

Overview

The war in Ukraine continues to heavily impact people and communities. In the third year of the invasion, an estimated 14.6 million people, or about 40% of the Ukrainian population, need multisectoral humanitarian assistance¹. In Protection, 6.5 million are targeted, including 0.8 million for emergency gender-based violence (GBV) response. Women and girls make up more than half of those in need and 59% of those reached as of July 2024². The deepening humanitarian financing gap results in the least funded sectors - Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL), Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI) and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) - receiving only 9-16% of needed funds as of July 2024³.

The humanitarian situation in Ukraine remains dire, with new challenges emerging in the first half of 2024. Attacks on energy infrastructure are likely leading to higher electricity bills for civilians whose livelihoods and ability to meet basic needs are already gravely impacted by the war. In border and frontline oblasts, needs have increased due to attacks on educational, health, and residential infrastructure, and rising hostilities. Key issues include disruptions to telecommunications, basic utilities and medicines⁴ and safety and security concerns.

The 2024 Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA) objectives include emphasising the intersectional experiences of vulnerable groups in the crisis, and their opportunities and barriers in accessing humanitarian services and resources. It also explores roles, contributions, and challenges of local women rights organisations (WROs) in the humanitarian response system. The RGA aims to make practical, sector-specific programming and strategic recommendations to support more gender-responsive / transformative and inclusive humanitarian programming and inter-agency coordination in Ukraine.

To assess gender-specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks, the 2024 RGA used a mixed methods approach to collect, consolidate, and analyse qualitative and quantitative data, while being triangulated with secondary sources.

Primary data was collected in March-April 2024 in Dnipropetrovska, Donetska, Kharkivska, Khersonska, Mykolaivska, Odeska, and Zaporizka oblasts.

Key findings

Gender roles and responsibilities

The number of displaced female-headed households (FHHs) has been consistently higher compared to before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, and women's time constraints due to increasing involvement in unpaid work have been compounded by the growing need for them to become responsible for providing for the family as more men enter military service. Changes in conscription laws to expand conscription and tighten enforcement have increased the pressure on men to fulfil traditional roles as 'defenders'. But this is also leading to renewed 'avoidance' strategies that see more men staying at home and not seeking employment, professional training opportunities or humanitarian services. This is further weakening an already fragile workforce which records an overall reduction of younger men while increasing tensions at home and within the family. Women are also contributing to military service with over 62,000 women enlisted, including 5,000 stationed at the frontline and 43,479 on active duty.

Food security

Male and female IDPs seeking to meet their basic food needs continue to rely on the following coping mechanisms. Given heightened economic stressors and increasingly stretched social support systems, people with compounding vulnerabilities, such as female IDPs and FHHs that have a person with a disability or multiple dependants, continue to use more harmful coping strategies than men or male-headed households (MHHs) such as shifting to cheaper and less preferred foods, reducing portion size, and spending savings.

¹ [Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024](#)

² [Ukraine Humanitarian Response 2024: Oblast-level Dashboard](#)

³ [Ukraine: Humanitarian Response and Funding Snapshot \(January - June 2024\)](#)

⁴ [Humanitarian Situation Monitoring: Evolution of Needs \(November 2023-May 2024\), July 2024, REACH](#)

Livelihoods

Employment opportunities for IDPs remain challenging due to the inability to match their experiences and skills with vacancies in new locations, with more FHHs reporting extreme livelihood needs such as employment, skill-building programmes, and social support services compared to MHHs. The top barrier to employment reported is a lack of adequate childcare and social service facilities for children, especially impacting women as primary child caregivers.

Health

Older people, displaced residents, and those living in rural areas face additional barriers in accessing primary healthcare. Roma populations also have difficulty accessing healthcare services due to a lack of identification documents, low levels of awareness of available services and biased attitudes from service providers.

Sexual and reproductive health (SRH)

An overburdened healthcare system leaves critical gaps around SRH services, especially midwifery care referrals for pregnant women. The inability to retain specialised and skilled medical professionals is a critical limitation.

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS)

Marginalised groups, including LGBTQI+ people, continue to face barriers in accessing MHPSS due to stigmatising attitudes from service providers, while Roma people face additional language and cultural barriers. Men often underreport or do not identify their need for psychological support due to gender stereotypes which stigmatise men who seek help.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Clean water supply continues to be an issue across Ukraine due to the destruction of infrastructure, and logistical and financial challenges related to timely installation and repair of damaged water systems. Access to safe water and sanitation facilities in Roma communities – already a critical issue before the escalation of the war – has worsened. There is continued demand for specific hygiene products, such as

incontinence materials for older people and menstrual hygiene materials for adolescents and women of reproductive age, especially in rural areas.

Shelter

The availability of affordable accommodation is becoming more challenging, with factors such as gender, age, disability, and large household size contributing to poorer living conditions and additional NFI needs. Roma communities continue to face barriers to housing repair and access to shelter due to lack of documentation. Transgender and non-binary people can face similar barriers due to a mismatch of gender assignment in their documents.

Camp coordination and camp management (CCCM)

There continues to be a significant lack of disability-inclusive and gender-segregated infrastructure and facilities in collective sites (CSs), leading to access issues and protection risks. There is a need for increased training on referrals and reporting mechanisms in CSs in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), gender-based violence (GBV), and trafficking.

Education

Respondents noted the lack of in-person education as contributing to harmful coping mechanisms and a decline in the mental health of adolescents. Access to educational opportunities has particularly worsened for Roma children and children with a disability, creating multi-layered barriers to learning while they live in temporary settlements or host communities. Time spent on education and out-of-school learning remains impacted by an increase in care work (particularly for girls) and engagement in small repairs, home maintenance, and farming activities (especially for boys, particularly in rural areas).

Cash assistance

Fewer adult men in need of cash assistance are receiving it from both humanitarian organisations and the Government of Ukraine, particularly in relation to

government-provided social benefits, with adult women obtaining almost double the amount of financial support compared to adult men. This can be partially explained by a reluctance among men to formally register for humanitarian assistance as part of conscription avoidance strategies.

Protection

Bomb shelters and information about their locations remain largely insufficient, especially for displaced people, older people and Roma communities. Access to bomb shelters is severely limited for people with a disability and older people with restricted mobility, in part due to digitalisation of relevant information and limitations in accessing technology like smartphones and computers.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

GBV remains prevalent in Ukraine and is continuing to increase, especially for women and girls. Yet cases are likely to be systematically underreported as survivors may not seek help due to shame and stigma around sexual violence that may be heightened for men, LGBTQI+ people and Roma communities. Despite recent progress, the scope of specialised services for GBV survivors is still insufficient and referral pathways are not always available.

Child Protection

Both adolescent girls and boys are taking on more adult responsibilities on behalf of the household, increasing their safety and protection risks. There are concerns about adolescent boys being at heightened risk from mines and explosive ordnance while spending time outside the home.

Accountability to affected people (AAP) and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA)

Establishing safe, inclusive, culturally appropriate, and contextualised feedback and complaint mechanisms (FAM), is critical to ensure that crisis-affected people can access information about available assistance and report any issues, including incidents of SEA. However, there are still gaps among the war-affected people in understanding PSEA measures established by humanitarian organisations, including identifying potential SEA cases and reporting incidents.

Participation and decision-making of women's rights organisations (WROs)

WROs⁵ continue to play a critical role in humanitarian response efforts; however, they still report difficulties in accessing quality (flexible, predictable, that covers all direct and indirect costs etc) funding alongside in-kind support or project-specific funding for humanitarian assistance. Significant challenges to WRO participation remain due to unequal decision-making in the design and development of programmes, language barriers, and the use of humanitarian technical jargon. There is also a greater need for transparency regarding how agenda items are selected for meetings. However, there are some positive changes, including stronger representation and engagement in some top-level humanitarian structures.

Key recommendations

The sector-specific recommendations can be found in the full Rapid Gender Analysis.⁶

To donors

1. Increase the volume and improve the quality of funding to WROs, including funding for core and

⁵ Together with women-led organisations (WLOs), who are critical first responders as well. A specific push to focus on WROs in the RGA and this brief is explained by the unique nature of Ukraine's humanitarian response. It is majorly delivered by WLOs, who are often larger mainstream organisations focusing on general humanitarian activities

and not on women's rights and gender equality. Therefore, organisations with a specific mandate to address the latter were the main object of analysis in this section of the RGA.

⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/rapid-gender-analysis-ukraine-august-2024-enuk>

indirect costs, institutional development and organisational strengthening, networking between WROs, and psychosocial support to prevent burnout. Set agency-specific targets for direct funding to WROs, make these targets known, track actual funding against targets and report publicly on progress.

To the Government of Ukraine

1. Consult and coordinate with humanitarian organisations, especially those representing marginalised groups, crisis affected people and WLOs / WROs, to ensure that their unique voices and experiences are included in decision making processes in humanitarian response and in recovery and reconstruction spaces.

To coordination bodies in Ukraine

1. Adopt the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG) Funding Taskforce definition of WROs⁷ to ensure financial support to organisations focused on gender equality and women's and girls' rights.
2. Develop guidance for WROs in coordination with the GiHA WG to navigate funding opportunities across the humanitarian-development nexus and facilitate access to quality funding from both institutional humanitarian and development donors. This should aim to improve the sustainability of WRO participation in relevant spaces and initiatives, such as advocacy and social norms change spaces, as well as humanitarian response, recovery and reconstruction spaces.
3. Develop a strategic plan at the HCT level to enhance the participation and decision-making of WROs in humanitarian response. This should include well-defined objectives, targets, indicators, timelines, means of verification,

budgets, needs assessments and capacity sharing / strengthening plans (including training and mentorship). The plan should be developed with the full participation of WROs and in coordination with GiHA WG, be monitored regularly, and have clear accountability mechanisms agreed.

4. Continue to apply the adapted Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender with Age Marker for activity-based costing and planning. The GiHA WG should use this tool to track and regularly report on the extent of funding for gender targeted and for gender mainstreamed activities to relevant humanitarian coordination bodies (e.g. HCT, Inter-cluster Coordination Group).

To the UN and INGOs

1. Adhere to just, transparent, enabling partnership commitments based on equality, mutual capacity sharing, and risk sharing (rather than transferring). Consult with local partners, including WLOs / WROs, while designing programs and advocating for change.
2. Recognize and support (including through funding) local partners', including WROs / WLOs', agency and leadership and actively support and promote their direct, safe and meaningful participation and leadership in relevant humanitarian and nexus coordination and decision making spaces at national and local level. This may include promoting their access to the cluster system and relevant reporting and mapping mechanisms (ActivityInfo, Services Advisor).

⁷ A women's rights organization (WRO) is:

1) An organization that self-identifies as a woman's rights organization with the primary focus of advancing gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights; or

2) An organization that has, as part of its mission statement, the advancement of women's and girls' interests and rights (or where

'women', 'girls', 'gender' or local language equivalents are prominent in their mission statement); or

3) An organization that has, as part of its mission statement or objectives, to challenge and transform gender inequalities (unjust rules), unequal power relations and promoting positive social norms.