions. Promoting STEM education for girls is one prerequisite for more women entering male-dominated fields of work over the medium and long term. Similar to women's participation in the labour force more generally, women's participation in STEM is an opportunity for Ukraine that has not been leveraged.



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**9. Set targets for increasing women's leadership at all levels of government, elected and appointed, and on company boards.** When women are leaders in government and businesses, they can support initiatives that empower women, serve as role models, challenge gender stereotypes and are more likely to address gender-based discrimination. The UCSR study found that, at the level of territorial communities, understanding of gender issues and the use of gender-sensitive practices remain low. A 40 percent gender quota was applied in the October 2020 local elections. In the next elections, it will be important to retain this quota and to ensure that it is effectively applied at all levels. As Ukraine progresses in transposing the European Union acquis, it will also be called upon to apply the Directive that aims for gender balance among directors of listed companies.<sup>37</sup>

**10. Regularly collect, analyse and publish data to monitor women's labour participation, gender employment discrimination, the gender care burden and the gender pay gap.** Data are needed to make informed decisions, to engage stakeholders, to create evidence-based policies and to measure the impact of policies and programmes on women's economic empowerment. However, there are particular problems with gathering data during the war. Due to martial law, the State Statistics Service of Ukraine has suspended the collection of official statistical data and the conduct of national sample statistical surveys, resulting in a lack of gender-sensitive statistics. Gender-sensitive data are also insufficient in sociological studies and surveys. Ministries, departments and regional administrations rarely collect data and knowledge on women in the labour market, entrepreneurship and the status of vulnerable categories of women. Data collection processes—with a dual focus on women in formal and informal employment to use for policymaking on protection against discrimination, sexual harassment, fines and non-payment of wages, unjustified dismissals and other barriers to women's economic empowerment—should be reinitiated and financed.

<sup>37</sup> By mid-2026, every stock-listed company within the European Union needs to have at least 40 per cent female non-executive directors or have a female representation of executive and non-executive of at least 33 per cent. Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures.