



INVISIBLE BATTALION



I KNOW A GIRL WHO CARRIED WOUNDED PEOPLE TO SAFETY DURING A SHELLING IN ILOVAISK WHILE MOST MEN WERE SITTING IN THE BASEMENT. IF A WOMAN, MOTHER, SISTER, OR DAUGHTER IS WILLING TO DEFEND OUR VALUES AND OUR TERRITORY, NO ONE CAN FORBID HER TO DO SO.



“INVISIBLE BATTALION”: WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN ATO MILITARY OPERATIONS

(SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH)

“I know a girl who carried wounded people to safety during a shelling in Ilovaisk while most men were sitting in the basement. If a woman, mother, sister, or daughter is willing to defend our values and our territory, no one can forbid her to do so.”

PERFORMED BY:

*Project coordinator: **Maria Berlinska**, Head of Volunteer Organization “Air Reconnaissance Support Center”*

*Academic coordinator: **Tamara Martsenyuk**, Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy*

Anna Kvit, *researcher on gender issues*

Ganna Grytsenko, *researcher on gender issues*

WRITTEN BY:

Ganna Grytsenko (Items 2.3; Items 3.1 and 3.2)

Anna Kvit (Items 2.3, 3.4)

Tamara Martsenyuk (Section 1, other parts of Sections 2 and 3)

*Under the general editorship of **Tamara Martsenyuk***

The research was made possible due to the information and financial support provided by the ICF Ukrainian Women's Fund.



The Ukrainian Women's Fund is an international charitable foundation that was founded in 2000 by a team of women leaders aimed at developing and supporting the overall women's rights movement in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. The Ukrainian Women's Fund has, through 15 years of active work, established itself as the leading and only organization in Ukraine that provides targeted and consistent financial, outreach and consultative assistance to civil society organizations that work to defend, support and promote the rights of women in their political, economic, social and everyday life. The Ukrainian Women's Fund's activities are grounded in the belief that to have a just, harmonious and successful society, equal rights between women and men must be ensured.

The research was published with financial support provided by UN Women Ukraine.



The opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily reflect the views of UN Women.

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide. UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.

This publication includes photographs requested by the Ukrainian Women's Fund in the course of a social study titled “The Invisible Battalion: Women Taking Part in ATO Military Action.” Photos by Kleopatra Anferova.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
SECTION 1. GENDER EQUALITY IN THE UKRAINIAN SOCIETY	5
1.1. Ensuring gender equality in Ukraine: legislation and international obligations	5
SECTION 2. WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES: CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION	6
2.1. Gender issues in military sociology	6
2.2. Methodology of the empirical study of women's position in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and ATO operations	6
2.3. Women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: achievements and problems of integration ...	7
2.3.1. The number of women and specifics of their employment	7
2.3.2. Prohibition of certain military occupations for women	8
2.3.3. Gender policy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	9
SECTION 3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMBAT OPERATIONS	10
3.1. Participation of women in the ATO: voices of the "invisible battalion"	10
3.1.1. Legal aspects of women's participation in the ATO	10
3.1.2. Living conditions of women in the ATO zone	12
3.1.3. Gender stereotypes concerning ATO women	12
3.1.4 Further prospects	12
3.2. Women in the ATO: Expert opinion	19
3.3. Representation of ATO women in the media	21
3.3.1. Attitude toward women in the army and distribution of gender roles in the ATO	21
3.3.2. Images of women in the ATO	21
3.3.3. The needs and concerns of women in the ATO	21
CONCLUSIONS	25

INTRODUCTION

Ukrainian society has been undergoing fundamental changes in its approach to and legitimization of gender relations in recent decades. The successful introduction and regulation of gender relations in society involves establishing the values of gender equality in society as a whole and in its various institutions, in particular. First of all, it means the prevention of gender discrimination and ensuring equal participation of women and men in public decision making. The Army is no exception, because during social problems and armed conflicts, it is important to professionally integrate and consider the interests of male and female citizens who are involved in conflict resolution and in establishing peace in the country.

Ukrainian women were involved in protests at Euromaidan 2013 – 2014, and in all activities, including in military ones (forming the so-called Women's Hundreds), on an equal basis with men. Currently, women are also fighting in the ATO, which has been repeatedly covered by media reports. However, there is still an important

question about the visibility of women and recognition of their role (on a par with men) by the state and society.

Thus, the purpose of this investigation was to ascertain the specifics of women's participation in military operations in the ATO zone, revealing both possible achievements and problems of women's integration in the military. We began with a desk research of gender aspects in the armed forces, which included analyzing statistics of women's involvement in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the status of women's integration in military structures, a review of the relevant legislation and others. Second, we presented the results of expert interviews on gender aspects of women's integration into the army in Ukraine and the women's situation in the combat zone. Third, we analyzed how the mass media portrays ATO women. Fourth, we used ethnographic research in the ATO zone (observation, interviews with women and men involved in combat actions) to clarify the legal aspects of women's participation in the ATO, the gender division of labor, living conditions, medical problems faced by women etc.

Section 1. GENDER EQUALITY IN UKRAINIAN SOCIETY

1.1. Ensuring gender equality in Ukraine: legislation and international obligations

The idea and value of gender equality are implemented primarily at the state level. Gender policy is defined as a state policy aimed at ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Certain transformation processes – the changing perception of women as mothers only to citizens with equal rights and opportunities in public life¹ – have been observed in the gender policy of the post-Soviet Ukraine. The so-called institutional regulation of gender relations, whose important part is the relevant legislation, has been developing for over twenty years.

Generally, the issue of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in Ukrainian society is governed by both general and special legislation. First, the Constitution of Ukraine (1996), Section II "The rights, freedoms and duties of man and citizen"² and the special Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men"³ (2005) contain definitions of concepts such as equal rights and opportunities for women and men, gender-based discrimination, positive actions, sexual harassment etc. Further on, the Law (Article 6) states that "gender-based discrimination shall be prohibited" and lists what is not considered gender-based discrimination. Among other things, the list includes compulsory military service for men. Despite the importance of these issues stipulated in the law, it is viewed rather as a declarative document, which lacks mechanisms to implement gender equality policy, and does not spell out responsibility for violating the law.

The international reports that measure the state of gender relations do not place Ukraine anywhere near the top. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2014⁴, prepared by the World Economic Forum, which measures the gender gap in four critical areas of inequality between men and women—economic participation, education, political representation and health sector—Ukraine ranked 56th⁵ out of the 142 countries surveyed. The international Freedom in the World annual report includes a section on "personal autonomy and individual rights". Ukraine was found a "partly free" country with a rating of 3.5⁶ in 2014. As such, it faces the following issues in relation to gender equality: "Gender discrimination is prohibited under the Constitution, but authorities show little interest in or understanding of the issue. Human rights groups complain that employers openly discriminate against people based on sex, age, and appearance".⁷

Ukraine has assumed a number of international obligations, including ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men. According to the Millennium Development Goals, set at the UN Millennium Summit in September 2000, which must be met by 2015, Ukraine determines "ensuring gender equality"⁸ among the six identified goals. Another important commitment for Ukraine concerns ratifying the major international document regarding the rights of women, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979)⁹. Ukraine is to periodically report to the Committee of the Convention on the progress of meeting its obligations. According to the results of the previous National and Alternative reports on the implementation in Ukraine of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination,

4 Global Gender Gap Report 2014. – Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2014. – p. 358 // http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR14/GGGR_CompleteReport_2014.pdf (in English)

5 The higher position in the list, the more a country is close to gender equality.

6 Out of a maximum of 7.

7 Freedom in the World 2014. Freedom House, about Ukraine. Access: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2014/ukraine-0#.U9tj6PmSwbQ> (in English) (dated August 1, 2014)

8 Millennium Development Goals: Ukraine 2015 Goal number 6 "Ensuring Gender Equality" [Electronic resource] // <http://www.ukraine2015.org.ua/tsil6> (in Ukrainian)

9 The United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women / UN Convention on the International Document 12/18/1979 [electronic resource]. - Access: http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/995_207 (in Ukrainian)

1 Martsenyuk T. Women in Ukrainian Politics: Challenges and Prospects for Change. - K.: International Center for Policy Studies, 2015. - p. 10 // <http://www.ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/handle/123456789/4441> (in Ukrainian)

2 Constitution of Ukraine from June 28, 1996 // <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80> (in Ukrainian)

3 The Law of Ukraine "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" dated September 8, 2005 r. No. 2866-IV [electronic resource]. Access: <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2866-15> (in Ukrainian)

the issue of equal rights and opportunities for men and women in Ukraine is controversial. On the one hand, Ukraine has “made real steps to create the mechanism to ensure the rights and freedoms of women in accordance with the International Human Rights Standards”.¹⁰ On the other hand, “the country has not yet changed its ideology regarding gender issues in society consistent with international trends pertaining to the matter”.¹¹

The National Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2014)¹² noted that despite the accession to international agreements and adoption of national legislation on equal rights and opportunities for women and men, there is a lack of political will to implement gender transformations, a low level of representation of women in public and political life. A significant problem is stability of stereotypes about the roles of men and women in society and family (which are spread through education and the mass media).

Section 2. WOMEN IN THE ARMED FORCES: CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION

2.1. Gender issues in military sociology

In military sociology, discussions of women’s participation in the Army are based on real opportunities for women to be professional soldiers. The main dilemma in discussing gender integration is the question of what a modern army should be like. Should it be a professionally closed group, or must it also respond to social changes in society, and to the changing role of women in society, in particular? There are two possible scenarios for women to join the armed forces. Women either adapt to the existing regulations and orders, which are “masculine” in nature, or, they change the existing structure and the nature of the army, making it gender-neutral.

2.2. Methodology of the empirical study of women’s position in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and in the military actions in the ATO zone

The empirical part of the study, which concerns the actual study of the situation of women in the armed forces of Ukraine and their participation in the ATO, consisted of two parts: desk and field studies. *The desk study* envisioned a review of previous professional (academic) national and some international studies, available media information; the results of formal requests for the corresponding statistical information to the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Internal Affairs; legislation in relation to women in the armed forces.

The field study used qualitative sociological methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews with women who were or had been in the ATO zone; interviews with men and women experts; observation (in the form of participation in several academic events); content analysis of media messages. In particular, **42 ATO women from various units were interviewed**. We used the “snowball sampling” technique to recruit

10 Report on the implementation in Ukraine of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women / [Lead of writing team L.E. Leontieva, A.V. Tolstokorova]. - Kharkov: Folio, 2007. - p. 18.

11 Ibid.

12 Gender policy and institutional mechanisms for its implementation in Ukraine: Ukraine national review of implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcome documents of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly / [Ed. Koryukalov, M.; with the assistance of the UN Women “Strengthening accountability in the financing of gender equality. EU-UN Partnership on Gender Equality” in Ukraine, Representative of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Ukraine and Ukrainian Women’s Fund]. - K., 2014. - 120 p.

the respondents. The respondents were aged 20 to 47. Also, 9 military men were interviewed about the treatment of women on the front. The respondents answered three units of survey questions: 1) legal aspect of participating in the ATO; 2) living conditions of service; 3) behavioral and psychological aspects of their stay on the front. The representation of ATO women in the media was analyzed using the **qualitative content analysis**¹³ technique. 33 media materials, including articles and videos, released in the period from April 2014 to September 2015 were analyzed in the study.

2.3. Women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: achievements and problems of integration

2.3.1. The number of women and specifics of their employment

Nataliya Dubchak writes in her article published in 2008¹⁴ that, traditionally, the Armed Forces of Ukraine used to be the most conservative social institution on the issue of women serving in the military whereas currently, almost 10% of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are women. In total, there are about 1,800 women in the military, of whom 1,151 are officers. Back then, the most numerous category of military women—about 40% of female soldiers—served under contract.

Representation of women in defense **has been increasing** which is consistent with global development trends. However, the growing number of female soldiers, especially those under contract, is not associated with the prestige of the service, but rather with the reluctance of men to hold low-paid positions¹⁵. In fact, women mostly have so-called "feminized" professions like nurses, finance, logistics, and communications.¹⁶

In early October 2015, head of the Communications and Press Agency of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine Oksana Gavrylyuk

reported at a briefing in Kiev¹⁷ that 938 women had participated in the ATO. As of early October 2015, about 14,500 female soldiers and 30,500 employees of the Armed Forces of Ukraine are in the service. Almost 2,000 are officers with 35 women holding management positions in the Ministry of Defense, General Staff and various corps of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Responding to the request for statistical information concerning the involvement of women in combat operations in the ATO zone, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine indicates that the total number of the National Guard of Ukraine is about 14,000 people, including 21 women (positions: doctor, nurse), for the ATO duration. In other words, women make up only 0.0015%. In 2014 – 2015, about 22,000 National Guard of Ukraine troops, including 500 women (0.023%) served in the zone of hostilities. No female internal affairs or defense personnel were killed in the line of duty in the ATO in the East of Ukraine. 1,316 internal affairs and defense personnel were decorated for participating in the ATO in 2014-2015, including 480 persons (3 women and 477 men) in 2014, 836 people (15 women and 821 men) in 2015. The Ministry of Defense of Ukraine provided statistical information only about state decorations for military women: 10 in 2014 and 18 in 2015.

It would be expedient to analyze in detail the situation of women in the Armed Forces, in terms of the general labor market of Ukraine. According to the report on discrimination and gender inequality in Ukraine, there is evidence of **employment discrimination** against women, particularly in the armed forces¹⁸. Also, the **right of military personnel to education** is infringed because after receiving basic or complete higher education based on a state order, officers are allowed to study in other higher education institutions on-the-job only provided they have served for a period equal to the period of their education, whereas privates, sergeants and sergeant majors, after the extension of service

13 Hsieh H-F., Shannon S. Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis / Qualitative health research. – 2005. – Vol. 15. – No. 9. – pp. 1277 – 1288.

14 Dubchak N.I. Women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: Problems of gender policy // Strategic Priorities. – No. 4 (9). – 2008. – pp. 187 – 188.

15 Dubchak N.I. Women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: Problems of gender policy // Strategic Priorities. – No. 4 (9). – 2008. – p. 190.

16 Is there a future for women in Ukrainian Army? // Pravda. – October 8, 2013. // <http://pravda.if.ua/news-45277.html> (in Ukrainian)

17 Almost one thousand Ukrainian women participated in the ATO // UNIAN, October 9, 2015. // <http://www.unian.ua/war/1147650-mayje-tisyacha-jinok-viyskovoslujbovtiv-vzjali-uchast-v-ato.html> (in Ukrainian)

18 Armed Forces (Gender discrimination) // On the Edge: Tackling discrimination and inequality in Ukraine / The Equal Rights Trust Country Report Series: 5 London, August 2015. – pp. 58 – 59.

under a new contract.¹⁹ Gender discrimination is manifested, in particular, in a different representation of military women in the public social discourse (which will be covered in an individual section). The Ukrainian media often publish stories about “heroes”, with the names and the list of feats, but rarely about “heroines”²⁰.

The discursive invisibility of military women is directly linked to yet another aspect of inequality: being invisible to the media, women are also invisible to the military infrastructure, despite the fact that their number is considerable. The infrastructure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is designed for the needs of men and thus excludes women with their specific needs from the army. Therefore, it must change, so that the army can properly incorporate women and enable them to efficiently participate in hostilities on equal terms with men, to fulfill their desires and opportunities, and defend their values.

2.3.2. Prohibition of certain military occupations for women

Military professions that can be occupied by female soldiers at soldier, sergeant and sergeant-major positions are provided in the Interim list of staff positions for private, sergeant and sergeant-major positions, which was approved by the Minister of Defense of Ukraine on May 27, 2014 under No. 337²¹ (with later amendments). Opening a table that lists around one thousand posts for military service personnel at private, sergeant and sergeant-major positions, we see that women are allowed to occupy only a small number of positions for military service personnel such as, artist of different categories, archivist, librarian, accountant, executive secretary, chief nurse, disinfectant, code breaker, manager, clerk, printer, storekeeper, tailor, draftsman, nurse, meteorologist, musician, head of economic division, canteen etc, paratrooper

- packer of parachutes, baker, hairdresser, postal operative, radio operator, telephonist, pharmacist, nurse, artist, shoemaker and others. In other words, women find the only positions open to them are the traditionally “female” posts that involve the provision of services, care for others, and entertainment.

Instead of this, female soldiers doing military service under contract are not allowed to be appointed to positions of autopilot, adjutant, board mechanic and engineer, boatswain, diver, flamethrower operator, driver, working dog handler, chief petty officer, grenadier, animal trainer, electrician, charge man, vehicle commander, section commander, platoon commander, vehicle commander, tank commander, etc., gunner, painter, camoufleur, operator, pointer, interpreter, fire fighter, senior baker, woodworker, timekeeper, turner, tractor driver, photographer, chemist, duty officer, plasterer, and many others. This list includes features of not only horizontal gender segregation, separate “niches” or types of jobs for women and men. It also contains examples of vertical gender segregation: woman can be a common baker, but not a senior baker.

According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine²², there is a list of professions in which women with the appropriate training can be subject to military registration: medical; communication; computing technology; optical and sound ranging and metrology instruments; cartography; topographical surveying; photogrammetry and aero photo service; printing industry; film radio mechanics. Women fit for military service may be accepted into military service depending on age: up to 50 years of age for officer ranks and up to 45 years for other military ranks.

A specific feature, as well as one of the key issues with the military women’s legal status, is that it is governed by the standards of both military and other branches of law.²³ In particular, according to the Labor Code of Ukraine, women may not be employed for difficult work or work

19 Savchenko Y. Some features of legal status of women soldiers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine // Law. - 2011. - No. 6. - p. 176.

20 The only exception is the prisoner-of-war Nadezhda Savchenko, although her “heroism” is not associated primarily with her military service, rather with her behavior in custody.

21 The provisional list of staff positions for private, sergeant and sergeant-major positions, including those allowed for female military service personnel and corresponding military ranks and tariff categories of posts. In: Decree No. 337 dated May 27, 2014 about approval of the interim list of staff positions for privates, sergeants, sergeant-majors and female military service personnel and about the tariff list of service personnel in the above-mentioned positions // <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0600-14#n16> (in Ukrainian)

22 On approving specialties for which women with appropriate training can be taken into military service // Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated October 14, 1994. No. 711 // <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/711-94-n>

23 Savchenko Y. Some features of legal status of women soldiers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine // Law. - 2011. - No. 6. - p. 178

in harmful/dangerous conditions, they may not be involved in lifting and moving items, whose weight exceeds specially established limits. The list of such jobs is approved by the Ministry of Health in coordination with the State Committee of Ukraine for Labor Protection. Also, women may not be involved in work at night, except for the sectors and types of work with the maximum night hours for women approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Hence, in employing women for a specific job, the commander (chief) must be aware of the above list and strictly adhere to its requirements. Also, military women enjoy privileges as enshrined in the law of Ukraine on social protection of women, maternity, and childhood. However, the practice shows a number of problems with the implementation of certain rights.²⁴

In general, the issue of **women's access to certain military professions** should be considered comprehensively. Over 500 trades and professions are prohibited by law for women in Ukraine today. Women do not have a right to perform any work or be engaged in any of the professions that are included in the "List of difficult work and work in harmful/dangerous conditions" approved by the Ministry of Health²⁵.

The ban on certain professions for women for reasons of "special care" entails a number of consequences²⁶. It creates a significant difference in the financial provisions for women and men who are employed in the same segment of the labor market. When the state prohibits certain types of work for women, justifying its concern with reference to their reproductive health, it recognizes and creates higher value "of women as mothers" and undermines the role of "women as workers". Consequently, the ban ignores male reproductive health, which is unfairly considered invulnerable and resistant to harmful external influences. The ban also conveys gender stereotypes: men are seen as

invulnerable persons and women, as excessively vulnerable, who should be bearing children.

2.3.3. Gender policy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine

The gender policy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is a part of the overall gender policy, for the function of military administrative bodies, which regulates the processes of social interaction between men and women serving in the army, improvement and development of their social status and relationships, taking into account military cultural traditions and stereotypes²⁷.

The main **directions of optimization of gender policy** in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and its harmonization with European standards are as follows²⁸:

- development of research projects on the gender aspect of national security in general and military security policy, in particular;
- development of educational, cultural, and communication activities with the population of Ukraine and military personnel to form a culture of gender identity, development of humanitarian and educational activities in this area;
- development and implementation of the mechanisms of legal liability in cases of gender-based discrimination in daily practice;

In general, the gender policy of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is consistent with the national gender policy, which was described above. However, the realistic enforcement mechanisms of the declared policy of equal rights and opportunities for women and men are not quite clear. In fact, this report shows that, de facto, gender principles of the Armed Forces policy are not always satisfied.

In 2010, a **survey of military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine**²⁹ was conducted to ascertain the current state of gender equality, and the conditions and factors that affect its

24 Savchenko Y. Some features of legal status of women soldiers in the Armed Forces of Ukraine // Law. - 2011. - No. 6. - p. 180

25 On approving the list of difficult work and work in harmful and dangerous conditions, which prohibits the employment of women: Decree of Ministry of Health #256 dated December 29, 1993. Kyiv // <http://zakon5.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/z0051-94>

26 Martsenyuk T., Plakhotnik A. Gendered jobs: How the labor market and domestic work construct gender (Section 5) // Gender for media: Textbook on gender theory for journalism and other humanities / ed. Mayerchuk M., Plakhotnik A., Yarmanova G.. - K.: Kritika, 2013. - pp. 80 - 81.

27 Informational material on gender policy in the Armed Forces of Ukraine [electronic document provided by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine]. - 8 p.

28 Ibid.

29 The number in the sample - 1,071 persons (799 male soldiers and 272 female soldiers). It is representative and its structure conforms to the minimum sample in the survey and serves as a micromodel of the population.

establishment in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.³⁰ The survey findings³¹ confirm the presence of gender-based discrimination in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. According to the majority of respondents, this phenomenon affects mainly military women. In particular, according to over half of the female respondents, the main reason for their possible release or transfer to a different military unit could be because of their sex, and almost half of female soldiers expressed lack of confidence in the fact that nothing will prevent their service in the Armed Forces. Moreover, almost every tenth female respondent cited cases of sexual harassment. The following main reasons for gender discrimination were mentioned: outdated traditions and ideas about the role and place of women in society; imperfection of the legal framework to protect human and civil rights (regardless of gender); lack of efficient implementation mechanisms for gender equality ideas; disparity of gender standards of the Armed Forces of Ukraine with the social needs of military personnel.

Section 3. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN COMBAT OPERATIONS

3.1. Participation of women in the ATO: voices of the "invisible battalion"

We are all very grateful to our boys who fought hard for peace in Ukraine!

Let's congratulate our heroes with Defenders of Ukraine Day together!

In your comments, post photos of defenders - fathers, husbands, sons, so all of us can see their serene faces.

"Facts: ICTV News" (Facebook, October 8, 2015)

"First thing the girls who were set free wanted to do was to go to war."

"As the tortures they were subjected to in captivity were too much"

Nataliya Korzh, film director of the documentary "Tortured femininity"

"In the beginning of the war, we saw that the woman of today is very active, very promising, very productive and very serious about the protection of her country."

"And she does that very professionally."

Olena Biletska, NGO "Women's Guard"

3.1.1. Legal aspects of women's participation in the ATO

First of all, the questionnaire included questions about how military women ended up on the front, to allow our respondents to tell about their self-positioning and their motivation for involvement in the ATO. Since, as was noted above, primarily men are mobilized for the ATO, and women must have a military profession to be mobilized, the respondents mainly come to the front voluntarily. 40 of 42 respondents came to the combat zone as volunteers and only 2 were mobilized. One woman said that she tried to get mobilized, but was rejected because of her age and gender, so she was forced to get enlisted in a volunteer battalion.

30 Attitude of military personnel to gender equality and its establishment in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: Survey Report / Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, Scientific Research Center of humanitarian problems of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. - K., 2011. [electronic document provided by the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine]. - 66 p.

31 Ibid. - p. 40.

The respondents might have totally different motivations for voluntary participation in the war - from fully private to generally civilian. Among private motivations to participate in ATO: women followed their husbands, friends, and sons to war, while for some of them military service was a childhood dream. "After Maidan" was another commonly mentioned reason:

"I wanted to bind my career, my work, all my life with the army since I was a little girl. I always liked the uniform, the discipline in the army. Unfortunately, I have not had a chance to be drafted or enter the military academy. But after the Maidan, when riots broke out in the East, I decided that I should help people. Because the Easterners came to the Maidan, helped us, too. We are a single nation. So I decided to go to war. I just wanted to help." (Female respondent 1)

As for the generally civilian motivation, some women got into the army via volunteering: at first they cooperated with the army as volunteers, providing troops the necessary equipment, medication, and food, and then they proceeded to direct participation in hostilities. In some cases, civilian motivation is directly articulated:

"The duty of every citizen is to defend the territorial integrity of the state" (Female respondent 23)

Arriving at the front, a woman has to incorporate herself into the army institutionally. A part of the respondents (17 of 42) managed to get formalized and, subsequently, to receive the appropriate benefits, including the legal status of a combat participant. In particular, the Law of Ukraine "On the status of war veterans and guarantees of their social protection" envisages a number of benefits, including free medication and medical products, free rehabilitation treatment, 75% discount for utility bills etc. Two respondents suggested they could be granted the status, while the other 23 could not, because the volunteer unit in which they served had no formal legal status with the Ukrainian Armed Forces or Ministry of Internal Affairs structures.

"What benefits are you talking about, if there is no information I was there. Well, maybe there is somewhere, but not in the right places" (Female respondent 8)

"Actually, I was not legal for six months. My first

ATO certificate dates August 20, but I was officially enlisted on January 20. That is, legally I was not in the ATO for six months, although I was under fire in Schastya the whole time. But the biggest paradox was that I was told I would be enlisted on January 28. I had been living in Kiev for 8 days, thinking I was a civilian, that I was no longer related either to the [volunteer unit] or the war, but I got a call and was told I was registered and that I was a deserter." (Female respondent 21)

Due to difficulties with enlistment for those women who serve informally and thus are invisible to the military bureaucracy, they lose their chance to obtain several benefits granted to combat participants. Our respondents are aware of that and consciously continue to participate in operations. They don't see obtaining benefits as a critical motivation or they even specifically deny it. Some respondents plan to claim the status of combat participants after the war, even though they are not entitled to it, since they haven't been officially enlisted.

And even in cases where a service woman was enlisted in the Armed Forces, her position in the papers might not be always consistent with her actual occupation. Such difficulties with the enlistment of military women in various positions actually make them invisible, both psychologically and legally.

For example, one female respondent, a doctor, was registered as head of field baths (even though there were no baths). Another female respondent said she was registered as an accountant, but actually served as a rocket launcher operator. Another respondent was never enlisted into an actual position (drone operator), even though she insisted there was a legal opportunity to do so.

As the anti-terrorist operations are not legally a war, they are not covered by military legislation which creates legal conflicts:

"We won't get a man's position in this case, although there is a decree about wartime, that no matter if you're a woman or a man, you should be raised in rank and position." (Female respondent 17)

However, despite the Ministry of Defense's conceptual vision of the role of women on the

front as one for care and as an auxiliary force, as mentioned above, actually one third of our respondents (15 out of 42) hold purely combat positions. Almost half (19 of 42) respondents engaged on the front deal with medicine, while another part (9) deal with HQ, organizational, and service support issues. Some women combine various responsibilities.

"I am a miner, I mine and demine. Sometimes, I may be a sniper. Legally, I am a rocket launcher operator. We all know how to do everything." (Female respondent 14)

3.1.2. Living conditions of women in the ATO zone

According to numerous data and evidence, the infrastructure in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is implemented very poorly. There are difficulties with a centralized supply of uniforms and shoes for female soldiers of an appropriate size. Female respondents complained about an insufficient provision of uniforms and shoes from the government, pointing out that they buy them on their own, using their salaries, at the expense of their parents and volunteer funds. The same situation is observed with female hygiene products. They are not supplied for female respondents who have to get them like a uniform, by themselves or using volunteers.

"People like me need custom tailoring. First, I'm a woman, second, my figure is not standard. I need an individual approach." (Female respondent 13)

"There is nothing for women in the army. I get the impression there are no women in the army" (Female respondent 36)

As for accommodation and cohabitation of women and men, we learned that sometimes women have to share a room with men in the army, and in some cases they are provided with separate accommodation. Cohabitation is comfortable when done out of habit and with an understanding of the circumstances that make it a necessity, as well as when relations with male colleagues are decent and amicable. The female respondents grow accustomed to the discomfort and treat it with understanding.

"Somehow, I got used to it. They are my sworn brothers, almost family, so I do not really feel any

discomfort. No, I feel no discomfort, it's just that I am just used to the fact that everybody is the same."

(Female respondent 8)

The living conveniences depend mainly on how much the men are ready to take this factor into account:

"The guys made me a private toilet and guarded the showers." (Female respondent 41)

The female participants did not complain about health care in general. In fact, about half of them are themselves front-line physicians or paramedics. One of the respondents established a comprehensive medical service unit. However, the army medical service seldom provides specific gynecological support, so our female respondents could only rely on the imperfect national medical system.

"There is a staff gynecologist in any military or regular hospital. If there is a need for narrow specialists, he's there. After all, both women and men serve in the army. But the nearest hospital is 35 kilometers away, and a military hospital is 90 kilometers away." (Female respondent 14)

3.1.3. Gender stereotypes concerning ATO women

Generally, the female respondents confirm a friendly attitude towards them, as well as friendly relations with colleagues. Their opinions, if they want to express them, are heard. Some respondents have an impact on decision-making in their units. Some respondents feel quite comfortable; they have never been confronted with assertions that they have no place in the war. But the rest of them have witnessed behavior of that kind and give their own examples of disrespectful treatment. A respondent who has children repeatedly heard fellow colleagues call her a "mother-cuckoo". One of the respondents pointed to stereotypical feelings towards women starting with the draft office. Another complains about the chief of staff, who said that he saw no women in a military unit and they must not be here. However, as we can see, the treatment of women as "second class" is caused by stereotypes rather than by the female respondents' personal characteristics; men do



DIANA MAZUR

MEDIC/RADIOTELEPHONE
OPERATOR OF THE MEDICAL
STATION IN THE 12th
KYIV TERRITORIAL DEFENSE
BATTALION, 32

"AS A CHILD I DREAMED OF
JOINING THE ARMY, BUT THEY
WOULD NOT ACCEPT GIRLS.
WHEN I STUDIED AT THE INSTITUTE,
MILITARY TRAINING WAS OFFERED
TO MALE STUDENTS ONLY.
I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE A CHOICE."



CUBA (CALLSIGN)

UKRAINIAN VOLUNTEER
CORPS (UVC) HOSPITALLERS
PARAMEDIC, 29

"WE ALL FIGHT FOR THE
GROUP OF PEOPLE
ALONGSIDE US WHO CARE."



OLHA OMELCHUK

MEDIC,
12TH KYIV TERRITORIAL
DEFENSE BATTALION, 34

"THREE MONTHS ON THE
FRONTLINE WITH THE WOUNDED,
CONSTANTLY WORRIED ABOUT
THEIR CONDITION, IN DANGER,
AND ON ABSOLUTELY EQUAL
TERMS WITH THE MEN."



KATERYNA PODZIZEY

UVC, PARAMEDIC, 22

"FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE IT HELPS TO
UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE OF
BEING ON THE FRONTLINE,
AS WELL AS THE YOUNGER
BROTHERS AND SISTERS!"



ANARCHY (CALLSIGN)

UVC HOSPITALLERS,
PARAMEDIC, 20

"EVERY STEP WE MAKE IS
ONE STEP CLOSER TOWARDS
VICTORY. WHETHER YOU
ARE A COLONEL OR A
REGULAR SOLDIER."



KATIA PRYIMAK

UVC HOSPITALLERS, 22

"I WAS THE LEADER OF
OUR FOUR-MEMBER MEDICAL
TEAM: MEDIC, PARAMEDIC,
FIRE SUPPORT, AND THE DRIVER.
I WAS THE ONE MAKING DECISIONS."



YULIIA TOLOPA

AIDAR, IFV COMMANDER,
ASSAULT TROOPER, 20,
RUSSIAN CITIZEN

"WHEN A LANDMINE BLEW UP
UNDER US THE FIRST PEOPLE WHO
RUSHED TO OUR AID WERE
ANDRIANA, THE RIFLEMAN,
AND LADA, THE MEDIC."



VALERIIA FEDORENKO

KULTCHYTSKYI BATTALION,
19, RUSSIAN,
UNMANNED AERIAL VEHICLE
OPERATOR



MARIIA CHERNENKO

UVC HOSPITALLERS, MEDIC,
24

"I WENT THERE BECAUSE
I'M A MEDIC. I HAVE TO BE WITH
THEM. A MEDIC MUST HELP
PEOPLE AT WAR."



HAIKA [GADGET]
(CALLSIGN)

AIDAR, MEDIC/RADIOTELEPHONE
OPERATOR, 23

"EVERY MAN I MET AT THE
BATTALION SAID I SHOULD BE AT
HOME AND HAVE KIDS."

The respondents believe that reform of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is badly needed:

women's contribution to the fighting must be measured by achievements:

"Three months on the front, with the wounded, with experiences related to their condition, in danger, and quite equal with men. You can't compare, say, the contribution of a woman medic and that of a male sniper, like who is more necessary in the war. But saying that a man should be in the war, and a woman should not, is unacceptable. It's like saying that singing or cooking is a woman's business." (Female respondent 7)

"There is discrimination against women, like a woman may be either in the kitchen, or at a supply warehouse." (Female respondent 42)

Women and men are equal, but not identical. Some respondents make minor reservations about the actual equality, related to the difference in physical strength between men and women. Generally, the respondents often add that women can perform their duties not worse and often much better than men. In fact, the respondents added that women could motivate men to serve better. This can also be considered for servicing men, not domestically, but rather emotionally.

"Women are more reckless, more firm." (Female respondent 9)

"Women in the army discipline men better." (Female respondent 3)

Whatever the wishful thinking, in describing the current situation, most female respondents recognize that the desired gender equality in the armed forces of Ukraine is still a long way off. One woman says directly that be it in her particular battalion, or in the Ukrainian army as a whole, there is no way a woman can make a career because of discrimination.

Various respondents feel differently about further military service. A small proportion (4 respondents) would like to pursue a military career, but most are not interested, and would like to return to civilian life after the war. You can't always tell how much this reluctance is due to purely personal factors and how much is down to the fact that a military career is deliberately

complicated for women, as they are well aware. Two female respondents directly stated that they did not have such a possibility. One had the opportunity to be promoted in her specialty at the headquarters, but she was not happy with the arrangement and these headquarters. Another respondent had thought about a military career at first, but eventually decided that she was more interested in reforming the army in general. One respondent expressed a desire to become a minister of the armed forces and participate in reforming the army.

We asked the respondents about how their families and civilians feel about their participation in the war. There were mixed feelings, but at this point almost no complaints against specific gender stereotypes were presented. Also, the respondents complained about their different experience with people who were never in the war, and as a result, about misunderstandings with them. They believed that it would be difficult for them to get settled after the war. They would like to have some rest, receive some social and, if necessary, psychological support (one respondent said that everyone in combat experienced psychological problems). Everybody complained about the benefits procedure being too complicated. One of the respondents is a citizen of the Russian Federation. She complains about several problems because of a lack of Ukrainian citizenship and Ukrainian passport.

"There are issues when they say: your combat participant ID is no good, give us a slip, but being a clerk myself, I say the combat participant ID certifies that the person was there. Why present a slip, which is actually the basis for this certificate?" (Female respondent 24)

In fact, there are almost no gender colored responses here either, except in one case, where a woman talks about possible difficulties with subsequent relationships with men, given the figure of a male soldier as a kind of model for male behavior:

"And it's even more difficult for women who demobilize. Most women do not demobilize, because they simply do not know where to go. Like, she couldn't find anybody here, so she comes back and thinks: damn it, who can I find here, they

are all write offs, like he didn't go to the army, but I did." (Female respondent 22).

Two female respondents say that social services tried to take away their children, because they allegedly failed to fulfill their parental responsibilities. Another said there were cases like that in her unit. A fourth said that before the war she was raising her child without a husband. She left her child with a grandmother for the period of her service. The grandmother is not happy about that but the child, she said, approaches the situation with understanding.

We also interviewed 9 male soldiers. We did that to see the service of women in the ATO through the eyes of men and to make a comparison with what women themselves say about their service in the army. Generally, the male respondents feel very differently about women's participation in the ATO. Some are neutral/friendly, believing that everybody who wants to is entitled to participate in the defense of the country and to professionally serve in the army. They stand in solidarity with our female respondents that the army needs reform, and this reform should not distinguish between contract service personnel in terms of gender. However, other men express doubts that women can adequately serve in the army. Some respondents recognize there is discrimination against women in military service, but they treat it differently. Men generally agree that women may face problems with service in the army, but consider it necessary for women themselves to express them or say that they personally have never seen any examples of discrimination.

3.2. Women in the ATO: Expert opinion

Nataliya Dubchak, a retired major, former counselor of the Minister of Defense on Gender Issues, speaks about general **problems** faced by women in the Ukrainian Armed Forces which don't apply to men: *"Unfortunately, it's harder for a woman than for a man. He doesn't have to prove anything, while a woman must prove 'she's different.'"* The researchers speak about a similar need for women to make more effort to achieve the same status as men in relation to other areas of the labor market, especially

traditionally "male" ones, such as politics, business, information technology etc.

Volodymyr Kukhar, Deputy Company Commander for Personnel Issues said at the conference³² that he knew many women who would like to serve, but they failed to achieve this goal. He explains that this is because it is not easy for a woman to get into the armed forces. If a woman has a university degree, she might theoretically claim to become an officer, because it is one of the prerequisites to achieve an officer's rank in the Ukrainian military forces. However, according to Volodymyr Kukhar, the system does not encourage targeting primary officer ranks. He believes that this is a problem of the career army:

"It is a problem of corporate solidarity of officers who are not interested in outsiders coming in and taking over various positions."

The deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine and co-chairman of the Equal Opportunities Caucus also speaks about the problem of gender segregation in the armed forces of Ukraine:

"Career growth of military women is a problem. In Ukraine, in general, the problem of inequality on the labor market and a 'glass ceiling' in professional advancement in most areas is very complex. The military sector is not just an exception. In fact, it is the most closed sector, in this sense. We have very few women in leadership positions in the army. As far as I know, women officers make up just over 3% of the total number of officers in the Armed Forces. Every year, the number of women who receive the highest military ranks and decorations in the armies of the world increases, but it is never the case in Ukraine. Only a dozen women have been raised to the rank of colonel, and even they are in medical service."

Expert Kateryna Levchenko speaks about the **gender stereotypes** women themselves have internalized: *"Actively participating in the ATO, they believe that their functions and their missions are genuinely secondary in comparison to what the men do."*

Vitaly Golota from the Armed Forces of Ukraine

³² NATO, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Democracy Development Center (DDC) Workshop "The Role of Women and Gender Policies in Addressing the Military Conflict in Ukraine", September 21-22, 2015, Kyiv

also pointed out in his speech³³ that women do not always believe in themselves, in order to engage in the more traditionally “male” professions:

“Let’s be honest, what would a woman want to achieve: a tank company commander or a military psychologist? It depends. For some reason, however, there are many psychologists and no one tries the tank company. Please believe me. When I repeatedly asked women, whether they were ready to become deputy battalion commanders, the answer was more often than not ‘no.’”

Also, Vitaly Golota was critical of gender stereotypes in relation to women in military service:

“Our military leaders often think, ‘If I take on a woman, something might go wrong.’ In fact, it was demonstrated that women accomplished missions, that women were ready to go on tours, women were ready to enter the field, women were sometimes willing to leave their children behind for their husbands, or call out mothers, mothers-in-law, aunts, and sisters. Thus, the stereotype that women would not do something was simply not justified.”

The journalist Volodymyr Sologub observes that he seldom met women in the military operations he visited for his ATO reports. He adds that he saw many **women doctors**, or rather paramedics:

“There are many young ladies who do work that is quite dangerous and complex... I spoke how I saw ladies who go around and collect the wounded, in fact, from the battlefield, from the positions where they were wounded, and pull them into a dugout or trenches. And they actually go there, and collect them while under fire, to give them medical assistance.”

Volodymyr also mentioned that “at least half of the journalists working on the front line – in the combat zone – are women”.

Mary Honiukova, acting company commander of the 46th special purpose unit, spoke at the conference about the **prejudice against**

women in the armed forces:

“In our situation, this is what has happened for eighteen months: we all came in as riflemen. Then, we made nurses, scouts/nurses, graduated from the sergeants’ boot camp. But the men were given ranks after the boot camp, and none of the five girls, who were there as well, were given any. They got certificates of a special purpose squad leader. It was good for nothing. When we presented it in the AFU, they didn’t tell us to go get re-certified, and you are on. They said that the papers were not valid. And it was nobody’s business that we had been in training for eleven months. And only thanks to the battalion commander were we assigned military ranks and taken into active service.”

However, the female experts are also critical of **compulsory military drafting for men**, and offer alternatives. For example, the gender expert Larysa Kobylyanska is convinced that not all men can serve in the army and that there are women who can:

“There are men who are useless for the army, so I think there should be a different approach. Instead of using the mandatory/optional approach, voluntary, contract relations, military patriotic education should be used: re-introduce basic military training to universities and even in secondary schools, both for girls and for boys.”

On the other hand, the women’s training coordinator Olena Biletska says: “They recruit boys in quantity, they mobilize them, but no one thinks of the quality. And women are better quality in some specializations.”

Answering the question **what can help women who are already in the ATO**, the female experts emphasized the need for their visibility, both as victims, and as heroines:

“In my view, we have to speak and write as much as possible about these women. Not like now, when a girl lost her legs, and that’s how we knew” (Nataliya Dubchak). Nataliya Dubchak adds that there might be a series of shows about women in the war “for propaganda and to showcase the women”.

Kateryna Levchenko is critical of using women as heroines for a certain period of time, and cites unpleasant historic precedents:

³³ NATO, Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) and Democracy Development Center (DDC) Workshop “The Role of Women and Gender Policies in Addressing the Military Conflict in Ukraine”, 21-22 September 2015, Kyiv

"When the war is over, what do they recommend women do? Deal with housekeeping etc. It happened after World War I, and it happened after World War II... we should keep that in mind."

Attorney Olena Biletska notes the importance of giving military women the appropriate status and support of women's organizations, as well as helping them after the war is over:

"What is waiting for them? Where are they going? I know that today those women who are fighting, they can't go return to a normal life. They can't work as before. They will be explicit leaders and they will need completely different things. I am sure of that."

The deputy Maria Ionova is of a similar opinion, believing that women will need to be increasingly engaged in the national security sector and defense decision making.

3.3. Representation of ATO women in the media

This item aims to analyze how ATO women are represented in the media in the period from April 2014 to September 2015, in order to understand what ATO women's images are projected to the public and what exactly is known about women's participation in the ATO, about their lives on the front and afterwards, at home.

The image of a woman in the ATO is romanticized and glorified. Women's participation in anti-terrorist operations is depicted as a heroic act, regardless of their position in the army hierarchy. The very presence of women in the area of armed conflict, its voluntary nature and women's desire to contribute to the conflict resolution is seen in the media as a positive phenomenon. It is important to note the absence of overtly negative images of women in the ATO in the media: no allegations of unprofessional conduct, carelessness, failure to perform traditionally female duties such as motherhood, and almost no victimization of women in the ATO. However, some publications have tried to speculate on the attractiveness of the image of women in the army using calendars with half-naked female soldiers on racks or headlines in newspapers like "the most beautiful woman in the ATO"

3.3.1. Attitude toward women in the army and distribution of gender roles in the ATO

The official position of defense/internal affairs structures on women in the military is ambiguous and seemingly quite optimistic: women in the army hold various positions; their rights are not suppressed. According to the media, the defense representatives believe that the Ukrainian army employs enough women and their rights and freedoms are not limited: they are "trusted" with both "traditional" tasks (communications, medical staff), and "complicated", "combat" missions. However, from the other comment we see that "Combat missions are not only those with a gun. They might involve setting up communications, performing surgery, servicing our patients etc. in field hospitals. In other words, acceptance, delivery," the ATO spokesman said ³⁴.

Unlike Commander-in-Chiefs, soldiers hold more egalitarian views of women's participation in the ATO (at least, that is what they choose to share in some articles and videos about ATO women):

"Clearly, I would like our women and girls to get involved in other things, but if a person feels like doing it, or if they desire to defend their country, I think it does not matter what sex they are."

We can also see in the media that the traditional gender roles tend to be reproduced in the war just as well: men are the defenders, women are the defendees. Men are strong, and women are indulged. The respondents take it for granted and appreciate the masculine care in about half of the articles that raised this issue. Many media materials also support stereotypes about traditional gender roles in the war.

3.3.2. Images of women in the ATO

Based on the analyzed material, it would be expedient to distinguish the three main images of ATO women as shown in the mass media: warrior woman, caring helper and revolutionary.

Warrior Woman. This is the image of a soldier who fights on equal terms with men. She lives in the same conditions as men, does "male" tasks: fires a sniper rifle, a machine gun, drives a

³⁴ Now women may be drafted // Strike. January 20, 2015 // <http://firstsocial.info/news/teper-pid-prizov-potraplyat-i-zhinki> (in Ukrainian)

military vehicle, and carries the wounded from under fire, with bullets flying over her head etc. Strong and emotionally stable, she enjoys authority among her peers.

In the war, a woman like that earns from men respect, confidence and the view that she is a soldier on equal terms with men: "I'm a soldier like the others".³⁵ The mass media call these women "saviors", "defenders", "bold", "brave", "fighter", "brave Athena"³⁶, "goddess of war".³⁷ However, journalists try to explicitly or implicitly add an element of femininity to the image of an "Amazonian", a strong and brave soldier, in most of their articles and videos. This could be a description of jewelry on a woman sniper, a silk evening dress on a female machine gunner³⁸, mentioning children or including a photo of a woman soldier with a wreath of flowers on her head etc.

Caring helper. Women in the ATO are not only fighters and Amazonians, but also caring and sympathetic soldiers, doctors, psychologists, photographers etc. They care about the male soldiers, help and support them in their work and in their presence. They are more "feminine" and more likely to stick to gender-based division of labor. These women take combat training together with the men. They stay together with the men in hazardous areas, live in spartan conditions, wear bullet-proof vests and carry weapons, but they "normally" do not have as much workload or challenges on the front. They often perform non-combat tasks: office/warehouse support, reporting, nursing etc.

"... We will at least cook porridge and mend uniforms for them, as they are men whom the state didn't help".³⁹

"... Office work is among the duties of the girls from the Sich camp. The boys are said not to have time to keep certain records and perform

accounting. And this is very important work that needs to be done".⁴⁰

The fact that some women perform more traditional functions on the front - some call them "auxiliary" - is visible only through deeper analysis, while the message, which is on the surface of articles and stories about ATO participants, is that all women are heroines. A woman in the army, in the combat zone, near combat or even involved at its heart, serves as a display of courage, heroism, and patriotism. The mass media basically does not distinguish women working in an office in the ATO from those who shoot guns or carry the wounded from the battlefield with bullets flying over their heads - there are no major and minor, or "auxiliary", roles that women can perform in the ATO. The overriding idea in all articles and stories about women and the Ukrainian army in general is that everyone there is a hero. Everyone contributes to resolution of the conflict, deterring the enemy, building peace, and this contribution is invaluable.

Revolutionary. This category covers several women whose activity in the ATO is of a revolutionary and innovative nature. They are reformers and innovators who break old patterns and stereotypes, develop new military industries, and remain on the same hierarchical level as men in the army, while their names and stories have become famous. There are few women like this. They include:

Nadiya Savchenko is the most famous Ukrainian military woman and ATO participant. She is an example of a unique female heroine in the structure of the Ukrainian army, and as a model of a revolutionary woman in the political arena. She successfully overcame bureaucratic obstacles and stereotypes regarding the female role in military operations, and stereotypes about women as the "weaker sex". She managed to get the list of professions in the army permitted for women expanded by 2 positions - pilot and navigator. Nadiya is the most famous professional military woman in this war. She is also a politically active woman. Being in prison in Russia, Nadiya became a deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. She also practices

35 Lab'yak I. Women in the ATO: Three stories // Galnet. November 10, 2014 // <http://galnet.org/newsticker/222311-zhinky-v-ato-try-istoriji> (in Ukrainian)

36 Service women in the ATO zone are fighting equally with men // TSN. November 9, 2014 // <http://tsn.ua/video/video-novini/zhinki-viyskovi-u-zoni-ato-voyuyut-na-rivni-z-cholovikami.html> (in Ukrainian)

37 Same.

38 Lab'yak I. Women in the ATO: Three stories // Galnet. November 10, 2014 // <http://galnet.org/newsticker/222311-zhinky-v-ato-try-istoriji> (in Ukrainian)

39 Service women in the ATO zone are fighting equally with men // TSN. November 9, 2014 // <http://tsn.ua/video/video-novini/zhinki-viyskovi-u-zoni-ato-voyuyut-na-rivni-z-cholovikami.html> (in Ukrainian)

40 Woman in the ATO zone: Poltava woman is a volunteer and serves with her loved one // Kolo. October 8, 2014 // <http://kolo.poltava.ua/novini-poltava/alla-fedorchenko-23244.html> (in Ukrainian)

different ways of political struggle (fasting, speeches, books, and letters). Eventually, the military image of this woman has changed to the image of a heroine, the victim of political repression and a symbol of struggle against the regime, fighting for freedom. She is identified with great warriors and politicians, well-known men, victims of the regime, fighters and winners. "Thus, in recent weeks, Nadiya Savchenko, like many of her compatriots, famous or anonymous, of Russian or Soviet times, started a new struggle writing prison notes. From their prison cells, Sakharov, Vaclav Havel, Lech Walesa, and Padilla all shook the confident and arrogant regimes like today's neo-czarist regime in Moscow."⁴¹

Tetyana Rychkova is known as Counselor to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine and a successful volunteer. We see in Tetyana's image an emancipated woman who performs somewhat egalitarian gender roles. She is socially active, public, bold, and regularly travels to the war zone. Over time, the image of Tatiana has transformed from a "traditional" caring one – Tatiana took care not only of her husband in the ATO, but also provided for all members of the 25th brigade – into the image of a powerful reformer.

"Today, her task is to 'make reforms'. She repeats this phrase so often that you come to realize it is her new goal just like it was with helmets and bullet-proof vests for the soldiers of the 25th Brigade ... In the media, Tetyana is called 'Tanika-polygraph'⁴², 'tank girl'⁴³, 'Kyiv junta leader'⁴⁴, 'authority on the front',⁴⁵ 'guardian angel' for the ATO soldiers"⁴⁶, which is evidence of Rychkova's

standing, both among soldiers and the ATO command. Tetyana is well-integrated into the "male" military world but at the same time, in the media, she does not demonstrate active support for ideas for better integration of women into the army.

Maria Berlinska is an Air Reconnaissance Officer, participant of the ATO, and founder of the Air Reconnaissance Support Center. She is a representative of the younger generation. A feature of Maria is her age. The media form a romantic image of a still young⁴⁷ student who "cut her dark blond braid, came by a bulletproof vest and ran away from her masters studies at the Kyiv Mohyla Academy to the front".⁴⁸ Over time, Maria's image has transformed into a more revolutionary one: a student, one of the few who undertook to correct the deficiencies of air reconnaissance in Ukraine. She founded and headed the Air Reconnaissance Support Center, which already has over 100 graduates, who apply their knowledge and skills in the ATO war zone, which is an unprecedented case because she is not just a girl but a person "from the outside" – not an Armed Forces' servant, developing air reconnaissance, a strategically important sector for the army.

3.3.3. The needs and concerns of women in the ATO

Information about the **needs** of ATO women in the Ukrainian media is gender neutral. The specific needs of the women involved in the ATO, such as military uniforms for women, personal hygiene items, lack of specialized health care for women, are barely discussed in the media at all. The need for separate accommodation for women in the army is mentioned in the media most often. However, from the media information about the ATO we get the impression that men and women coexist harmoniously in one room.

The problem of returning home and reintegration is described in the media very briefly. However, in media stories of heroines we recognize difficulties in reintegration on

41 Nadiya Savchenko: War, captivity, kidnapping, prison, hunger strike in prison and beyond // Ukrainian Pravda. May 11, 2015 // <http://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2015/05/11/7067480/> (in Ukrainian)

42 Titish G., Tetyana Rychkova: I cried twice during the war. The second time when I was at the Ministry of Defense // Ukrainian Pravda. April 6, 2015 // <http://life.pravda.com.ua/person/2015/04/6/192127/> (in Russian)

43 "The Defense Ministry called me the tank girl, but they did change the staffing plan for the Airborne Corps", - volunteer Tetyana Rychkova provided Ukrainian paratroopers with tanks. VIDEO // Tsenzor.Net. 3 leaf fall 2014 // <http://censor.net.ua/v310092> (in Russian)

44 Tanya's war and peace. // Ukrinform. 11 Listopad 2014 // http://www.ukrinform.ru/rubric-lastnews/1727128-tanini_voyna_i_mir_1683033.html (in Russian)

45 Titish G., Tetyana Rychkova: I cried twice during the war. The second time when I was at the Ministry of Defense // Ukrainian Pravda. April 6, 2015 // <http://life.pravda.com.ua/person/2015/04/6/192127/> (in Russian)

46 Mashable: Story of a woman who became a friend and "guardian angel" for ATO fighters // TSN. September 24, 2014 <http://tsn.ua/ukrayina/mashable-istoriya-zhinki-yaka-stala-tovarishem-i-yangolom-ohoroncem-dlya-biyciv-ato-370397.html> (in Ukrainian)

47 First National (2015) Travelers. Maria Berlinska // <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ADjKqOGGwbA> (in Ukrainian)

48 26-year-old Aydar Battalion soldier Maria Berlinska: when people saw us, they hid ... and only children waved to us and followed, running after us // Vikna. October 24, 2014 // <http://vikna.if.ua/news/category/ua/2014/10/24/23995/view> (in Ukrainian)

psychological, bureaucratic, and household levels. First, female soldiers return with post-traumatic stress disorder manifested in the form of guilt, sacrifice, detachment, and emotional conditions:

"I'm on the borderline of two lives: the life there and the life here. And you know, the life there ... who has not been there ... it's hard to describe ... sometimes I can't find the words to describe the kind of life that is going on there now. There are a couple of men that I pulled out at Ilovaysk who were later killed at Debalcevo. Naturally, in those moments, when you realize that you are needed there, you are ready to drop everything here and rush over there, because there is actually no one over there today."⁴⁹

"... Our boys are still there... how can I go home now? Please, understand me correctly, I am not ready to go back mentally. Mentally, I am still there."⁵⁰

Second, society lacks tolerance towards ATO soldiers. There is misunderstanding about the essence of the situation in the East. After the war, the women soldiers face negative attitude as soldiers, people who are related to war, and have problems with integration, but this was mentioned only in one video. Third, the media is already publishing the first reports about bureaucratic problems related to obtaining combat participant status and, consequently, the lack of social benefits for ATO participants. However, the information available in the media is not sufficient to raise awareness of this problem in society.

"I remember once I was kicked out of the tram, because I have this ID, but it's not really legit yet, so I tried to present the ATO ID. Many people started to resent us, saying we had made up a war for ourselves ... and it is very painful and it hurts that Odessa residents feel that way today ... I understand that there are different categories of people, but I just got off the tram, that's all ..."⁵¹

49 Ilovaysk. The point of no return. "Murka". // Gromadske TV. August 30, 2015 // <http://www.hromadske.tv/society/ilovaisk-tochka-nepovernennya--murka/> (in Ukrainian)

50 Service women in the ATO zone are fighting equally with men // TSN. November 9, 2014 // <http://tsn.ua/video/video-novini/zhinki-viyskovi-u-zoni-ato-voyuyut-na-rivni-z-cholovikami.html> (in Ukrainian)

51 Ilovaysk. The point of no return. "Murka". // Gromadske TV. August 30, 2015 // <http://www.hromadske.tv/society/ilovaisk-tochka-nepovernennya--murka/> (in Ukrainian)

"I'm not sure what this combat participant status is good for, but I see guys so proud of it, and so it would be nice to have it officially."⁵²

52 Peterson N. Meet Ukraine's Women Warriors // The Daily Signal. August 11, 2015 // <http://dailysignal.com/2015/08/11/meet-ukraines-women-warriors/> (in English)

CONCLUSIONS

The phenomenon of vertical and horizontal gender segregation is inherent in the Armed Forces of Ukraine as in the general labor market. The number of women in the military is gradually increasing in line with global trends of national development. However, the growing number of military women, in the contracted service, in the first place, is associated rather with the reluctance of men to hold low-paid positions. Women mostly hold the so-called "feminized" professions: nursing, finance, logistics, and communications. Women in the Ukrainian Armed Forces also face gender discrimination and prejudice from the authorities. At the least this contradicts UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000), signed by Ukraine, which stresses the importance of treating women not just as victims of a conflict, but as participants of conflict resolution and the peace process on an equal basis with men.

Women's access to the armed forces and military service is regulated by several documents: a provisory list of military professions and permanent staffing positions of private, sergeant, and sergeant-major positions, those of military women, and tariff lists of the above servicemen; a list of officers' positions, which may be filled by women who are enlisted for military service under contract on a voluntary basis; the list of professions for which women with appropriate training may be entered into military records. Another problem of the legal status of military women is that it is governed not only by the norms of military law, but also by the provisions of the various branches of law. In other words, the issue of women's access to certain professions should be considered more comprehensively.

The Armed Forces of Ukraine have an established gender policy that satisfies the national gender policy. However, there is a problem of resistance of the existing mechanisms and realistic implementation of the declared policy of equal rights and opportunities for women and men.

The results of our empirical survey of 42 women, fighting in the ATO, showed basic problems that were reported by almost all the female respondents: problems with their ability to make

decisions in the army. Women are not actually allowed to make decisions in the armed forces. Many of them are not formalized and, in fact, are not able to receive payment for their work, and won't receive public benefits, any combat participant status and all the ramifications that go with that. Another problem concerns the fact that some women are registered in the wrong positions. In other words, they are limited in the professions they can choose with the explanation that the staffing plan doesn't have those positions for women. Some issues that are not discussed by the state are logistics issues: the lack of specialized health care for women, the right size and shape of shoes, and poor living conditions. In fact, the infrastructure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is equipped to meet the needs of men and exclude women from the army with their specific needs.

The expert surveys enable us to look deeper into the situation with women's integration in the armed forces, as well as supplement the responses of the "invisible battalion". Both female and male experts are also critical of compulsory military service for men, offering alternatives. They note the importance of giving women the appropriate status, and support for military women from women's organizations. Women will need to be more involved in the areas of national security and defense decision-making. However, experts also mention that gender stereotypes are also eternalized by female soldiers themselves.

The Ukrainian media often speak of "heroes", listing their names and feats, but rarely about "heroines". ATO women have a positive and heroic image in the media. However, the mass media does not cover the real needs and concerns of women in the ATO. The articles and videos we have analyzed never speak either about the lack of women's uniforms, hygiene and medical care, or about PTSD, difficulties of reintegration, obtaining combat participant status, and the impossibility to receive "combat" benefits, especially for women with volunteer battalions. Thus, the media performs rather a recruiting function, depicting only the more positive and heroic sides of ATO women. A greater media emphasis on women's needs on the front and the problems they face after

returning from the war would help improve public awareness and could be an additional leverage of influence on supplies and gender policy in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.



20 Esplanadna str., office 210
Kyiv, 01023, Ukraine
Tel.: +38 044 253 59 80
www.unwomen.org



27 Chornovola str., office 221
Kyiv, 01135, Ukraine
Tel.: +38 044 507 06 10
www.uwf.kiev.ua