

# The Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group in Ukraine

A Case Study of Good Practices and Lessons Learned



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# Acknowledgements



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# Acronyms



<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation	<b>ICCG</b>	Inter-Cluster Coordination Group
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-Based Violence	<b>IDP</b>	Internally Displaced Persons
<b>GiHA</b>	Gender in Humanitarian Action	<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex
<b>GiHA WG</b>	Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group	<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>HCT</b>	Humanitarian Country Team	<b>RBM</b>	Results-Based Management
<b>HNRP</b>	Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan	<b>RGA</b>	Rapid Gender Analysis
<b>HPC</b>	Humanitarian Programme Cycle	<b>ToR</b>	Terms of Reference
<b>HRP</b>	Humanitarian Response Plan	<b>WLO</b>	Women-Led Organizations
<b>IASC</b>	Inter-Agency Standing Committee	<b>WRO</b>	Women Rights Organisation

# Introduction



Since 2022, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) in Ukraine has been actively working to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into humanitarian response efforts across the country. This report showcases good practices from the GiHA WG in Ukraine and distils key lessons learned to date. It aims to inspire GiHA working groups globally and facilitate cross-context learning among humanitarian actors. By highlighting concrete examples from Ukraine, the case study contributes to the broader learning agenda on how GiHA working groups can serve as a strategic mechanism for advancing gender-responsive humanitarian action.



*The GiHA working group is a powerful tool for coordination and a good platform for networking and advocacy.*

– Representative from a local Women Rights Organisation (WRO) in Ukraine

# Background

In 2025, an estimated 305 million people globally will need urgent humanitarian assistance and protection as multiple crises intensify, causing devastating impacts on those affected.<sup>1</sup> Gender plays a critical role in humanitarian action worldwide, shaping the way crises impact individuals and communities. Women, men, girls, boys, and LGBTIQ+ people experience humanitarian emergencies differently due to pre-existing inequalities, social roles, and access to resources. Gender-sensitive/responsive humanitarian responses are essential to address these disparities, ensuring equitable access to aid, rights, opportunities and empowering affected populations.

To adequately address gender considerations in humanitarian contexts, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), recommends the establishment of GiHA working groups.<sup>2</sup> GiHA working groups are crucial for coordinating and leading efforts to address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of people of all genders, fostering more inclusive and equitable outcomes in times of crisis. The presence of GiHA working groups (or equivalents) in humanitarian contexts has increased from 44% in 2018 to 88% in 2023.<sup>3,4</sup> In 2024 there were 35 GiHA working groups at regional, national or sub-national levels, across 22 countries.<sup>5</sup> Twenty-nine of these groups were co-chaired by UN Women.<sup>6</sup>

GiHA WGs' nature, role and effectiveness around the world are still not well documented and explored. A 2020 evaluation highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities.<sup>7</sup> They included lack of funding, limited expertise of gender focal

points and lack of connections with clusters' operations and decision-making. Having dedicated gender expertise and resources, strong links to the Inter-Sector Coordination Group Secretariat for strategic decision-making, staff focused on sector-specific implementation, and longer operational timeframes were identified as opportunities.

With the increase in GiHA working groups, Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) have steadily progressed in meeting the 2017 IASC Gender Policy standards.<sup>8</sup> The share of HCTs consulting local women's organizations at least once a year increased from 56% to 85%. In 2023, 82% of Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) and Humanitarian Needs and Response Plans (HNRPs) included provisions to address all three key gender priorities: economic empowerment, gender-based violence, and sexual and reproductive health. This marks a significant increase from just 45% in 2018. Whilst good progress has been made, the proportion of HCTs with a Gender Strategy/Action Plan (50 per cent) and those who conduct joint gender analyses (58 per cent) remains low.

1 [Global Humanitarian Overview 2025](#)

2 [IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 2024](#)

3 [IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report 2023](#)

4 [IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report 2024](#)

5 [Global Mapping of GiHA WG \(Internal UN Women\)](#)

6 [To read more about UN Women's coordination role and results in humanitarian action, please refer to the UN Women Humanitarian Action Annual Report](#)

7 [The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation \(IAHE\) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls \(GEEWG\), 2020](#)

8 [IASC review of the implementation of the Gender Accountability Framework 2018–2023 IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report 2023](#)

# Gender in Humanitarian Action in Ukraine



All Ukrainian citizens face significant and varied challenges due to the Russian Federation's ongoing aggression. In 2024 the numbers of casualties increased by 30% compared to 2023, and attacks on civilians continued to rise in 2025. Women and girls especially face compounded vulnerabilities.<sup>9</sup> Women and children make up more than half of those in need and account for 64% of internally displaced people.<sup>10</sup>

Women in Ukraine face higher poverty rates, greater mental health challenges, and a disproportionate share of caregiving responsibilities, particularly for older relatives and individuals with disabilities.<sup>11</sup> The growing burden of unpaid care work further restricts their economic opportunities and access to assistance.<sup>12</sup> Women experience higher unemployment than men, a gender gap in wages<sup>13</sup> and are more dependent on humanitarian aid. The gender pension gap — where women receive 30% less than men — leaves older women especially vulnerable, compounding their financial insecurity.<sup>14</sup> Approximately 2.4 million people in Ukraine — primarily women and girls (89%), but also men and boys — are at high risk of gen-

der-based violence (GBV),<sup>15</sup> as reported cases of violence are on the increase.

Men are more likely to be affected by direct exposure to hostilities, and changes in conscription policy hinder their access to humanitarian services, employment and safety.<sup>16</sup> Men account for 80 per cent of civilian casualties from landmines and unexploded ordinance, while boys made up an additional 10 per cent.<sup>17</sup> Men and boys, particularly those displaced or living with disabilities, face barriers to accessing healthcare and psychosocial support, including due to stigma around applying to mental health services.<sup>18</sup>

While gender alone is not a sole determinant of vulnerability, it can intensify the severity of needs and challenges, especially when combined with factors such as age, disability, and household composition. This impact is even more pronounced among other vulnerable groups, including Roma and other ethnic minorities,<sup>19</sup> LGBTIQ+ individuals,<sup>20</sup> and people living with HIV+.<sup>21</sup>

Women's rights organizations (WROs) in Ukraine are playing a crucial role in responding to the humanitarian crisis. They were among the first responders during the escalation of the war in 2022 and have deep-rooted connections with affected communities.<sup>22</sup> Yet many struggle with lack of multi-year funding and access to decision making on the humanitarian response.<sup>23, 24</sup>

9 [Ukraine Rapid Gender Analysis, CARE 2024](#)

10 [Ukraine 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan](#)

11 [Vulnerability Assessment, REACH, CCCM Cluster, 2024](#)

12 [Ukraine Rapid Gender Analysis, CARE 2024](#)

13 [Women's Economic Empowerment in Ukraine during Russia's Invasion, UN Women, 2024](#)

14 [Ukraine Rapid Gender Analysis, CARE 2024](#)

15 [Ukraine 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan](#)

16 [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment, REACH 2024](#)

17 [Ukraine: Worsening impact on civilians of Russia's attack, torture of prisoners of war, HRMMU 2024](#)

18 [Ukraine Rapid Gender Analysis, CARE 2024](#)

19 [The Situation of Roma Communities during the war in Ukraine, Voice of Romni 2024](#)

20 [Strategic and Practical Recommendations of the LGBTIQ+ Communities Working Group, Ukraine Protection Cluster 2024](#)

21 [The Impact of War on Women Living with HIV in Ukraine, Positive Women 2024](#)

22 [Rapid Assessment: Impact of the War in Ukraine on Women's Civil Society Organizations, UN Women 2022](#)

23 [Impact of United States Funding Suspension on Ukrainian Women's Organizations, UN Women 2025](#)

24 [Mapping of Women's Rights organisations in Ukraine, UN Women 2025 \(Forthcoming\)](#)

Ensuring gender equality in the humanitarian response is critical to addressing the distinct needs, barriers and vulnerabilities of women, men, girls, and boys affected by the war. A gender-sensitive response ensures that aid reaches those who need it most, promotes diverse women's participation in decision-making, and strengthens long-term re-

covery efforts by fostering inclusive and resilient communities. Failing to consider gender dynamics can lead to unequal access to resources and services, ultimately deepening existing inequalities and prolonging the vulnerability and suffering of the most affected.

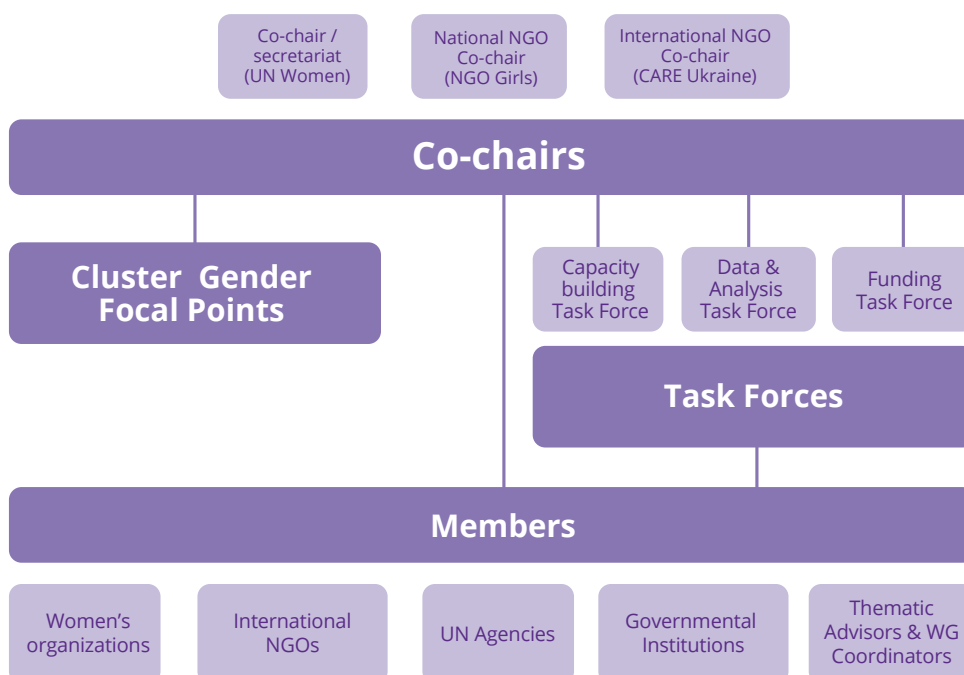
# The GiHA Working Group in Ukraine

Following the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the GiHA Sub-Group was established and later formalized in 2023 as the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working

Group, after UN Women became a full member of the Humanitarian Country Team. The GiHA Working Group's overarching objective is to ensure the coordinated humanitarian response in Ukraine robustly integrates gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, adhering to the guidelines established the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action Gender Policy. The GiHA WG offers interagency and intersectoral technical support to the Humanitarian Coordinator, the HCT and all other stakeholders involved in the humanitarian response, including government authorities. The GiHA Working Group is guided by a terms of reference (ToR) and an annual work plan.<sup>25</sup> It is co-chaired by UN Women, an international humanitarian NGO and a national CSO.

<sup>25</sup> [GiHA Ukraine Terms of Reference](#)

## GiHA Working Group in Ukraine Organigramme



## The 2025 GiHA Work Plan: Anticipated Outcomes and Outputs<sup>26</sup>

### Outcome 1

The UN-led inter-agency humanitarian response coherently and systematically contributes to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian crisis



#### Output 1.1

Strengthened UN system-wide coordination and cooperation for gender-responsive humanitarian action in Ukraine.



#### Output 1.2

Increased production, analysis and use of gender statistics, analysis and gender, age and disability disaggregated data.



#### Output 1.3

Increased capacity of humanitarian actors across the cluster and subcluster system to advance commitments to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across the humanitarian planning cycle.

### Outcome 2

Vulnerable women, LGBTIQ+ persons, former combatants, people with disabilities, internally displaced persons (IDPs), Roma communities, and older women and men increased their leadership and agency through enabling environment that fosters their meaningful participation in coordination, programming, implementation, and decision-making structures within humanitarian action



#### Output 2.1

Local women rights and women-led organizations access funding, tools, and resources to advance women's leadership in the development, implementation and monitoring of humanitarian and early recovery plans in Ukraine.



#### Output 2.2

Inclusive, meaningful participation and leadership of marginalized groups including vulnerable women and LGBTIQ+ persons, former combatants, people with disabilities, IDPs, Roma communities, older women and men voices in the coordination, programming and implementation as well as decision-making structures of humanitarian action.

<sup>26</sup> GiHA Ukraine 2025 Work Plan

# Good Practices and Lessons Learned from Ukraine

Since 2022 the GiHA WG in Ukraine has played a key role in the humanitarian landscape and contributed to ensuring that gendered considerations are integrated into humanitarian response efforts.

## AN INCLUSIVE PLATFORM, PROMOTING LOCAL WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION

A main goal of the GiHA WG in Ukraine is to enhance women's leadership and agency by creating an enabling environment that ensures their meaningful participation in coordination, programming, implementation, monitoring, and decision-making structures within humanitarian action.



### Good Practices

**DIVERSE MEMBERSHIP:** The GiHA WG currently has over 400 members, including representatives from more than 100 Ukrainian WROs. Members include representatives from international organisations, UN agencies, local civil society organisations and donors. There is great diversity in geographical spread, thematic expertise and representatives of different groups of women

and girls, as well as vulnerable men and boys. The working group includes representatives from local CSOs that work to advance the rights of people with intersecting marginalization; for example, women with disabilities, Roma women, LGBTIQ+ people and IDPs. The diversity of members in the working group creates an inclusive platform and an enabling environment for different actors to collaborate and learn from each other.

**CO-CHAIRING ARRANGEMENT:** The GiHA WG is co-chaired by UN Women, an international NGO (currently CARE Ukraine), and a national WRO (currently NGO Girls). Together they provide leadership on GiHA integration within the inter-agency humanitarian coordination mechanism, engage members in agenda-setting and work plan development and implementation, and facilitate coordination and information-sharing. Several GiHA members mentioned during interviews that having a local NGO as co-chair is a critical component of ensuring local ownership and accountability to people being supported in the humanitarian operation.

*Meetings are held regularly and always with a clear agenda. Communication from the co-chairs is timely, meaningful and clear. During the meetings, relevant topics are raised, and there is an opportunity to share experiences and ask questions. It is nice that feedback from participants is taken into account, as well as access to useful materials, analytics and training opportunities that help strengthen the capacity of organisations.*

WRO Mapping Survey Respondent

**TASK FORCES:** The GiHA WG is supported by three task forces, which are aligned with the IASC policy on gender equality priorities. The Capacity Strengthening Task Force focuses on training initiatives for national Women-Led and Women's Rights Organizations (WLO/WRO), local/national humanitarian actors, and international

stakeholders. The Task Force on Gender Analysis in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) is dedicated to embedding gender-sensitive data and analysis in humanitarian products, producing gender-responsive knowledge products (such as alerts and snapshots), and strengthening gender analysis skills of GiHA partners. Lastly, the Resource Mobilization and Capacity Support Task Force works to enhance funding access and organizational capacity for Ukrainian WLO/WRO, producing actionable insights and mapping tools to support equitable resource distribution and participation in humanitarian efforts.

### SHOWCASING WROS' WORK AND CONNECTING THEM WITH HUMANITARIAN PROCESSES:

Monthly GiHA WG meetings regularly include presentations from local WROs on their current programmes, priorities, assessments and research. This increases the visibility of WROs' work, supports the sharing of best practices and facilitates collaboration with other relevant actors. The presentations keep members informed of key priorities and emerging trends related to gender equality, which can guide and strengthen their own initiatives. GiHA meetings also cover practical topics such as the Activity Info, the Assessment Registry and funding application procedures.

*Women with disabilities are often only seen as victims and the most vulnerable, and for us the GiHA WG was about equal partnership. We are able to share experiences on who is working on what and where, and share capacities. It is a very transparent way for collaboration and to be on the same page on humanitarian actions.*

- GiHA member and representative of a WRO working for women with disabilities

**CLEAR GOALS AND WORK PLANS:** The working group has a clear ToR<sup>27</sup> and annual work plan,<sup>28</sup> which outlines key priorities, planned activities and key milestones, and defines roles and responsibilities for each priority area. The annual work plan is co-created with working group members and in consultation with the humanitarian clusters. Co-creation of the workplan ensures improved localization, ownership and participation of women and other marginalized groups in humanitarian action.

### ACCESSIBLE AND REGULAR MEETINGS:

WROs often face time and resource constraints in participating in humanitarian coordination meetings, and thus it is important to ensure regularity, accessibility and relevance of GiHA meetings. The working group has instituted a standing meeting in hybrid format as part of its practice to help maximize country-wide participation. The average participation rate during meetings is 70 people online and 15 people in person. Simultaneous Ukrainian-English interpretation is provided at all meetings. A clear meeting schedule ensures the consistency and regularity of convenings. After each meeting, materials discussed and presented are shared swiftly and published on [Relief Web](#) for easy access. Items actioned in a meeting are included in the subsequent meeting agenda to ensure follow-up and track progress.



## Lessons Learned

**Consistent, well-funded, and stable leadership is essential for the strategic effectiveness and continuity of the GiHA WG.** The GiHA WG was established in 2022 shortly after the full-scale Russian invasion, based on global best practice. Initially GiHA membership was extremely fluid, as organizations and their staff often migrated to

<sup>27</sup> [GiHA Ukraine Terms of Reference](#)

<sup>28</sup> [GiHA Ukraine 2025 Work Plan](#)

safer areas, and new international and national organizations entered the humanitarian space. Many Ukrainian organisations pivoted from a development focus to a humanitarian response. UN Women's own representative in the GiHA WG also changed several times in the first year of the full-scale war. The GiHA WG stabilized and began to work more strategically when it was supported by fully funded coordinators whose ToRs specified their coordination role.

**Creating a safe, inclusive, and enabling environment is essential to ensuring meaningful participation of local women's organizations in the GiHA Working Group.** To create a fully inclusive platform that gives space to local WROs/WLOs and CSOs representing marginalized groups, there is a need to consistently consider how to create a safe space for women's participation. For example ensuring that everyone feels safe to speak up, ask questions and present their priorities. Through the good practices mentioned above, such as providing interpretation and having a local WRO as co-chair, the GiHA WG has made dedicated efforts to create an enabling environment. The importance of this as a cross-cutting priority is a key lesson learned and needs to continue to be prioritised to enable even wider participation.

**Adequate human and financial resourcing enables the GiHA WG to play a vital role in humanitarian coordination and effectively elevate the leadership of local WROs/WLOs.** When appropriate human and financial resources are allocated to it, a GiHA working group can assert itself as a critical mechanism in the humanitarian coordination structure, significantly raising the status and leadership of local WROs/WLOs and supporting humanitarian partners to mainstream gender equality throughout the humanitarian response. In Ukraine this has involved 3 full-time staff (1 GiHA Programme Specialist, 2 Programme Assistants), 1 part-time staff (Project Coordination Officer) and an annual budget for operationalising the work plan of approximately USD 500,000. CARE International and NGO Girls have appointed one co-chair each, with a minimum commitment of 20% of their time, to ensure the effective coordination of the GiHA Working Group in Ukraine.

## A COMMITMENT TO GENERATING GENDER DATA AND ANALYSES

The GiHA WG has since its inception placed a particular emphasis on the importance of humanitarian actors collecting, analysing and using gender data to inform decision-making at all levels.



### CONDUCTING GENDER-SPECIFIC RESEARCH:

The GiHA WG has led or supported dedicated gender research in Ukraine, including rapid gender analyses (RGAs). Prominent examples include the 2022 RGA (UN Women and CARE) and the [2023](#) and 2024 RGAs (CARE). These have been used to inform humanitarian needs assessments and response plans. In 2025, the working group collaborated with the Office of the Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy of Ukraine in the production of a rapid assessment of the impact on Ukrainian WROs of the suspension of US foreign assistance. This supported multiple stakeholders to advocate for increased focus on funding to WROs as key humanitarian responders and a bulwark against the erosion of gender equality. Local WROs have also conducted area or subject-specific assessments, which can be instrumental to addressing the needs of particular populations. In 2024, 14 different reports, assessments, surveys and research initiatives related to gender equality were presented and discussed by GiHA WG members during GiHA meetings.<sup>29</sup>

### PROVIDING INPUT TO HUMANITARIAN ASSESSMENTS:

Input has also been provided by GiHA members into wider humanitarian assessments, including the [Multi-Sector Needs Assessment](#) (MSNA), with recommendations on how to ensure data collection tools and analyses are gender-responsive.

<sup>29</sup> [Many of these reports can be found on the GiHA Relifeweb page](#) and/or in [the OCHA assessment registry](#)

This has included how to make household surveys considerate of intersectional gender dynamics and to include disaggregation by gender, age and disability. Several workshops were organised to support enumerators for various humanitarian assessments (including the MSNA) on gender-responsive and feminist data collection approaches and principles. The GiHA WG also provided input into the development of the [MSNA Gender, Age and Disability Situation Overview](#).

### COMPILING AND DISSEMINATING GENDER DATA AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

The GiHA WG has had an important role to play in disseminating data to its members and other humanitarian actors. For example, the GiHA WG has compiled key gender considerations into tip-sheets for different humanitarian clusters and has shared wider data from the MSNA to WRO to be able to use in their planning. The main purpose of the tip-sheets was to support clusters to ensure that their planning and response efforts are underpinned by key gender considerations, evidence and best practices.

**Providing concrete tailored, and actionable recommendations for specific clusters increases the likelihood that gender analysis findings will be effectively applied in planning and response efforts.** A key lesson learnt over the years of developing RGAs in consultations with WROs/WLOs and providing support to humanitarian actors on gender-responsive data collection and analysis, is the need for very specific and relevant recommendations. It is critical to have concrete and actionable recommendations for each humanitarian cluster, based on key findings, for them to be picked up and used by clusters in their planning. The "Closing the Gender Gap in Humanitarian Action in Ukraine" report prepared by the GiHA WG provides an analysis of the gaps and advancements identified by clusters in light of the recommendations outlined in the 2022 RGA. For example, it shows how the Food Security and Livelihood (FSL) cluster has taken the recommended actions to further consult women on food distribution and allocated grants to women-led value chains, such as dairy production and beekeeping.

## Lessons Learned

**Producing and sharing credible gender data and analysis is essential for gaining recognition, building legitimacy, and ensuring meaningful integration of the GiHA WG into the humanitarian coordination system.** When the GiHA WG was still new, it struggled to be meaningfully integrated into the humanitarian system. A key turning point occurred when GiHA collected gender data and analysis which it made available to the humanitarian system. This included for example the publication of the Rapid Assessment: Impact of the War in Ukraine on Women's Civil Society Organizations<sup>30</sup> and Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine (RGA) in 2022.<sup>31</sup>

30 [Rapid Assessment: Impact of the War in Ukraine on Women's Civil Society Organizations, UN Women 2022](#)

31 [Rapid Gender Analysis of Ukraine \(RGA\) in 2022, UN Women and CARE International](#)

## GENDER IN THE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMME CYCLE AND HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

### Good Practices

#### CONSULTATIONS WITH DIVERSE WROS:

The GiHA WG has facilitated consultations with a diverse range of WROs to help inform the humanitarian response. To make humanitarian decision-makers more aware of the needs and concerns of war-affected people with intersecting vulnerabilities and marginalisation, the GiHA WG has organized dialogue events between the HCT, UNCT, Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), and Ukrainian organizations representing women and LGBTIQ+ people who are displaced, elderly, disabled, and Roma communities. The outcome of

the dialogues included clear commitments of the UNCT/HCT members towards these marginalised groups.

### CLUSTER-SPECIFIC SUPPORT ON GENDER EQUALITY:

The GiHA WG supported cluster coordinators and gender focal points to better integrate gender equality considerations into their cluster-specific plans and budgets. This has, for example, included conducting workshops and providing each cluster with tailored gender tip-sheets with key recommendations. Gender focal points are governed by a ToR developed by GiHA WG with clear time and resource commitments from clusters. They play a critical role in ensuring gender is well integrated into cluster plans and responses, and support overall monitoring of response quality. For example, the Gender Focal points — in collaboration with Disability Focal Points, the LGBTIQ+ Communities Technical Working Group and the Age and Disability Technical Working Group — lead an annual assessment of the HNRP using a modified Gender with Age Marker (GAM) tool. Cluster responses are assessed on the extent to sex, age and disability disaggregated data is coupled with needs analysis for different groups and the extent to which data and analysis consistently inform tailored assistance and monitoring indicators for different groups.<sup>32</sup>



## Lessons Learned

**Due to limited capacity and the complexity of humanitarian coordination structures, the GiHA WG must focus and prioritize its support on the most strategic areas to ensure impactful and high-quality gender integration.** Support extended to the coordination mechanism needs to be prioritized. Gender is a cross-cutting issue, and ideally, the GiHA WG would have the

<sup>32</sup> “Gender with Age Marker (GAM) Coding Report Card for Clusters, Ukraine HNRP 2025” Produced by Cluster/AoR Gender Focal Points, Disability Focal Points, LGBTIQ+ Communities Technical WG, Gender in Humanitarian Action WG, Age and Disability Technical WG

resources and capacity to provide tailored and targeted support at all levels and throughout the coordination mechanism. But its size and complexity – which in Ukraine includes nine cluster, three sub-clusters and 11 working groups – imposes constraints on the support that can be provided by the GiHA WG and the Gender Focal Points. The GiHA WG must prioritize its offer and efforts to target the most strategic areas – key clusters and HPC processes – to deliver quality inputs.

**It is critical to contextualise and adapt global tools and definitions to suit each context.** For example the GiHA WG introduced a revised definition of Women’s Rights Organizations (WROs) tailored to the Ukrainian context. While many women-led organizations (WLOs) engage in humanitarian work, they do not always prioritize the specific needs of crisis-affected women and girls or focus on gender equality. Existing global definitions from the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Grand Bargain, and UN Partner Portals do not fully capture these distinctions. The GiHA WG’s definition clarifies the difference between WLO and those actively dedicated to advancing women’s rights and gender equality, whether solely or alongside other priorities.

## CAPACITY STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR WOMEN’S RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS

Since its formation in 2022, one of the GiHA WG’s key priorities has been to strengthen WROs’ capacity as humanitarian actors in a rapidly changing context. Although some CSOs had humanitarian experience and expertise from working in war-affected eastern Ukraine since 2014, those working outside of that arena tended to be focused on development work. In 2022, they rapidly pivoted to addressing immediate humanitarian needs felt across the country. This meant navigating a new humanitarian coordination system and processes, shifting thematic priorities and working in a new donor landscape with new requirements. The GiHA WG, with the financial support of UN Wom-

en, began delivering intensive, tailored RBM and GiHA training. More than 100 WROs have completed this training since 2023.

## Good Practices

### CAPACITY NEEDS ASSESSMENTS:

The GiHA WG has continuously assessed its members' capacity-strengthening needs, to be able to deliver tailored trainings and workshops that speak to current gaps. These assessments identified for example a need to better understand gender in humanitarian action and Results-Based Management (RBM) to apply for funding from key donors and to gain a more comprehensive picture of the humanitarian cluster coordination system, as well as international humanitarian principles.

### PRACTICAL APPROACHES TO LEARNING:

Practical work has been a critical component of successful capacity-strengthening initiatives organised by GiHA. Most trainings incorporate real-world examples (from Ukraine and internationally) and provided opportunities for participants to immediately apply new knowledge in group work assignments, such as drafting mock project proposals. Training integrates familiarization with the key humanitarian data sets and information repositories, such as the Ukraine Humanitarian Assessment Database<sup>33</sup> that can be accessed and used by partners for the development of context analyses and planning documents.

### GIHA WG CAPACITY STRENGTHENING TASKFORCE:

The GiHA Capacity-Building Task Force mobilizes capacity needs assessment and ensures that capacity-strengthening goals are integrated into the GiHA annual work plan and given adequate time and resources. The task force typically targets three types of training:

- Training on the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and GiHA. (Target audience: national WLOs/WROs)

- Training on GiHA for partners in national and sub-national coordination mechanisms, focused cluster-specific gender-sensitive programming. (Target audience: national/local humanitarian partners)
- Training on GiHA for international actors, including cluster-specific gender-sensitive programming. (Target audience: Managers, operational staff, frontline workers, Clusters)

## Lessons Learned

**Peer-to-peer learning is a powerful tool for localizing capacity strengthening, as it enables women to share lived experiences and technical expertise, enriching training relevance and effectiveness.** Peer-to-peer learning is a highly effective and invaluable method for localization. In training sessions designed to support WROs, women supported each other's learning, contributing insights derived from their own life and work experiences, which greatly enriched trainings and ensured relevance. For example, during the trainings on RBM, women collaborated on specific technical areas (such as GBV), where they shared with each other their experiences, good practices and challenges. This allowed less experienced participants to learn from their peers who are technical experts in a certain topic.

**Combining training with opportunities for rest and recuperation creates a more effective and supportive learning environment, especially for women responders facing high stress and personal impact from the ongoing war.** Several trainings were held in Western Ukraine (a safer part of the country and less affected by shelling and hostilities), which created a more enabling environment for learning as well as an important opportunity for rest and recuperation. The mental health and recovery needs of women's rights defenders, who are at high risk of burn-out due to their high workloads and stressful environments, must also be taken into account.

<sup>33</sup> [Ukraine Overview of Assessments](#)

## LOCAL EFFORTS ON GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION



### Good Practices

#### REGIONAL GIHA WGS:

In 2024 two regional GiHA WGs were formed, in Zaporizhzhia and Poltava. This grew out of a need identified by local WROs for better local-level coordination. UN Women and the GiHA WG have supported these organizations to operationalize GiHA coordination structures. These working groups have their own ToR, budget and work plan, based on the identified regional needs and priorities. They are co-chaired by local WROs, and supported by UN Women with administrative, coordination and technical support. These groups work with local grass-roots organisations, women's rights activists and local authorities to influence the local humanitarian response.

#### LOCAL MONITORING, ANALYSIS AND INFLUENCE:

The regional GiHA WGs monitor local government plans and programmes, and submit recommendations on how to make these more gender-responsive. With a much more nuanced and detailed understanding of the needs and priorities of women in a particular area, they can provide concrete and relevant inputs. The Zaporizhzhia working group submitted recommendations to local authorities on how to better support internally displaced women, including on how to ensure housing for single mothers and response to GBV survivors.

#### LOCAL SYNERGIES AND COLLABORATION:

The regional working groups have also established collaborations with other local networks, working groups and coalitions consisting of both local civil society actors and authorities. The Poltava working group, for example, coordinates with the local Coalition on 1325 for Women, Peace and Security Agenda to ensure complementarity, avoid duplication and engage in collective action. GiHA WG

members have also been able to better collaborate with each other and establish referral mechanisms between CSOs providing different types of support.

#### REMOTE AND COMMUNITY-BASED DIALOGUES:

The regional GiHA WG in Poltava extended its initiatives to several remote communities to engage women, who are traditionally excluded from decision-making spaces. Widening participation has enabled the local WG to even better capture the experiences of diverse groups of women and collectively advocate for their needs and priorities to humanitarian actors.



### Lessons Learned

**Having gender experts lead local GiHA working groups and ensuring stable membership is crucial for maintaining a unified, gender-responsive approach.** A lesson learned in establishing the local GiHA WGs is the importance of having members with gender expertise leading efforts to ensure the group moves together in gender-responsive ways. It is also critical to avoid a high turnover of representatives from different organisations to the WG, by setting clear roles and expectations of members from the beginning, to avoid disruptions and fragmentation.

**Local GiHA WGs require resources and capacity support to be effective and sustainable.** In order to sustain efforts and ensure the WG operates effectively, there is an ongoing need for capacity-strengthening support and a dedicated budget for work plan activities. Training on, for example, advocacy and monitoring are needed for the whole WG and not just a few selected individuals, in order for them to be effective in practice.

## ADVOCATING FOR FUNDING FOR WROS



### Good Practices

#### GIHA WRO FUNDING TASK FORCE:

The GiHA WG Funding Task Force was mobilized in 2024 to pool evidence and expertise generated by members and to identify tangible action points towards improved funding and capacity support for WLOs and WROs in Ukraine. Key activities have included advocacy for funding for WROs and gender equality initiatives, donor engagement and sharing funding opportunities with GiHA WG members.

#### POSITION PAPERS AND ASSESSMENTS:

The task force has, for example, been involved in the development of a position paper with clear recommendations for duty-bearers on funding for WROs: *Accessible Funding for Women's Rights Organizations in Ukraine*.<sup>34</sup> It has also highlighted the acute situation for WROs after USAID funding cuts: *Impact of United States Funding Suspension on Ukrainian Women's Organizations*.<sup>35</sup>

#### COLLABORATION WITH THE WOMEN, PEACE AND HUMANITARIAN FUND:

The presence of the Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) in Ukraine has been a critical source of funding for WROs. The WPHF has less stringent application and reporting processes than other humanitarian donors, allowing more opportunities for smaller and grass-roots organisations to gain funding. The GiHA WG has continuously advertised WPHF funding opportunities and arranged information sessions.



### Lessons Learned

#### Training significantly enhances WROs' ability to develop successful funding applications.

Trainings on Results-Based Management (RBM) organised by the GiHA WG have supported local WROs to prepare funding applications. In a follow-up survey to participants from the trainings (which included over 75 WROs from across Ukraine), 82% of participants surveyed said that they developed a new project proposal using RBM principles and tools. Out of these, 38% had already received funding for their plans.

*After participating in the training, our NGO applied for funding for a project. We made a needs assessment, identified the problem, developed project results and identified risks based on the tools and formulas we learned during the training. We actually started writing the project by defining the results. Our application was approved, and we are now working on the project!*

– WRO Representative and attendee of a 4-day RBM Training

<sup>34</sup> [Accessible Funding for Women's Rights Organizations in Ukraine. UN Women 2025](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Impact of United States Funding Suspension on Ukrainian Women's Organizations. UN Women 2025](#)



# **GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION WORKING GROUP UKRAINE**

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