



Voices from Ukraine: Civil Society as a Driver for Peace

Strengthening the Role and Contribution of Ukrainian
Women in Conflict Prevention, Resolution,
Peacebuilding and Reconciliation

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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
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Executive Summary

Since the November 2013 “Maidan protests”, the political and security landscape in Ukraine has altered drastically and, possibly, irreversibly.

In November 2013, after the Ukrainian Government signalled its intention not to proceed with signing an Association Agreement with the European Union, people flocked to the Maidan (Square) in Kiev to protest. Civil society was at the forefront of the protests, comprised of both established organizations as well as groups and communities that sprouted spontaneously. These initially peaceful protests turned violent. By mid-February 2014, more than 100 people had been killed, with more than 800 injured. A few weeks later, following the seizure by armed men of key buildings in the Crimean capital and the subsequent referendum, Russian President Putin signed a law formalizing Russia’s annexation of Crimea. The international community does not recognize the annexation as legally valid.

Following the Maidan violence, President Yanukovich fled Kiev and Parliament declared President Yanukovich unable to fulfil his duties. In response, President Yanukovich claimed that he been forced to leave the capital because of a “coup”. On 25 May, Petro Poroshenko was voted in as President with 56% of the vote. Following the flight of President Yanukovich and the subsequent installation of a new Government in Kiev, armed groups seized control of towns in the eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. This led to armed confrontations with the Ukrainian Armed Forces, which very quickly turned into major military offensives. Today, parts of eastern Ukraine, including around the city of Donetsk, are experiencing on-going conflict. The United Nations has reported serious human rights abuses, including the killings of at least 2,200 people, arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances. The conflict has led to the internal displacement of more than 250,000 persons, with more than 120,000 persons fleeing to Russia.

Many structural long-term factors form the grievances underlying the current conflict. Many state institutions are perceived as incompetent, unaccountable, and unresponsive, dominated by political patronage. The political elite is seen as unrepresentative, with women accounting for less than 10% of Parliament and with only one woman in the cabinet. Oligarchs are seen as predatory, capturing the political agenda. After two decades of widespread corruption, the standard of living has deteriorated, with women earning 70% of the salary of men in equal positions. Profound challenges to economic recovery and growth persist. A historical social-cultural fault-line between west and east Ukraine exists, whereby those in the west and central parts of Ukraine see themselves as Europe-facing, whilst those of the south and east are Russia-facing.

A number of factors are driving and escalating the conflict and instability. Patriotism fever, propaganda, the misuse of terminology and the absence of independent, impartial and objective information are combining dangerously to

fuel a divisive narrative of 'us vs. them'. A growing militarism within Ukrainian society makes it difficult to speak out against the conflict and a "military solution". In Ukraine and beyond, the conflict has been reduced to a binary interpretation of 'pro-Ukraine' or 'pro-Russia' and an increasing demonization of the other. The conflict, however defies such banal oversimplification. It is possible to support the grievances underlying the Maidan protests but to not agree with the 'unconstitutional' way in which former President Yanukovich left office. It is possible to want greater political autonomy and view the Russian Federation as a positive example because it has a 'strong' government. But this does not imply a desire to secede from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation. When asked, most people are not able to define themselves as belonging solely to one camp: someone could be 'pro-Maidan', 'anti-federalism' and yet be 'pro-use of Russian as a state language'. The risk is that the divisive narrative becomes the reality.

The Maidan protests helped civil society to expand its voice, role and place in political life. Women played an active and equal role in the Maidan protests. They 'manned' barricades, threw stones, guarded government buildings, checked in patients to hospitals, and provided legal, medical and psychological assistance to protesters. The Maidan protests provided women with the space and opportunity to adopt and assert new gender roles, and showcased women as political actors. Maidan left some women and men with new or renewed hope in the faith of civil society.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine has, however, diverted attention from addressing the grievances underlying the Maidan protests. State machinery is fully absorbed in fighting a conflict in the east. Civil society, mainly comprised of women, is working overtime to support IDPs fleeing the east and soldiers. These activities reinforce the gender role of women as supporters of 'their men' in defending the country. In consequence, the narrative of women without agency is deepened and the potential role of women is subordinated. Men are fighting in the conflict or, if they do not want to fight, are fleeing the east to the western and central parts of the country where they run the risk of being accused of cowardice, treachery and betrayal of the homeland. Today, there is little public space for Ukrainian men to adopt a non-violent position in opposition to war. At the same time, a divisive narrative is unfolding. The diversion of civil society, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and the divisive narrative are impacting civil society's ability to craft a role as an effective driver for peace in an environment of intensifying conflict and increasing militarization. The conflict is deprioritizing women's equal participation.

Investment now - during the conflict - to strengthen the role, voice and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation may pay dividends in the subsequent transition. If serious attention and focus is not provided now to the participation and inclusion of women, regression of women's rights and the further reinforcement of gender stereotypes is likely, impacting negatively upon all across society.

Experience shows that conflict can offer an opportunity to shift, if not reshape, the traditional gender roles of men as well as of women. Such a shift may contribute to the development of a less militarized society where Ukrainian men do not feel confined to occupy the traditional masculine roles of “provider”, “warrior”, “hero” and “defender of the homeland”.

It is therefore important to build upon the specific strengths of civil society – courage, solidarity, the ability to mobilize and challenge stereotypes and others – to secure the gains from Maidan and build a national voice and movement that can play a proactive, central and defining role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Since 2010, an increasing number of protests by civil society have taken place in Kiev, as well in as other cities and towns across Ukraine. The protests have been largely motivated by the deteriorating economic and social situation. However since November 2013 in what has become known as the “Maidan protests”, the political and security landscape in Ukraine has altered drastically and, possibly, irreversibly.

In November 2013, after the Ukrainian Government signalled its intention not to proceed with signing an Association Agreement with the European Union (EU), people flocked to Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Independence Square) in Kiev to protest. The protests were initially directed at the Government’s decision not to proceed with the Association Agreement, under discussion for the preceding few years. Other demonstrators directed their protests against widespread corruption within Ukrainian society, as well as violation of other economic related rights, including unpaid wages, working conditions and illegal dismissals. People with different motivations, backgrounds and aims eventually joined the protests, which expanded to cities and towns outside of Kiev. Eventually, ‘Euromaidans’ took place in Crimea, Odessa, Kharkiv, as well as in Donetsk in the east. Civil society was at the forefront of the protests, comprised of both established organizations and groups and communities that sprouted spontaneously to protest. Such is the variety of motivations that came together during the Maidan protests, that political analysts have described the series of protests as an “intangible conglomerate of popular aspirations rather than a concrete event”¹.

These initially peaceful protests turned violent. By mid-February 2014, more than 100 people had been killed, the vast majority protesters as well as approximately 11 police officers. More than 800 were injured. Various explanations have been put forward as to why the protests turned violent. These include the storming of the protest by the Ukrainian Special Police Force, the Berkut,² and, specifically, their use of live ammunition, grenades and snipers against the protesters. Other contributing factors include the presence and actions of provocateurs from “the east” and possibly from Russia, as well as the radicalizing presence of the Right Sector movement at the frontlines of the confrontation with the Government.

¹ Olga Onuch and Gwendolyn Sasse, What does Ukraine’s #Euromaidan teach us about protest?, The Washington Post, 27 February 2014, available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/02/27/what-does-ukraines-euromaidan-teach-us-about-protest/>, last accessed on 11 September 2014

² Amnesty International, Ukraine must prosecute the perpetrators of demonstration deaths, 26 February 2014, available at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news/ukraine-prosecute-perpetrators-protest-deaths-2014-02-26>, last accessed on 13 September 2014

A few days later, on 27 February, armed men seized key buildings in the Crimean capital, Simferopol. The Crimean de facto Prime Minister subsequently declared sole control over Crimea's security forces and appealed to Russia "for assistance in guaranteeing peace and order". On 16 March, a referendum on whether to join Russia was held in Crimea. 97% of those voting are reported to have voted in favour of joining Russia. On 21 March, Russian President Putin signed a law formalizing Russia's annexation of Crimea. The international community does not recognize the annexation as legally valid.

Following the Maidan violence, on 21 February, President Yanukovych fled Kiev for eastern Ukraine. The next day, 22 February, Parliament declared President Yanukovych unable to fulfil his duties and set an election for 25 May to elect his replacement. In response, President Yanukovych claimed that he been forced to leave the capital because of a "coup" and that he had not resigned, and had no plans to do so. The same day Yanukovych supporter, Volodymyr Rybak, resigned as speaker of the Parliament, and was replaced by former President Yulia Tymoshenko loyalist Oleksandr Turchynov, who was subsequently installed as interim President. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the interim Prime Minister, is also seen as a loyalist of Tymoshenko. Many in the east and Russia questioned the legitimacy of this new interim Government and claimed that the removal of the President was "unconstitutional"³.

Following the flight of President Yanukovych and the subsequent installation of a new Government in Kiev, armed groups seized control of towns in the eastern oblasts (regions) regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, together known as 'Donbas'. This led to armed confrontations with the Ukrainian Armed Forces and very quickly to major military offensives. Today, parts of eastern Ukraine, including around the city of Donetsk, are experiencing on-going conflict. The United Nations (UN) has reported serious human rights abuses taking place in Donbas, including the killings of at least 2,200 people (including civilians, military personnel and armed groups), arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances⁴. The conflict in Donbas has led to the internal displacement of more than 250,000 persons, with more than 120,000 persons fleeing to Russia⁵.

³ "The decision on the removal of the President of Ukraine from office by the procedure of impeachment is adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine by no less than three-quarters of its constitutional composition, after the review of the case by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine and the receipt of its opinion on the observance of the constitutional procedure of investigation and consideration of the case of impeachment, and the receipt of the opinion of the Supreme Court of Ukraine to the effect that the acts, of which the President of Ukraine is accused, contain elements of state treason or other crime." Article 111 of the Constitution of Ukraine, available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/constitutions/country/52>, last accessed on 11 September 2014. News reports have stated that just over two-thirds of Parliament voted to remove President Yanukovych.

⁴ August Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

⁵ UNHCR, available at <http://www.unhcr.org/540590ae9.html>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

The backdrop to this conflict is a system in which large segments of society perceive many state institutions as incompetent, unaccountable, and unresponsive, dominated by political patronage. The political elite is seen as unrepresentative, oligarchs as predatory. After two decades of widespread corruption, the standard of living has deteriorated; profound challenges to economic recovery and growth persist. Political, governance and economic grievances are testing the limits of the already delicate social and cultural cohesion of a state comprised of more than 18 officially recognized nationalities⁶, as well as numerous ethnic, linguistic, and religious groups. In sum, Ukraine is more polarized, insecure, poor, vulnerable, and at risk, than it was a year ago.

Ukrainian women have historically experienced significant inequality in all spheres of life. This includes limited representation and visibility in public life, in particular to elected and appointed positions; earning significantly less than men in the workforce with disproportionate levels of poverty; and as victims and survivors of violence with particularly high levels of trafficking of women and girls. Traditional stereotyping of female roles fuels these inequalities.

Though the potential contribution of women to politics, the economy and social development has historically been largely disregarded, women participated significantly in the Maidan protests. In addition to direct participation in the protests, provided health care and legal aid to protesters, women searched for missing persons, and checked in injured persons at hospital surrounded by the Berkut. The Maidan protests showcased women as political actors, successful in coordinating, cooperating and actively opposing denial of their rights. Moreover, their participation took place in the face of increased rhetoric against the role of women in society and, on some occasions, the use of violence against female protesters by elements of the Right Sector.

The ongoing conflict in Donbas has seen women opposing armed groups. Women in Kramatorsk have addressed the armed groups and requested them to leave the city. Such cases, however, seem to be the exception rather than the rule. There is an increasing concern within civil society that the gains made during Maidan - specifically the expanded role, place and voice of civil society and particularly of women in Ukrainian political life - are being lost in the ongoing conflict.

As such, in June 2014, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) reached out to Ukrainian civil society, and brought female and

⁶ According to the 2001 national census, there are 18 nationalities, which total 99.6% of then total population of 48.5 million in Ukraine. These 18 nationalities are in descending order of population numbers: Ukrainians (77.8%), Russians (17.3%), Belarusians (0.6%), Moldavians (0.5%), Crimean Tatars (0.5%), Bulgarians (0.4%), Hungarians (0.3%), Romanians (0.3%), Poles (0.3%), Jews (0.2%), Armenians (0.2%), Greeks (0.3%), Tatars (0.2%), Gipsies (0.1%), Azerbaijanis (0.1%) Georgians (0.1%), Germans (0.1%), and Gagausians (0.1%). This leaves 'other' nationalities to account for the remaining 0.4% or approximately 200,000 persons. Available at State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/>, last accessed on 11 September 2014

male activists from different parts of Ukraine to Geneva. The purpose of this visit was to strengthen WILPF's and the broader international community's understanding of the role and contribution of civil society, in particular of women, in the Maidan protests as well as the on-going conflict.

In Geneva, the activists met with representatives of Member States and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including at a side event at the Human Rights Council, to discuss the situation in Ukraine. WILPF also organized meetings for the Ukrainian activists with women civil society activists from Bosnia-Herzegovina. The purpose of these meetings was to share experience of the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict, including on how issues of ethnicity and religion were manipulated to sow division, fear and ultimately conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The Ukrainian participants provided an analysis of what had happened during the Maidan protests. They also highlighted the impact of historic gender discrimination on the protests. It was also clear, however, that gender analysis of the conflict had not been developed. Nor had analysis of the measures required to ensure full participation of civil society, in particular, of women, in the prevention of further conflict, peace negotiations, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

1.2 Objectives

Based upon this preparatory work, WILPF undertook a consultation in Ukraine. In August 2014, WILPF met with approximately 45 people from across women's civil society and the international community in Kiev and Odessa.

The objectives of this consultation were:

- To listen to women's civil society;
- To analyse conflict dynamics, including the gender dimensions;
- To understand the role and contribution of civil society, in particular, of women's organizations, in the conflict;
- To assess the strengths and challenges facing civil society, and in particular, women's organizations, to participate in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation;
- To discuss the potential role of civil society in the conflict and specifically whether civil society could act as a driver for peace;
- To identify strategic priorities to transform the role of civil society as a driver for peace and actor in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation; and
- To recommend priority areas of engagement.

1.3 Methodology

The consultation process was comprised of four elements:

- a. Desk research on recent history, current situation and civil society of Ukraine;
- b. Interviews in person in Kiev and Odessa with members of women's organizations, internally displaced persons (IDPs), economists, journalists, representatives of international organizations and bilateral donors;
- c. Interviews in person in London with representatives of international financial institutions and Ukraine experts; and
- d. Telephone interviews with representatives of international organizations and international human rights organizations.

1.4 Report outline

The report is structured as follows. Section 2 provides an analysis of the conflict focusing on grievances underlying the conflict and the drivers fuelling the conflict, as well as the role and contribution of women and men in the conflict, and the impact of the conflict on women and men. Section 3 provides an analysis of women's civil society. It begins by discussing pre-Maidan civil society before setting out the impact of both Maidan and the conflict on civil society. It then analyses the strengths, challenges, opportunities and risks facing civil society. Building upon this analysis, Section 4 draws conclusions regarding the role and risks facing civil society and, more specifically, the participation of women in the conflict and beyond. In response to these conclusions, Section 5 recommends an overall goal for the development of civil society and sets out the strategic priorities and areas of priority engagement to achieve this goal.

2. Analysis of Women, Men and the Conflict

The consultation highlighted several structural causes underlying the conflict, as well as dynamics impacting the trajectory of the conflict.

2.1 Grievances underlying the conflict

Interviewees referred to a number of structural long-term factors that form the grievances underlying the current conflict. Key grievances are discussed below together with some of their gender dimensions.

2.1.1 Political exclusion

“We need a third Maidan as one set of oligarchs just replaced another”.

This refrain was repeated by those who wanted Ukraine to sign the EU Association Agreement, as well as those who did not. The statement is emblematic of the lack of political participation, representation and voice experienced by the majority of those interviewed.

All interviewees singled out the predatory presence of the Oligarchy as the most significant obstacle to a more inclusive political system⁷. The Oligarchy, mostly made rich through privatisation of publicly held assets following independence and many with fortunes in the banking, telecommunications, gas, steel, and coal industries, have also taken over media outlets, thereby limiting attempts to undermine their influence.

Not content with economic domination, the Oligarchy maintains a domineering role in the political life of the country. Interviewees sketched official and unofficial roles, in front and behind the stage. Despite the Maidan protests and the subsequent change of government, interviewees underlined the Oligarchy's continuing capture of the political agenda⁸. They considered both current President Poroshenko and former President Yanukovich as part of the Oligarchic class. Some described the Oligarchy as forming a separate political class sitting above the President and Parliament, directing government policy and decision-making. The anger, frustration and apathy expressed by all

⁷ Andrew E. Kramer, Behind Scenes, Ukraine's Rich and Powerful Battle Over the Future, The New York Times, 6 December 2013, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/07/world/europe/oligarchs-ukraine.html?pagewanted=all&r=0>, last accessed on 11 September 2014

⁸ Sergii Leshchenko, Ukraine's Oligarchs are Still Calling the Shots, Foreign Policy, 14 August 2014, available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2014/08/14/ukraines_oligarchs_are_still_calling_the_shots_0, last accessed on 11 September 2014

interviewees towards the Oligarchy was one of the key unifying factors from those both east and west Ukraine.

Gender dimensions of political exclusion

Article 24 of the Ukrainian Constitution provides for equal treatment and rights of women and men⁹. After the Constitution, the legislation of Ukraine includes a large number of subordinate laws and regulations, including the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men¹⁰.

In reality, however, women experience considerable challenges to access and exercise their political rights above and beyond those experienced by men. Although women represent 54% of the Ukrainian population, they are severely underrepresented in politics as leaders. Whilst the 2013 Global Gender Gap Index introduced by the World Economic Forum, ranked Ukraine 64th overall out of 135 countries, when it came to political empowerment, Ukraine was ranked 119th¹¹.

Lack of political empowerment and participation is evident in that only 3 out of 23 candidates for the 25 May 2014 presidential elections were women. Further, women hold less than 10% of the parliamentary seats in Ukraine, ranking Ukraine at 127th out of 188 countries worldwide¹². The current Cabinet of 18 Ministers includes only one woman. There are no women regional Governors; all 24 oblasts now have male Governors. [There was one woman regional Governor, for Luhansk oblast. In the days before publication of this report, the President removed a number of regional Governors, including the Luhansk Governor. No further information is available at the time of going to print.] A draft law that provides for gender quotas, requiring political parties to ensure that women comprise 30% of their party lists of candidates, has “languished after the first reading last year” reports OHCHR¹³.

⁹ “Equality of the rights of women and men is ensured: by providing women with opportunities equal to those of men, in public and political, and cultural activity, in obtaining education and in professional training, in work and its remuneration; by special measures for the protection of work and health of women; by establishing pension privileges, by creating conditions that allow women to combine work and motherhood; by legal protection, material and moral support of motherhood and childhood, including the provision of paid leaves and other privileges to pregnant women and mothers”. Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine, available at <http://www.legislationline.org/documents/section/constitutions/country/52>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

¹⁰ Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men, 2005, available at www.legislationline.org/.../Ukraine_law_on_ensuring_equal_rights_and_opportunities_of_women_and_men_2005_e.pdf, last accessed on 4 September 2014

¹¹ The Global Gender Gap Index 2013 available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR13/GGGR_CountryProfiles_2013.pdf, last accessed on 11 September 2014

¹² Women in National Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, available at <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, last accessed on 11 September 2014

¹³ July Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

Women are, however, better represented in local government: women comprise 12% of regional councillors, 23% of district councillors, 28% of city councillors, and 50% of village councillors¹⁴. Perhaps the situation is best summarized in the words of a woman activist: “Where work is, women are there; where power is, men are there”.

The Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has repeatedly expressed concern at the underrepresentation of women in high-level elected and appointed bodies, including as members of Parliament. In its Concluding Observations in 2010, the Committee urged Ukraine to take measures to increase the representation of women in elected and appointed bodies through the implementation of temporary special measures¹⁵.

Voices from Ukraine:

A female former MP working with Parliament to advance gender equality

“I was a member of Parliament for a short while before elections were called. Though I was an independent candidate, I was on a political party list. I was low down on the list and the political party did not win enough votes to select me. My main reason for being a Member of Parliament was to promote human rights. I tried to build coalitions between the political parties but this was not welcomed. Simply put, women’s engagement in politics, especially at the Parliamentary level, is not welcome. I and other gender and women’s rights experts have tried to speak and lobby male MPs to adopt the draft electoral law which calls for a 30% quota of women on political party lists. But they are not going to vote for it because it means giving up their own seats. As a member of Parliament, I was able to push key human right issues, including amendments to the law on violence against families.”

2.1.2 Weak governance, widespread corruption and lack of trust

Many interviewees referred to corruption as the root cause of the on-going conflict and instability¹⁶. Daily mundane corruption, which pervades all aspects of life, fuels an already deep-rooted sense of mistrust in state institutions. This mistrust arises not only from the perceived failures of politics, governance and

¹⁴ May Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, May 2014, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

¹⁵ Paragraph 32, Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Document CEDAW/C/UKR/CO/7, 5 February 2010, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws45.htm>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

¹⁶ Transparency International ranks Ukraine as 144 out of 177 countries in its Corruption Perceptions Index 2013, available at <http://www.transparency.org/country#idx99>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

the economy since independence. Instead, its origin can be traced back to Soviet times at least, if not to earlier historical experience.

Nearly all interviewees described feeling distrustful on a daily basis towards authorities at the local and national level. Yet many interviewees also referred to a mind-set of “dependency” in which many Ukrainians continue to look to the state for their survival. It is possible that the horizontal lack of trust between citizen and state impinges upon vertical citizen-citizen relations, perceptions and expectations, a theme further discussed in Section 2.1.4.

Gender dimensions of weak governance, widespread corruption and lack of trust

Women, as men, have to navigate an intensely corrupt system. It may be that as the family member usually responsible for taking care of the family and home, women are exposed to more corruption opportunities on a daily basis, such as trying to get the electricity reconnected, or trying to get children into school¹⁷.

2.1.3 Economic vulnerabilities and inequalities

Ukraine has many structural economic challenges. Many of these arise from the difficulties in moving from a closed Soviet economy to an open market independent economy. Remaining largely reliant on agriculture, mining and steel industries located in the east of the country, Ukraine has failed to diversify its economy and build up its service and information technology industries. Ukraine has also failed to sufficiently diversify its trading partners, with more than 30% of Ukrainian exports bound for Russia. Energy sources remain limited, leading to dependence upon Russia for up to 40% of domestic gas consumption, with the remaining 60% supplied by its own nuclear fuel capabilities. Whilst many Ukrainians remain dependent upon state-provided social welfare payments, the complex tax system inhibits full collection of revenue. The on-going and proposed economic reforms are painful.¹⁸

According to the Federation of the Trade Unions of Ukraine, every third person is employed illegally without any state-provided social guarantees or protection. There is a need to align labour legislation with international standards. Whilst some note the need to protect public servants' employment, whose mid-level salaries are 48% of the average salary in Ukraine and who lack guarantees of

¹⁷ Whilst interviewing the Chairwoman of a leading women's NGO in Kiev, WILPF waited whilst the interviewee received a call from the local electricity company asking for a bribe before agreeing to reconnect the electricity.

¹⁸ Interview with economic adviser, diplomatic mission.

employment¹⁹, other experts describe a bloated public sector with the consequent impact this has on the state budget²⁰.

Industries in the east of the country are considered particularly vulnerable. Since 1991, the mines and steel factories of the region have experienced little investment from the state or their new Oligarch owners, resulting in their extensive degradation. Operating Soviet-style production systems, they are considered inefficient, wasteful and a health risk. There are also virtually no small and medium-sized businesses operating in the east²¹. Nonetheless, the integration of the eastern economy with Russia through transportation networks and ready markets has provided many living in the east with a measure of economic security.

Gender dimensions of economic vulnerabilities and inequalities

Gender discrimination in the labour force is common. It is one of the main reasons for the high unemployment rate of women when compared to men with similar educational backgrounds. Both private businesses and government agencies often prefer male applicants in their job advertisements²². Even when women are employed they tend to earn only 70% of the salary of men in equal positions²³. This trend leaves many Ukrainian women with the lowest ranking and lowest paying jobs, often in 'female' fields, like education, retail and the hospitality industry, as well as dominating the lower echelons of the public sector. Women own only 22% of businesses, whilst more than 98% of capital in business is in the hands of men²⁴.

In 2010, the CEDAW Committee expressed its concern "about the real situation of women in the labour market, in particular about high rates of unemployment affecting women, important wage discrepancies between women and men, occupational segregation and the persistent gender-based discriminatory attitudes among public and private employers, including discriminatory recruitment practices and sexual harassment at the workplace."²⁵

¹⁹ May Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

²⁰ Interview with senior economist, international bank.

²¹ Lina Kushch, Elizabeth Piper and Natalia Zinet, In Ukraine's east, Soviet-style economy withers under onslaught, Reuters, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/07/28/us-ukraine-crisis-economy-east-idUSKBN0FX0CJ20140728>, last accessed on 11 September 2014

²² Anna K. Duszczuk, Women's Rights and the Emergence of a New Wave of Feminism in the Ukraine: The FEMEN Movement, 27 September 2013, available at <http://www.peacepalacelibrary.nl/2013/09/womens-rights-and-the-emergence-of-a-new-wave-of-feminism-in-ukraine-the-femen-movement/>, last accessed on 15 September 2014

²³ The Global Gender Gap Index 2013 available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR13/GGGR_CountryProfiles_2013.pdf, last accessed on 11 September 2014

²⁴ Statistics provided by women's activist and on file with WILPF.

²⁵ Paragraph 34, Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Document CEDAW/C/UKR/CO/7, 5 February 2010, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws45.htm>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

2.1.4 Social-cultural identity

Nearly all interviewees referred to a historical social-cultural fault-line between west and east Ukraine. Simply put, this describes those in the west and central parts of Ukraine as Europe-facing, whilst those of the south and east are Russia-facing.

For many on the west, those from the east are seen as socially and psychologically very different to those in the west. Many of those living in the western and central parts of the country describe wanting to live in a society that enjoys a standard of living, personal freedoms and responsibilities perceived to be along the lines of the western European model. Some manifested what appeared to be a patronizing attitude to some of those in the east. It was, however, an IDP from the east who described fellow easterners as preferring to “avoid thinking and instead drink a bottle of vodka every day. Easterners lack a sense of responsibility to make their own life; they want to receive from the state”.

Those from and living in the east are culturally more attuned to Russia. There is considerable social integration with Russia, with many traveling between Ukraine and Russia frequently, and family members living on either side of the border. Many from the east espouse social values that appear to be in line with more traditional Russian values, as opposed to those increasingly perceived as the more ‘western, liberal’ values of those from the west and centre.

As expected, this social-cultural identification has political and economic implications. For instance, those few interviewed who could for this purpose be described as supporters of the east, argued vigorously that the east has little representation in regional or national level politics and called for the regional governor to be appointed locally. Further, they emphasized the east’s role as the ‘breadbasket’ of Ukraine, thereby subsidizing the rest of the country. On the other hand, those from the west were quick to respond that not only are all regional and local level politicians - with the exception of the governor - appointed locally, politicians from the Donbas region were disproportionately present in the government of former President Yanukovich, who was also from Donbas. Moreover, those living in the west of the country argue that it is, in fact, the centre and west that subsidizes the ‘deprived’ east. An independent economist advised that statistics exist to support both contentions.

Gender dimensions of social-cultural identity

Ukraine is assessed 27th globally in terms of women’s education levels²⁶. Notwithstanding the 100% literacy rate for both men and women and that education levels of both genders in Ukraine are equivalent, women, however, on

²⁶ The Global Gender Gap Index 2013 available at http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GGGR13/GGGR_CountryProfiles_2013.pdf, last accessed on 11 September 2014

average make only 70% of men's earnings and their pensions are only 67% of those of men²⁷. As mentioned above, women account for a very low percentage of owners of medium-size businesses and very few women own major companies. What lies behind these deficits?

“Man is the head;
Woman is the neck which moves the head”.

- Ukrainian proverb

It seems that Ukraine is suffering from Wry Neck, with the neck tilted to one side and the chin to the other. Specifically, in its Concluding Observations in 2010, the CEDAW Committee identified “the persistence of traditional stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in the society at large, which represent a significant impediment to the implementation of the Convention and are root causes of women's disadvantaged position in political life, labour market and other areas.” The Committee also expressed concern about “persistent stereotypes found in school textbooks and sexist representation of women in media and advertisement campaigns.”²⁸

Taking into account the social-cultural construction of women's roles in society, there is correspondingly a particular form of masculine identity, which requires further investigation and analysis. What is clear, however, is that the conflict is exacerbating traditional gender roles; there are difficulties for male IDPs to avoid accusations of cowardice, limited space for men to protest against war in the context of mobilisation and patriotism, and pressure on men by women on both “sides” to take on the role of soldier and “defender”.

2.2 Drivers of conflict and instability

Interviewees cited a number of factors that are driving, intensifying, escalating and continuing the conflict and instability.

2.2.1 Greed and war profiteering

A number of interviewees referred to the economic profiteering surrounding the conflict. This included so-called ‘humanitarian oligarchs’ who are making money from for instance supplying flak jackets to the Ukrainian Armed Forces and charging double (i.e. \$300 instead of \$150). It also included the use of Ukrainian and foreign mercenaries by the armed groups. Many understood that it is in the interests of those making money from the conflict to continue and expand it as much as possible and to possibly delay or prevent its resolution.

²⁷ Ukrainian Women's Fund, Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making in Ukraine: Strategy Paper, 2011, available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/85974>, last accessed on 7 September 2014

²⁸ Paragraph 24, Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Document CEDAW/C/UKR/CO/7, 5 February 2010, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws45.htm>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

2.2.2 Economic hardship

Since the outbreak of hostilities in Crimea in March 2014, the value of the Ukrainian Hryvnia against the US Dollar has plummeted by 26%, from 10.24 Hryvnia in mid-March to 12.95 Hryvnia on 16 September 2014. This is shown in the graph below²⁹.

Graph: USD/UAH 180-day history from 20 March 2014 to 15 September 2014



Industrial production has declined overall by 4.7% in the six-month period from January to June 2014³⁰. GDP is expected to shrink by 6-7% in 2014. These economic figures have an impact on daily life and living standards. Inflation at nearly 0% in January reached 12.6% in July, and is expected to reach 19% by the end of 2014. Unemployment is also on the rise, up to 9% from 8% a year ago.

The decline in economic activity in the east and its impact is much sharper than in the rest of the country. Many mines, steel processing plants and other factories have closed or been destroyed by the conflict. This has led to a double-digit decline in industrial production, agriculture, construction, and international trade. Weakened tax compliance in the east arising from the conflict has also reduced revenue from that region. Unemployment is already in double-digit figures in the east. This has led to claims that some of those fighting with the armed groups are doing so in exchange for money as opposed to political or ideological reasons.

²⁹ US Dollar (USD) to Ukraine Hryvnia (UAH) exchange rate history, available at <http://www.exchangerates.org.uk/USD-UAH-exchange-rate-history.html>, last accessed on 5 September 2014

³⁰ Ukraine Country Report No. 14/263, IMF, 1 September 2014, Ukraine, available at www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2014/cr14263.pdf, last accessed on 12 September 2014

The economic impact has downstream social impact too. The conflict has resulted in the closing of banks, shops and services in the east. This has forced people to flee to the west with the consequent economic and social strain on already stretched resources of local communities and councils. Many public sector employees are expected to lose their jobs; pensions are expected to lose actual purchasing power. State-provided social protection programmes have been cut across the country and diverted to security spending, expected to reach at least 0.5% of GDP. These cuts, which include programmes to combat domestic violence, trafficking and HIV/AIDS, mean that those who were poor, insecure, and marginalized before the conflict become even more vulnerable.

The direct and indirect costs of the conflict impose a huge and possibly unviable economic burden on Ukraine. In recognition, in April, the International Monetary Fund signed a \$17.1bn loan with Ukraine, the equivalent of around 10% of Ukraine's GDP. \$3.2bn has already been disbursed directly to budget support³¹.

2.2.3 The divisive narrative

"I have never seen a situation like this where media is the key driver".
- Senior representative of international organisation, Kiev

Patriotism fever, propaganda, the misuse of terminology and the absence of independent, impartial and objective information combine dangerously to fuel a divisive narrative of 'us vs. them'. This narrative is becoming increasingly difficult to escape from and is shaping a new reality on the ground.

There is a palpable sense of patriotism gripping much of the country. This abounds not just visually in terms of public buildings painted in the national colours of blue and yellow, nor only in the parade of military hardware in Maidan Nezalezhnosti on Independence Day. It is evident in how interviewees refer to their financial contributions to support the Ukrainian Armed Forces by buying first aid kits, flak jackets and ammunition supplies. People are proud to be 'Ukrainian' and want to do their bit to support their soldiers fighting on their behalf.

Such public and pervasive displays of patriotism have a silencing and inhibiting effect on some of those who question the conflict or aspects of the conflict, such as the role of the Government in driving the conflict, or the inability of the Government to support its soldiers. Many interviewees initially responded that they wanted a military solution to the conflict. Upon further probing, it became clear that some at least feel a great deal of patriotic pressure to unquestioningly support the conflict. In reality, their views are more complex, nuanced and,

³¹ Robin Harding, IMF signs off on \$17bn Ukraine rescue package, Financial Times, 30 April 2014, available at <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bb64556a-d0b0-11e3-8b90-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3D55FtyAC>, last accessed on 12 September 2014

frequently contradictory. There is limited, if any, public space, including within civil society organizations, to voice these doubts and considerable self-censoring of counter-prevailing views.

Propaganda from all sides dominates. In the centre and west of the country, Ukrainian media driven propaganda fuels the patriotism and the war effort. In some districts and towns in the east controlled by armed groups, comprising approximately 25% of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, Ukrainian TV is no longer available. This 'information vacuum' is being filled by other propaganda, including from Russian media. There is little possibility of challenging this version of events as it is difficult for Kiev-based journalists to enter many parts of the east and most of the already limited civil society have left or are no longer able to function effectively in the east. Across the country, independent, impartial and objective national reporting is limited.

In Ukraine and beyond, the conflict has been reduced to a binary interpretation of 'pro-Ukraine' or 'pro-Russia' and an increasing demonization of the other. This follows and builds upon earlier binary formulations of 'pro vs. anti-Maidan' positions. It is fuelled by other reductionist descriptions, such as 'pro-Russian separatist/terrorist vs. pro-Ukrainian nationalist' and 'pro-federalism vs. pro-unity'. This binary interpretation is perpetuated by Ukrainian, Russian³² and international media³³, Ukrainian, Russian and international political leaders, as well as some international organizations.

Despite the ease with which such terminology is bandied about, the conflict defies such banal oversimplification. The issues underlying and driving the conflict are much more complex. There are many different permutations of views and, in fact, the permutations of views may be endless. For instance, we met those who supported the grievances underlying the Maidan protests but who did not agree with the 'unconstitutional' way in which former President Yanukovich left office. Such persons may use Ukrainian and/or Russian or a combination of both languages as the first language at home. They may or may not want greater political autonomy and may view the Russian Federation as a positive example because it has a 'strong' government. But this does not mean that they want to secede from Ukraine and join the Russian Federation. In fact, when asked, most people were not able to define themselves as belonging solely to one camp i.e. someone could be 'pro-Maidan', 'anti-federalism' and yet be 'pro-use of Russian as a state language'.

The combination of patriotism, propaganda, misuse of terminology and absence of independent, impartial and objective information drives conflict and instability in at least four ways. First, there is an emotional component to the use of

³² Arch Puddington, The Return of the Ministry of Truth, Freedom House, 25 August 2014, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/blog/the-return-of-the-ministry-of-truth#.VBP4OXNyEXw>, last accessed on 13 September 2014

³³ Is western media coverage of the Ukraine crisis anti-Russian?, The Guardian, 4 August 2014, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/aug/04/western-media-coverage-ukraine-crisis-russia>, last accessed on 13 September 2014

certain terminologies, particularly those that originated in World War 2 (“Fascists/Nazis” vs. “Partisans”). Second, it facilitates a lack of coherence and confusion in understanding (“I am anti-federalism because I do not want to economically support the east”). Third, it fuels, possibly unconsciously, a growing militarism within Ukrainian society wherein it becomes difficult to speak out against the conflict and a “military solution” (“Give war a chance”). And fourth, its cumulative effect is to increase polarization (“for us or against us”) and paranoia (“no one can feel safe, even in Kiev, because of the Russian aggression”). All told, the risk is that the divisive narrative becomes the reality.

Voices from Ukraine:

A female journalist: Balancing patriotism with professionalism

“Before the Maidan protests, we were in a state of staleness; not because of censorship but because there was a general atmosphere of malaise amongst journalists, especially because most of our news came from overseas. But since Maidan, we are making our own news. Maidan provided journalists with an opportunity to become real journalists. Before Maidan our role was to give information. But now we have the opportunity to shape the environment.

The challenge for journalists today is how to cover the problems in the country honestly and not to hush up negative information. There are journalists who do try to cover it professionally but they do not have editorial control. But if mass media becomes a propaganda agent, everyone loses.

The media should play a mediating role and cover the position of both sides but it is not doing so. For instance, we are now not able to visit the east. As such journalists end up relying on what the Government tells them is happening in the east. And they repeat that line to the public. There is also the challenge that the journalists are not used to covering a conflict: they do not know how to embed themselves with the military or how to cover the other side.

The challenge for a patriotic journalist is to know how to deal with internally displaced persons from the east who don’t support the Government. This is new, untested territory for us. We are learning that stories from different sides are a good way of bringing people together because these are regular ordinary people and it is the words and stories of ordinary people that change peoples’ minds.”

2.2.4 Language

According to Ukraine’s last census, undertaken in 2001, 67.5% of Ukrainians consider Ukrainian as their first language, whilst 29.6% of Ukrainians consider Russian as their first language³⁴. All interviewees, including those whose first

³⁴ Available at State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, <http://2001.ukrcensus.gov.ua/eng/results/general/language/>, last accessed on 12 September 2014

language is Russian, stated that they encounter no practical problems or obstacles in speaking or otherwise using Russian, particularly as many who speak Ukrainian as a first language are also able to speak Russian. Many interviewees referred, however, to how the language issue, and specifically whether Russian should be adopted as a second state language alongside Ukrainian, is regularly exploited by the political class to win support. In today's conflict, language is increasingly correlated with political position³⁵. Again, all interlocutors underlined the extreme sensitivity of this issue and noted that language was becoming "a match to light the fire".

2.2.5 Ukrainian identity

Whilst the conflict has certainly led to increased outward demonstration of pride in being 'Ukrainian', it is simultaneously causing individuals, communities and the broader Ukrainian society to reflection upon what it means to be Ukrainian today. Beyond agreement on maintaining the territorial integrity of the country and sovereignty over its decisions, there seems to be little consensus on the component values of Ukrainian identity. Instead, people seem to be addressing a number of unsettling questions as to what it means to be Ukrainian: Do I have to speak Ukrainian as my first language? Do I have to adopt the socially liberal values of Europe? Does it mean that I cannot maintain my Russian culture? Will Russia stop buying my cucumbers? Will I have to join the Moscow Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church? And so on.

2.2.6 Russia

The exact nature and extent to which the Russian Government is directly and indirectly supporting the armed groups' fight against the Ukrainian Government remains uncertain. Allegations of Russian Government support include the supply of military equipment and intelligence to armed groups and the presence of Russian military personnel in the conflict area whether whilst on leave or on official duty. More recent allegations include the incursion of Russian military personnel and assets into Ukrainian territory and their subsequent combat with Ukrainian Armed Forces on Ukrainian soil.

Many explanations have been proffered as to the reason behind the alleged Russian support to the armed groups. Most Russia experts do not seem to believe that the Russian Government is actually interested in physically re-asserting control over a part of its former empire. Instead, the most likely explanation points to President Putin's desire to re-establish Russian leadership, power and influence at the global level, through, inter alia, the on-going and continued destabilization of Ukraine. Such strategy is to be considered natural and logical following the perceived humiliating dismantling of the former Soviet

³⁵ WILPF notes the case of an interviewee living in Kiev who was brought up to speak Russian as her first language and whose partner also used Russian as his first language. Since the outbreak of the conflict, the couple has intentionally started speaking Ukrainian at home, including to their young child, as a means of asserting their Ukrainian identity.

superpower and Russia's corresponding demotion in international relevance, reach and stature over the course of the past 20 years. Such strategy would seek to address the sense of uncertainty, insecurity and disappointment felt by many across Russia and help rebuild a sense of national unity, purpose and greatness.

2.2.7 NATO/EU/some Western states

Statements and actions of NATO, the EU as well as some western states, including the US, UK and Germany, are perceived by some interviewees as contributing at least to the escalation in the conflict. NATO's position and, in particular, its openness to Ukrainian membership is cited as further evidence of the lack of understanding by NATO of legitimate Russian concerns at having NATO on its borders. Some assigned NATO actions a more existential rationale: from the perspective of an organisation in need of a reason to exist, following withdrawal from Afghanistan later this year, they are designed to goad Russia into further action³⁶.

NATO actions come on top of what many perceive to be the lack of understanding by the EU, exhibited over the past few years and more recently since the Maidan protests, of the concerns and fears of those in the east. Specifically, the EU is charged with failing to reassure those in the east that Ukraine is free and able to trade in both directions³⁷. It was also suggested that though the application of sanctions by the EU and the US on Russia has caused considerable uncertainty in the international financial system and increased the risk of, for instance, lending to Russia, the sanctions are yet to have impacted those who control Russia's political decision-making. In fact, it was suggested that the sanctions may be having the opposite effect than intended and, in fact, are consolidating public support behind Russia's position.

2.2.8 Unravelling the drivers

Drivers of conflict are by their nature cumulative, reinforcing, circular, indirect and direct. It is, therefore, not possible to precisely weigh up the strength of any individual factor as their impact varies over time, space and issue. Nor is it

³⁶ "The essence and tone of [Nato] statements on the Ukraine situation, and the plans announced to hold joint Nato exercises with Kiev on the territory of that country before the end of 2014, will inevitably lead to heightened tension. They risk wrecking the progress made in the peace process in Ukraine, and encourage a deepening of the split in Ukrainian society." Russian Foreign Ministry statement, 5 September 2014, available at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-29082574>, last accessed on 5 September 2014

³⁷ At the end of August 2014, German Chancellor Angela Merkel seemed to signal an understanding of easterners' concerns when she stated "And if Ukraine says we are going to the Eurasian Union now, the European Union would never make a big conflict out of it, but would insist on a voluntary decision", Valentina Pop and Andrew Rettman, Merkel: Ukraine can go to Eurasian Union, EU Observer, 25 August 2014, available at <http://euobserver.com/foreign/125331>, last accessed on 12 September 2014

possible to isolate any one factor as the only driver of conflict and instability. Instead there is a complex inter-relation between these various factors. The danger of drivers lies in their combustible and at times unpredictable combination.

It seems highly unlikely that the long-standing grievances in of themselves would inexorably have led to conflict. Instead, it is more probable that the Maidan protests, the subsequent and possibly unconstitutional manner of departure of President Yanukovich and the installation of a new unelected interim government triggered the underlying political, governance, and social-economic grievances in Crimea and in the east. Though viewed by supporters of Maidan as a great national struggle and as a revolution, for others this series of events signalled a fearful cataclysmic breakdown of order. These triggers led to protests in eastern towns and cities against the Government. These protests quickly transformed into violent protest. These violent protests were driven in part by the perception – or the manipulation of perception – that the Ukrainian Government had failed to communicate with the people of the east. Specifically, the Government had failed to explain what Maidan meant and what it did not mean. The Government failed to address easterners' fears of losing their social, economic and cultural relationships and ties with Russia. In the absence of such communication and with already active provocateurs, the violent protests quickly spread. Very shortly, these protests culminated in the seizure of state assets, buildings and power in Donetsk and Luhansk by armed groups and the subsequent declarations of autonomous republics in both oblasts. The conflict now continues, intensifies and expands driven by these and other factors.

2.2.9 The gender dimensions of the drivers of conflict

The following sets out an overview of some of the key gender dimensions of these drivers. These are discussed in more detail in Section 2.3 on the role and contribution of women and men to the conflict and in Section 2.4 on the impact of the conflict on women and men.

“I do not want to take up arms and fight my people.
Ukraine is one country; I will not shoot from east to west.”
- Male IDP from Donetsk, living temporarily in Odessa

The drivers of conflict tend to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity. For instance, the current evolving definition of Ukrainian identity revolves around the axis of patriotism and nationalism; everyone has to do his or her part to support the war effort. ‘His’ part primarily includes taking up arms to defend Ukraine. There is little public space today for Ukrainian men to adopt a non-violent position in opposition to war. The same is true for men living in the east. Those who do not fight with the armed groups risk being killed, attacked or forced to

dig trenches by the armed groups. Some men who have left the east and moved to the west because they do not want to fight have been accused by those in the west of being “weak men; incapable of defending their homeland”.

The drivers of conflict have two quite disparate impacts upon women. First, for many they tend to reinforce traditional notions of femininity. For ‘her’ part of the war effort, women are primarily responsible for providing medical, humanitarian and material assistance to soldiers and IDPs. This reinforces the gender role of women as supporters of ‘their men’ in defending the country and, de facto, in defending women and children. In consequence, the narrative of women without agency is deepened and the potential role of women is subordinated. Second, however, some women IDPs and civil society activists assisting IDPs and soldiers are experiencing a sense of agency and empowerment. Some IDPs, who are now living away from their husbands and families, report that they are more in charge of their lives and are able to take decisions for themselves. Some of those supporting IDPs also refer to how they have grown over the past few months and developed greater self-esteem.

2.3 The role and contribution of women and men in the conflict

Based upon the consultation, emerging patterns regarding the role and contribution of women and men in the conflict are set out below.

Table: The role and contribution of women and men to the conflict

Activity	Women	Men
Gather and share information on soldiers and IDPs needs	Both women and men are active on social media identifying, sharing and responding to local needs of soldiers and IDPs.	
Provision of humanitarian assistance for IDPs	Women play more of an organizing role than men in identifying what is required for IDPs and buying/finding it.	Men participate more in delivering assistance to IDPs, including to conflict areas.
	Both women and men work with local community networks or groups.	
Provision of assistance to soldiers	Women play more of a role in organizing assistance to soldiers including first aid kits, purchasing of helmets, body armour, ammunition, food, support to hospitals treating wounded and injured men.	Men deliver assistance to soldiers including through regular runs to the frontline.
Assist IDPs in finding	Women are more actively engaged in identifying	

accommodation and employment	accommodation and employment for IDPs.	
Looking after IDPs	Many women IDPs are looking after their children, as well as elderly and disabled IDPs.	
Protesting against the state	Mothers and wives have been blocking roads in some parts of the country, including Odessa, protesting because: - of the lack of support by the Government to support their sons/husbands fighting; or - They do not wish their sons/husbands to leave to fight given the already low number of men in the areas after years of emigration from the area.	
Fighting in the conflict on the Ukrainian government side	Men are fighting on the front line as part of the Ukrainian Armed Forces or with volunteer battalions. There are a few women combatants in the Ukraine Armed Forces, for example as snipers and gunners. Women are otherwise mainly engaged as medics, logistics, and support staff. There are also women's groups present in some volunteer battalions, for example the Donbas battalion. Some women encourage men, including family members, to fight.	
Fighting in the conflict with the armed groups	There are reports of women being involved in the armed groups. Some survivors have reported that they were held hostage and questioned by women, or women were present whilst interrogations took place by armed men. There are also isolated cases of women serving at checkpoints on the side of armed groups. Some women encourage men, including family members, to fight. Men are fighting with the armed groups. Some men who stayed behind in the east have been forced by the armed groups to dig trenches around the frontlines.	
Journalists	There are a limited number of journalists reporting from the front line; the majority are men.	
Peacebuilders	Women and men are trying to open dialogue with people of Donetsk and Luhansk but have no experience of mediation and few links with people of the east.	

2.4 The impact of the conflict on women and men

2.4.1 Internally displaced persons

Exact figures and a statistical breakdown of the IDP population are not available as there is no comprehensive and centralized registration system. However, UNHCR has stated that the IDP population is disproportionately made up of women and children, with reports of women comprising up to two-thirds of all adult IDPs. Many women have left their male relatives behind in the east to “look after their properties”.

Women IDPs, particularly those arriving with young children or looking after elderly or disabled persons, are undertaking significant responsibilities. Many are experiencing growing psychological tension as they try to build a new life for their families, often far away from family members and support networks. Particularly challenging tasks include managing difficult living conditions, searching for long-term accommodation, accessing day care, schools for the children and assistance for the elderly in order to enable them to seek employment³⁸.

2.4.2 Hostile response to IDPs from host communities

IDPs and those assisting IDPs referred to increasing tensions both within IDP groups and between IDPs and host communities. These are driven by a variety of reasons, including different political views, tight living conditions, psychological tension and differing expectations of host and IDP communities. In some aspects, this hostility impacts men differently from women. For instance, a male civil society activist originally from Luhansk recounted how after being intimidated and then tortured by armed groups in Luhansk, he moved to Kiev. When in Kiev, he was accused by men from his host community of being an “unpatriotic coward” and was told to “go back to your home in the east and defend our homeland”. Growing militarism creates a double burden for men who have left the east.

³⁸ July Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARRegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

2.4.3 Those left behind in the east

Some men left behind in the east when their families moved to Russia or to other parts of Ukraine have been recruited as fighters by the armed groups. There are also reports of increased alcoholism within the male community who stayed behind. There are also limited reports of women left behind in the east to look after their properties when men of fighting age have fled to Russia or other parts of Ukraine to avoid fighting.

2.4.4 Human rights abuses

OHCHR provided sex-disaggregated information on the numbers of civilian deaths, civilian injuries, and abductions (including of police) since the beginning of fighting in eastern Ukraine until mid July, as follows³⁹:

	Women	Men
Civilian deaths	30	441
Civilian injuries	104	1,274
Abductions including of police officials	393	324

2.4.5 Sexual and gender based violence

Men have been targeted in the east and harassed, intimidated, and/or tortured because, as males, they are viewed as a threat to the armed groups.

Many interviewees referred to incidents of sexual and gender based violence against women taking place in the east. However, details on the incidents were limited and vague. This reflected the cultural difficulties of speaking about rape and other forms of sexual abuse. The scant information also reflects the practical challenges of gathering information in the east during conflict, where police presence is minimal and experienced civil society organizations have either been forced to leave or are unable to effectively carry out their tasks.

There are also reports of increased domestic violence across the country. Experts explained that this reflects a general increase in tension as a result of the on-going conflict in the east. They also referred specifically to domestic violence associated with the return home of soldiers from the front. Additionally, the rise in domestic violence within the IDP community is ascribed to increasing tensions arising from difficult living conditions. A more recent spike is presumed related to the realization after summer and the return to school, that the conflict is unlikely to end soon, thereby prolonging indefinitely the stressful situation for IDPs. Experts advised that notwithstanding the

³⁹ July Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARRegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

increase in reporting, underreporting is likely given the prevailing patriotic fervour and the need to support the war and not to be distracted by such “trifling issues” at this time⁴⁰.

2.4.6 Trafficking in persons

Experts advised that there has been an increase in trafficking of persons since the outbreak of the conflict. This increase is likely to represent an increase in the trafficking of older persons, especially males, for labour exploitation purposes, for instance, as beggars to Russia. There are also allegations of males being trafficked to participate in the conflict and of women being trafficked as sex slaves within the conflict area.

2.4.7 Participation in the conflict

Some men have been forced to support the armed groups through digging trenches to mark new front lines. In Luhansk region, men aged between 16-60 have been repeatedly prevented from leaving Luhansk to ensure that, first, they do not join the Ukrainian Armed Forces and, second, to discourage the Ukrainian Armed Forces from using heavy weapons against them. Armed groups used women and children in particular as human shields during attempts to seize control of state buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk.

2.4.8 Participation in peacebuilding

The Geneva Statement on Ukraine was signed by Ukraine, Russia, the US and the EU on 17 April 2014⁴¹. The Statement announced an inclusive, transparent and accountable constitutional process and the immediate establishment of a “broad national dialogue, with outreach to all of Ukraine’s regions and political constituencies”. To date, however, civil society participation in these consultations, let alone the conscious participation and inclusion of women, has been extremely limited.

2.4.9 Economic vulnerability

The majority of the registered unemployed are women (at 55%) and young people aged 15 to 35 (42.3%)⁴². Anecdotes suggest that unemployment of women may be fuelled by increased employment in traditionally male sectors in order to meet the demands of the conflict, as well as men taking up the positions vacated by mobilizing men. At the same time, the mines and industries

⁴⁰ Interviews with national and international staff, humanitarian organizations.

⁴¹ Geneva Statement on Ukraine, signed by US, EU, Ukraine and Russia, signed on 17 April 2014, available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2014/04/224957.htm>, last accessed on 6 September 2014

⁴² July Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

of the east have been largely destroyed, primarily impacting male workers.

In March 2014, Parliament approved the law on the prevention of financial catastrophe to reduce budget costs for public sector salaries. Approximately 75% of these employees are women, so it is female public sector workers who bear the brunt of these cuts. Other budget cuts to social programmes to fund security efforts will also negatively affect women disproportionately, as they constitute 67% of the population over 65 years old and 55% of the registered unemployed⁴³.

Female IDPs are also likely to experience multiple economic discriminatory effects. In addition to generally earning 20-30% less than men for the same work, IDPs are experiencing difficulties in accessing their bank accounts as well as in receiving social welfare payments in their areas of displacement. Women IDPs also experience difficulties of finding employment when accompanied by children, elderly or disabled persons.

2.4.10 Family and social cohesion

Many women, men, girls and boys are experiencing increased tension and stress as a direct and indirect result of the conflict. This is impacting family, community and society relations, with examples cited of how fathers are not talking to sons and of the separation of couples. IDP parents, in the main women, are experiencing specific challenges of creating a new life and preparing their children to integrate and adjust to a new school and community. Some IDP men have told their wives not to look for employment. This may be because this impacts their sense of masculinity and understanding of their role as providers for their families. In reality, this may mean that the family turn suffers as interviewees reported that it was generally easier for women IDPs to find work than men - apparently because women are willing to take work usually considered menial by men.

⁴³ August Report on the human rights situation in Ukraine, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/countries/ENACARRegion/Pages/UAIndex.aspx>, last accessed on 13 September 2014

3. Analysis of Women's Civil Society

3.1 Pre-Maidan women's civil society

Over the course of the past 20 years, civil society in Ukraine has experienced various waves of development. After independence in 1991, civil society organizations, including organizations focusing on women's rights and gender issues, flourished. Most of the assistance came from international donors and philanthropists and was directed towards organizational development.

The Orange Revolution in 2004 provided new momentum to the development of civil society, particularly when some ministries and state institutions became receptive to working with civil society. This interaction, combined with renewed international assistance, contributed to the development of an increasingly professionalized civil society. Coalitions and networks of organizations were created, including on women's rights and gender equality.

Pre-Maidan women's civil society can broadly be grouped into three categories:

- Long-standing women's and gender organizations and networks;
- Women's professional and business organizations; and
- Former Soviet women's groups.

3.1.1 Long-standing women's and gender organizations and networks

Many of these organizations, which include registered NGOs, were created just after independence in the early 90s. They provide programmatic assistance largely to women, including on domestic violence, trafficking, and economic empowerment. Many of these NGOs undertake analysis, information sharing, education and training on gender issues. Some provide ad hoc technical assistance to state entities, including drafting of relevant legislation. Most interviewees stated that there was limited engagement by these NGOs on strengthening women's political participation. A number of coalitions and networks have emerged to respond to specific thematic issues. Though based largely in the centre and west of the country, there are women's organizations in the east.

3.1.2 Women's professional and business organizations

Women's professional and business organizations exist across Ukraine. These organizations focus on sharing experiences within their professional communities, providing advice and assistance to encourage women entrepreneurs, and providing support to women survivors of domestic violence and trafficking. Some maintain linkages with European and international networks.

3.1.3 Former Soviet women groups

These groups were created during the Soviet era. They are generally no longer active. Currently, however, there appears to be a particular negative connotation with some of these groups relating to their association with the former Yanukovich Government during the Maidan protests.

3.2 The impact of Maidan on civil society

"The effect of Maidan has meant that more women were publicly active; they were aware of their rights and wanted to demand them.

They said: we don't want to work in the kitchen.

Maidan was a wake up call for women; it activated them".

- Founding member of women activist group during Maidan Protests

Beginning with a small group of students and intellectuals, the demonstrations in Maidan Nezalezhnosti drew upwards of more than 100,000 protesters. Groups and communities spontaneously sprouted and demonstrated alongside established civil society organizations.

Women played an active and equal role in the Maidan protests. They 'manned' barricades, threw stones, guarded government buildings, checked in patients to hospitals, and provided legal, medical and psychological assistance. Women founded the Women's 100 and organized self-defence courses for women. Women asserted their presence and activism initially in the face of hostile reaction from some male protesters who put up posters and carried placards calling for women to go back to the kitchen and prepare food. The media too maintained these traditional gender stereotypes. It portrayed protesting men as "warriors" and "heroes" in need of food and support from "their women".

But many women did not want to be in the kitchen. Instead, many women stood shoulder to shoulder with men at the protests, even when some extremists from the Right Sector used abusive language and violence (principally stones but also beatings) against them. According to studies carried out during the protests, the

participation of women was about 45%.⁴⁴ For some males and sections of the media, the active, visible, public participation of women led to a change in rhetoric whereby “brothers” became “brothers and sisters” and “male revolutionaries” became “male and female revolutionaries”.

Maidan has been described as many things: as the “mirror of Ukrainian society in miniature”, the “clear manifestation of change from hierarchical structures to networking structures”, and “as a tool to reclaim government”. For many “the Maidan revolution showed us that our inputs could bring results”. It represented the opportunity to reassert “values of dignity, education and patience. It demonstrated a belief in one’s own ability to influence and shape one’s personal and political destiny”.

Maidan was a major step forward for civil society; it demonstrated that the level of influence and trust within civil society was greater than with state institutions. Maidan helped people to understand the potential role of civil society. Since Maidan, civil society development has entered a particularly dynamic phase. Maidan sparked a spirit of active volunteerism across many strands of society, and led to the creation of a new generation of civic activists.

Maidan also provided women with the space and opportunity to adopt and assert new gender roles, as well as to carry out traditional supporting roles. Some women joined the protests as they provided an opportunity to protest about many grievances that affected their daily lives, especially about economic inequalities and poverty. They did not participate consciously as a way of recasting the role and contribution of women in society. For other women, the opportunity to show that women were just as interested, capable and equipped to protest as men was an additional conscious motivating factor in their participation. Maidan left some women and men with new or renewed hope in the faith of civil society. It also left them with expectations of significant behavioural change by the political class.

The Maidan protests generally and the specific contribution of those groups and communities that emerged during the protests have strengthened the women’s movement in Ukraine. These groups have brought a sense of urgency and creativity, new networking skills, and a youthful voice and energy to women’s civil society. They are helping to shape a new direction for the women’s movement.

⁴⁴ Nina Potarska, Report of the Ukrainian Women’s and Non-Governmental Organisations Input at the UN Human Rights Council, 25 June 2014, on file with the author.

3.3 The impact of the conflict on civil society

“Since the conflict, our women’s rights and advocacy programme has been wiped out. We saw our strategy on women adjusted to deliver to the needs of IDPs.”

- Head of women’s organization, Kiev

Many activists reported feeling pushed aside and frustrated; of feeling especially disappointed after the achievements of Maidan. They also feel tired after 10 months on the go. They are now fully engaged in providing humanitarian assistance. This is absorbing their time, energy, focus and money. It has the impact of distracting them from constituting any kind of peace movement or having their voices heard as the political class plunges ahead with a military solution to the conflict. They described the flat lining of the Maidan dream as indicative of a “passive society” which lacks solid understanding of civic values and civic responsibility.

Many women activists also perceive that the conflict and its dynamics have crushed much of the space gained for women during the Maidan protests. Maidan lasted six months: it was not enough to transform societal attitudes towards women. Many women who were active in the Maidan protests are now active in supporting IDPs and substituting for state action. Men are seen as the ones fighting and defending the nation or alternatively responsible for progress in the political process. The gains of women from the Maidan experience are being lost as the stereotyping of traditional roles persists. Momentum and awareness of the newly visible roles and capacities of women is being lost.

Though Maidan has not disappeared from the conscience of civil society, the conflict has blurred the path ahead. It has pushed back and distracted attention from gender equality as a priority. The conflict is deprioritizing women’s equal participation.

3.4 Strengths, challenges, opportunities, and risks facing civil society

The strengths, challenges, opportunities and risks facing civil society are set out in the table below. Details are elaborated after the table.

Table: Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Risks facing Civil Society

Themes	Strengths	Challenges	Opportunities	Risks
Overall	Courageous, sense of solidarity, alert and ready to seize the moment	Distracted, overwhelmed and tired	Conflict dynamics provides space for civil society	Increasing polarization, distraction to support IDPs
Leadership	Good leadership within women's organizations	Lack of leadership from the state to advance gender equality	High-level political support to the role and contribution of women in society	Failure of high-level political support to translate into concrete outcomes
Partnerships within civil society	Relationships of trust within women's civil society	Limited dialogue between civil society in the west and east of the country	Civil society exposure to IDPs from the east	
Partnerships with the state		Limited state-civil society partnership	As primary deliverer of humanitarian assistance, role of civil society is strengthened	Budget support diverted to support funding of the conflict. State continues to view civil society as service providers.
Gender expertise	Gender experience and expertise within women's civil society	Uneven contribution to policy-making and strategic advocacy	Shared international experience	State's attention focused on the conflict, further deprioritizes gender equality
		Lack of knowledge and understanding of the Women, Peace and	Shared international experience on Women, Peace and Security	

		Security agenda.	agenda	
Substantive expertise, including political processes	Varied and broad experience, skills and capacities within civil society	Limited experience of women and political processes	Draft electoral law with 30% quote for political party candidates and Parliamentary elections increase women deputies	Result of Parliamentary elections on 26 October discourage women's participation in political processes
Organizational experience	Good organizational and mobilization skills within civil society	Limited organizational and mobilization experience of civil society in the east		
Networks	Existence of thematic networks within women civil society	Limited collaboration with women entrepreneurs, business communities and professional organizations	Work countrywide on Women, Peace and Security issues	
National presence	Some regional coverage of women's civil society	Limited civil society presence in the east		
Stereotypes	Existence of positive Ukrainian female role models	Existence of traditional gender stereotypes	Appointment of high-level visible women	Symbolic appointments only and do not lead to real political change
International support	Some women civil society have international exposure and networks		International experience and commitment to women and men	Ineffective international community response
			IMF loan	IMF loan excludes civil

				society and women
Conflict dynamics	Patriotism and the spirit of solidarity	Increasing polarization between east and west	The conflict itself provides space to transform gender roles	Escalation in conflict closes space, abilities and opportunities for civil society to be a driver for peace
Alternate CEDAW report			Alternate CEDAW report and General recommendation No. 30	

3.4.1 Strengths

Examples of Ukrainian women's organizations are included for illustrative purposes.

3.4.1.1 Alert and ready to seize the moment

Many interviewees recognised that Ukraine has entered a new phase and that it is necessary to adapt to this new phase if they wish to influence the evolving situation and to seize emerging opportunities. These interviewees were particularly receptive to understanding more about the global Women, Peace and Security agenda and to learn about the experience of other women in conflict and post-conflict situations. And, they were keen to act now.

3.4.1.2 Relationships of trust within women's civil society

Most importantly, the leaders of key women's organizations know each other well and appear to work well together, with relationships of trust and respect.

3.4.1.3 Gender experience and expertise

Considerable gender expertise has been developed by numerous women's organizations. This includes advising state institutions, including relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Social Policy as well as Parliament on policy and legislation development. The Centre for Gender Education in Luhansk

develops gender training for students undergoing teacher training as well as teachers.

3.4.1.4 Varied and broad experience, skills and capacities

Women's civil society carries out various tasks over a broad range of areas. This includes providing services, undertaking gender analysis, advising state institutions, developing education and training, gathering and disseminating information, and, more recently, mobilizing for political change. The Women's Information Consultation Centre, based in Kiev, is one of the oldest women's NGOs in Ukraine. It is a virtual information and resource centre. It also undertakes programmatic work, including human rights training for children, as well as conducting research and advocacy.

3.4.1.5 Strong organization and mobilisation skills

It was evident that many women's organizations are highly professional, well organized and structured. Some organizations have considerable experience with networking, information gathering and dissemination, outreach and liaising with donors. The Ukrainian Women's Fund, based in Kiev, works with approximately 150 NGOs across the 24 oblasts, primarily women's organizations but not solely. The Fund receives international funding, which it grants to local organizations to promote gender equality, justice and respect for human rights⁴⁵. The groups emerging from Maidan and now supporting IDPs have demonstrated extremely strong and capable mobilization abilities, through maintaining strong and growing networks. Women's 100, a group of feminist activists, was at the forefront of the Maidan protests. They brought attention to the gender dimensions of the grievances underlying the protests, demanding that sexism, anti-discrimination and gender inequality in Ukrainian society be urgently tackled.

3.4.1.6 Development of thematic networks

The system of thematic networks across women's organizations is impressive. The networks include specific gender issues, such as the Gender Strategic Platform. The Gender Strategic Platform, comprised of approximately 20-30 experts and organizations from across the country, regularly comes together to discuss and strategize on emerging gender issues, including advising parliamentary hearings on equal rights in 2013.

⁴⁵ See Ukrainian Women's Fund website, available <http://www.uwf.kiev.ua/en/>, last accessed 7 September 2014

The networks also work together on specific thematic and programmatic issues, such as children's rights, domestic violence and trafficking. Faith Hope Love, based in Odessa, plays a key role in the region in programme delivery as well as in participating in relevant thematic networks.

3.4.1.7 Some regional coverage

Most interviewees noted that there had been less development and presence of civil society in the east and south of the country. However, some strong organizations do exist, including the Kharkiv Information Centre. The Centre is a women's leadership training centre helping women build businesses and provides gender analysis and training for schools and universities.

3.4.1.8 Existence of positive Ukrainian female role models

There are a variety of potential female role models to inspire women and men. These include political leaders, such as Iryna Veryhyna, the former Governor of Luhansk. Governor Veryhyna was seen regularly on TV wearing a flak jacket and helmet and was described as "credible, calm, convincing and in control of the situation". In her role as governor of a region in the frontline of conflict, Governor Veryhyna is quietly challenging stereotypes. Lesya Orobets is a young woman who has served as a Member of Parliament since 2007. Ms Orobets was very active during the Maidan protests and ran recently for the race for Mayor of Kiev⁴⁶. She seems particularly popular with young women. The popular singer Ruslana Lyzhychko was also described by some as a role model. Ms Lyzhychko had been very active during the Orange Revolution and subsequently served as a Member of Parliament. During the Maidan protests, Ms Lyzhychko was present on what has been described as some of the hardest and coldest nights, thereby comforting and inspiring many tired and fearful protesters.

3.4.1.9 Good leadership within women's organizations

All the aforementioned organizations play a leading role within civil society. The Women's Consortium of Ukraine is comprised of 24 gender focused organizations and various thematic networks. The Consortium plays a key role in advocacy and programme implementation. La Strada-Ukraine is also

⁴⁶ Jon Lee Anderson, Portraits from Ukraine: Lesya Orobets' Campaign, The New Yorker, 29 April 2014, available at <http://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/portraits-from-ukraine-lesya-orobetss-campaign>, last accessed 7 September 2014

recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in anti-trafficking and the provision of support to survivors of domestic violence⁴⁷.

3.4.1.10 International exposure and networks

Many organizations are directly linked to European and/or international alliances or networks. The Donetsk Regional League of Business and Professional Women provides training and advice to women on entrepreneurship and self-employment, as well as economic support to domestic violence programmes. The League participates in the work of the International Federation of Business and Professional Women based in Bern.

3.4.2 Challenges

3.4.2.1 Limited state-civil society partnership

The 'national entity for the advancement of women's rights' is the Ministry of Social Policy (MSP). The MSP is also responsible for various social welfare funds and the state employment system. From the perspective of most interviewees, the overall consensus seems to be that the MSP is unable to carry out its mandate to advance women's rights effectively. This is due to a variety of reasons. These include the lack of in-house technical gender expertise, and a sufficient budget and staffing to support programmes. Most importantly, prioritization, focus, and seriousness on women's advancement appear to be missing. This refers to both targeted gender interventions, as well as integrating gender dimensions in the work of other ministries. Indeed, from 2010-2012, during the government of President Yanukovich, there was no actual state programme for the advancement of women's rights.

The MSP appears to view civil society organizations as mere service providers. This observation seems particularly pertinent in the current conflict context where civil society is shouldering the burden of humanitarian assistance to IDPs and soldiers. Civil society is not viewed by the MSP as a full legitimate partner, empowered and capable of advising and supporting the MSP. Even less is civil society viewed as capable of playing a watchdog role over state and government functions. Promoting gender equality does not appear to be a priority for the Government in terms of its machinery, budget, staffing, and programmatic action.

In its Concluding Observations in 2010, the CEDAW Committee expressed similar concerns. The Committee therefore recommended that Ukraine strengthen the MPS "by raising its authority and visibility, inter alia, by establishing it at a higher level of government and by providing it with adequate

⁴⁷ See La Strada-Ukraine website, available at <http://lastradainternational.org/lis-offices/ukraine>, last accessed 7 September 2014

human and financial resources in order to make it more effective. This should, in particular, include capacity for improved coordination among the various gender equality structures at the national and local levels and for enhanced cooperation with civil society”⁴⁸.

3.4.2.2 Uneven contribution to policy-making and strategic advocacy

There seems to be less emphasis in the work of women’s civil society organizations on policy-making and in particular using analysis to shape state action. Interviewees also underlined the need to strengthen strategic advocacy, in particular, through coalition building around common agendas to impact government and parliamentary policy-making.

3.4.2.3 Limited experience of women and political processes

Many interviewees confirmed that efforts by civil society to engage women in political processes had not been sufficiently prioritized. This means that women are often not aware as to what their rights are, let alone have the skills, confidence and opportunities to access and exercise those rights.

3.4.2.4 Limited civil society presence in the east

As mentioned earlier, the presence of civil society, in particular of women’s organizations, in the east is limited. Historically there are a number of challenges facing development in the east, including harassment from political parties and business. Many of those organizations originally present have left because of the deteriorating security situation.

⁴⁸ Specifically, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern that the national machinery at that time, the Ministry for Family, Youth and Sports, “does not have sufficient authority, visibility or adequate human and financial resources to carry out its mandate and promote the advancement of women and gender equality effectively”. The Committee also expressed its concern about “the Ministry’s limited capacity to undertake effective coordination and cooperation with all gender equality structures at the national and local levels, as well as cooperation with women’s organizations.” Paragraph 18, Concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women CEDAW/C/UKR/CO/7, 5 February 2010, available at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws45.htm>, last accessed on 4 September 2014

3.4.2.5 Limited collaboration with women entrepreneurs, business communities and professional organizations

A number of interviewees referred to the need to more effectively involve businesswomen in the work and aims of civil society. The primary motivation of such engagement would be to encourage businesswomen to more generously support civil society financially and technically. Secondary motivations include the need to learn from the organizational strengths and successes of businesswomen and to develop a better understanding of economics and financial matters.

3.4.2.6 Women's rights can follow later

Traditional underlying gender stereotypes are being reinforced in both the public and private sphere as the country focuses its attention, energies and resources on making war. Women are told repeatedly that now is not the time to push for 'their' agenda; women can wait whilst the men serve and save the country. Former President Yanukovych and former Prime Minister Azarov respectively publicly told women "to go to the kitchen", noting that "conducting reforms is not women's business"⁴⁹.

3.4.2.7 Lack of knowledge and understanding of the Women, Peace and Security agenda

Many interviewees had heard of Security Council resolution 1325. Very few were familiar with the Women, Peace and Security agenda and even less with the specificities of how it can help women and men in conflict.

3.4.3 Opportunities

3.4.3.1 Patriotism and the spirit of solidarity

All interviewees referred, in various ways, to the high levels of empathy amongst many Ukrainians, women and men at this time. They spoke of a sense of solidarity across much of Ukraine, including in some parts of the east. It

⁴⁹ Luke Harding, Ukrainian women berate 'Neanderthal' PM for sexist remarks, The Guardian, 24 March 2014, available at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/24/ukraine-mykola-azarov-women>, last accessed 7 September 2014

would be important to sustain this momentum by keeping the population positive, engaged, focused and moving forward in a way that broadens the circle of participation and inclusion. It would be particularly important to nurture and strengthen emerging groups particularly from the east.

3.4.3.2 High-level political support to the role and contribution of women

President Poroshenko has spoken of the important role of women, particularly women politicians, in the implementation of the peace plan and in supporting settlement of the conflict⁵⁰. The President has also publicly stated his support for increased and enhanced political participation of women, especially at high levels, describing the fact that there is only one woman minister in the Government and only 10% women MPs as negative. Indeed, he has stated, “European integration stipulates the necessity of increasing the number of women in all branches of power”. With a mandate from more than 56% of voters, the President’s public support and action towards increasing the participation of women in political life is a critical ingredient to encouraging broader receptivity and attitudinal change towards women in political life.

There have been a number of recent high-level appointments of women that may begin to address some of the perception questions regarding women’s suitability for high-level roles and responsibilities. These appointments include the appointment of Valeriya Hontaryeva as Governor of the National Bank of Ukraine, an appointment made by Parliament in June 2014. Ms. Hontaryeva is the first woman to lead the Bank. It remains to be seen whether this represents a serious commitment to women’s political and economic participation.

3.4.3.3 Draft electoral law and Parliamentary elections

The draft electoral law currently before Parliament contains a proposal referring to a 30% quota of female candidates within political party lists. However, it is also reported that the draft law does not set out the manner in which female candidates would be selected. It has been reported that even if a political party were to include 30% of female candidates on the list, there would be no requirement to actually select them as deputies in the event the party received the required number of votes at elections. Though President Poroshenko has stated his support for a gender-based quota allocation in the electoral legislation⁵¹, it is currently considered unlikely that Parliament will adopt the draft

⁵⁰ President Petro Poroshenko, The role of women is important in the fulfilment of peacekeeping mission today, 23 July 2014, available at <http://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/30844.html>, last accessed on 7 September 2014

⁵¹ President Poroshenko stated: “It is important to analyse, legally regulate and ensure the increase of the role of a woman not only in society, but also in public administration”. Id.

legislation before the next Parliamentary elections, scheduled for 26 October 2014.

3.4.3.4 IMF loan

The IMF has agreed to loan Ukraine \$17.1bn, of which \$3.2bn has already been disbursed. Civil society consultation on the use of the loan would be important to ensure broad support for proposed economic reforms. Civil society engagement could also assist in ensuring that the loans incorporate a gender-based budgeting perspective as well as ensuring that women entrepreneurs and businesswomen are able to access relevant assistance.

3.4.3.5 CEDAW reporting cycle and General recommendation No. 30

Ukraine is due to submit its regular report to the CEDAW Committee on 30 September. Ukrainian NGOs are currently preparing an alternate report to submit to the Committee. CEDAW General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations⁵² provides an important framework from which to review and consider the situation facing women in Ukraine at this time.

3.4.3.6 International experience and commitment to women and men

Considerable international experience in addressing the needs and rights of women in conflict and post-conflict contexts has been developed, including through the development of the Women, Peace and Security framework. International organizations, including UN Women, UN Department of Political Affairs, OHCHR and OSCE, and key donors have learned through difficult experience that it is critical that civil society be engaged as early as possible to ensure the prevention of further conflict, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation. As such, international organizations are building their own capacity to promote gender equality and the rights of women. Political will and programmatic funds to support the role of civil society in the conflict and peace process, and particularly of women, are anticipated.

⁵² General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, CEDAW Committee, 18 October 2013, UN document CEDAW/C/GC/30, available at <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/CEDAW/GComments/CEDAW.C.CG.30.pdf>, last accessed on 14 September 2014

3.4.3.7 The conflict itself

As we have seen from other conflict contexts, conflict often provides the space to adjust gender roles. Of the top 30 countries in the world that have the highest number of women in Parliament, 10 are in post-conflict countries including Rwanda, Burundi and Timor-Leste, reflecting the shifts in the power balance wrought by the conflict and peace processes⁵³.

Some interviewees referred to the sense of self-esteem they were experiencing as they try to make a new home and life for themselves away from their male family members. Others spoke about their sense that, though tired, anything was possible. The conflict is providing space and some opportunities for some women. With conflict new ideas and ways of thinking can emerge as to how women can better organize to seize their rightful place across all spheres of life.

3.4.4 Risks

3.4.4.1 Escalation in conflict

If the conflict escalates rapidly and pushes for a military solution, the ability and space of civil society, and women in particular, to build up their role and voice as a driver for peace is likely to be highly limited. This would be further constrained as civil society's efforts would likely focus on responding to the inevitable humanitarian needs.

3.4.4.2 Increasing polarization between east and west

Increasing polarization between some in the east and west may impact the ability of civil society to reach out and cohere around a common set of messages and priorities. This may lead to the exclusion of groups, in particular from the east, thereby limiting opportunities for peacebuilding and reconciliation.

3.4.4.3 Results of the Parliamentary elections on 26 October discourage women's participation

The upcoming parliamentary elections are an opportunity to encourage greater participation of women in political life. They also present a risk, as women may

⁵³ Ukrainian Women's Fund, Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making in Ukraine: Strategy Paper, 2011, available at <http://www.osce.org/odihr/85974>, last accessed on 7 September 2014

not succeed in increasing their numbers. This risk is particularly high given that the elections are taking place during conflict when the need for “strong men” to take care and defend their country is usually emphasized. Such a fall may come as a bitter blow to the younger generation of voters particularly given their post Maidan hopes, aspirations and expectations.

3.4.4.4 IMF loan excludes civil society and women

Though consultations with some segments of civil society have been initiated, there is risk that state funding, including as freed up by the IMF loan, does not take into account the perspectives of civil society or incorporate a gender dimension.

3.4.4.5 Ineffective international community response

Prior to the Maidan protests, the international community was comprised of a small United Nations Country Team, a limited number of diplomatic missions and a few international NGOs. Assistance was mainly focused on long-term reform, democracy and development programmes. Most organizations partnered with state entities. The extent to which donor and development organizations implemented targeted gender programmes is unclear; most relevant programmes seems to have, at best, integrated gender within their programmes.

Since the conflict, the international community has re-oriented some of its assistance to provide immediate humanitarian assistance. However, most development actors are still assessing the evolving situation and are yet to develop full conflict sensitive programming. Moreover, they have not articulated a specific approach to promote the rights of women in the conflict and post conflict context.

Experience has demonstrated the challenges inherent in ensuring effective support from the international community to the participation of civil society, in particular of women, in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation. Many of these risks are pertinent in the Ukraine context. For instance, the international community may support only western-leaning organizations as much for practical reasons (they are easier to access as for political reasons). The international community may not adopt a coherent coordinated programme of support, thereby impacting upon the effectiveness and efficiency of support provided. Or, the international community or parts of it may push its own supply driven agenda and not provide civil society the space

and time required to develop its own ground-driven agenda. Perhaps most importantly the international community runs the risk of eating up the precious time, expertise and resources of an extremely busy and occupied civil society.

4. Conclusions

Most Ukrainians now consider that Ukraine is at war. Many are still digesting what this actually means – and what it may portend. The prognosis remains unclear despite the ceasefire agreed on 5 September and punctured on 7 September and thereafter.

The security situation in eastern Ukraine is deteriorating swiftly. It is not possible to predict the rate of deterioration. Human rights abuses affecting women, men, girls and boys are taking place on a daily basis. The humanitarian situation is worsening, affecting both IDPs and host communities in an already beleaguered economic climate. The cold winter is shortly to arrive. It is certain to impact many; not just IDPs living in unheated recreation centres, but possibly much of the regular population if gas supplies are reduced or run out. Dialogue between the Ukrainian and Russian Governments and the armed groups is, at best, inconsistent, and treacherous at worse. It does not live up to its expectations. International rumblings in rhetoric and action heighten tension in the region.

For some - those living largely in the west and the centre of the country - Maidan represented a national heroic struggle. It lit hopes that the grievances underlying the protests - political exclusion, widespread corruption and the economic inequalities – would be addressed. For others - primarily those living in the east of the country - Maidan represented a breakdown in constitutional order and a fearful plunge into the unknown. For civil society and beyond, the Maidan protests showed what civil society could do. Maidan also showed women and men what women could do and, more importantly, what women and men working together could do.

The conflict in eastern Ukraine has, however, diverted attention from addressing the grievances underlying the Maidan protests. State machinery is fully absorbed in fighting a conflict in the east. Civil society, mainly comprised of women, is working overtime to support IDPs fleeing the east and soldiers. This reinforces the gender role of women as supporters of 'their men' in defending the country, deepens the narrative of women without agency, and subordinates the potential role of women. Men are fighting in the conflict or, if they do not want to fight, are fleeing to the east where they run the risk of being accused of cowardice, treachery and betrayal of the homeland. There is little public space today for Ukrainian men to adopt a non-violent position in opposition to war. At the same time, a divisive narrative is unfolding, fuelling a dangerous, and possibly self-fulfilling, paradigm of "us vs. them". The diversion of civil society, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes, and the divisive narrative are impacting civil society's ability to craft a role as an effective driver for peace in an environment of intensifying conflict and increasing militarization. The conflict is deprioritizing women's equal participation.

Experience from conflicts elsewhere shows that women, as men, have a critical role to play as drivers of peace in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation. With the full and central engagement of women, sustainable, equitable and prosperous peace is more likely to follow. Investment, therefore, now - during the conflict - to strengthen the role, voice and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation may pay dividends in the subsequent transition. If serious attention and focus is not provided to the participation and inclusion of women, regression of women's rights and the further reinforcement of gender stereotypes is likely, impacting negatively upon all across society.

Experience also shows that conflict can offer an opportunity to shift, if not reshape, the traditional gender roles of men as well as of women. Such a shift may contribute to the development of a less militarized society where Ukrainian men do not feel confined to occupy the traditional masculine roles of "provider", "warrior", "hero" and "defender of the homeland".

It is therefore important to build upon the specific strengths of civil society – courage, solidarity, the ability to mobilize and challenge stereotypes and others – to secure the gains from Maidan and build a national voice and movement that can play a proactive, central and defining role in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

Experience has shown that to do so the following five elements are required:

- Tailoring: The specific Ukrainian context should shape the specific Ukrainian response
- Bottom up: The response should build upon the expertise, knowledge, and networks of Ukrainian civil society, in particular, women's organizations
- Infusing lessons learned: The response should build upon international Women, Peace and Security experience
- Reinforcing statebuilding: Support should be led by the political and financial support of the Government of Ukraine
- International support: The response should be backed up by the political support and financial and technical assistance of the international community.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Overall goal

Based upon the views exchanged during this consultation process as well as taking into account comparative international experience, it is recommended that national and international efforts be aligned to support the development of civil society, in particular of women's organizations, as a driver of peace able to participate effectively in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation.

5.2 Strategic priorities

It is recommended that the following strategic priorities be adopted in order to realise the overall goal:

- i. Women and men need to understand the mutual benefits of a united front using the strengths of each;
- ii. Participation of civil society in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding and reconciliation;
- iii. Participation of women in particular in political processes;
- iv. Participation of women in particular in economic recovery; and
- v. Effective and consistent support by the international community.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with National Sections covering every continent, an International Secretariat based in Geneva, and a New York office focused on the work of the United Nations.

Since our establishment in 1915, we have brought together women from around the world who are united in working for peace by non-violent means and promoting political, economic and social justice for all.

Our approach is always non-violent, and we use existing international legal and political frameworks to achieve fundamental change in the way states conceptualise and address issues of gender, militarism, peace and security.

Our strength lies in our ability to link the international and local levels. We are very proud to be one of the first organisations to gain consultative status (category B) with the United Nations (UN), and the only women's anti-war organisation so recognised.



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