Brief. A need for gender mainstreaming and women’s participation in the development and implementation of Ukraine’s war recovery programmes

The Decree of the President of Ukraine “Issues of the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the War” of 21 April 2022 #266/2022 establishes the National Council for the Recovery of Ukraine from the War to develop strategies, action plans, proposals for priority reforms and relevant regulations on recovery processes. To ensure smooth operation of the National Council, a total of 23 working groups are set up that cover all possible areas related to the post-war recovery and development of Ukraine.

It is a good practice to mainstream gender into the operation of working groups for maximising effectiveness of the recovery processes.

This brief identifies international and national regulatory frameworks, arguments, specific tools and the expected benefits of applying a gender perspective in planning and implementing Ukraine’s recovery processes.

1. Gender mainstreaming and women’s participation in decision-making are an important component of Ukraine’s international obligations.

The international legal framework, which includes requirements for gender equality and non-discrimination, is established in:

1) international instruments on human rights and gender equality binding for Ukraine, in particular, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women;
2) the 1995 Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action;
3) UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and nine additional UN Security Council resolutions on Women, Peace, Security;
4) Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda that Ukraine has acceded to.

Gender mainstreaming in all areas of national policy is a requirement for both European integration of Ukraine in general and post-war recovery and reconstruction that will be supported by the EU, including financially. The RebuildUkraine High-Level Strategic Plan for Ukraine’s Recovery stipulated by the European Commission’s Communication of 18 May 2022 calls for a gender-sensitive approach – that is, women and men should be equally involved in and benefit from Ukraine's recovery. It is critical that the national recovery strategy is gender-sensitive, too.

Other international partners – including international financial institutions and bilateral development partners – that support programmes and provide funds for the recovery and reconstruction of Ukraine (EBRD, IMF, World Bank, U.S., Canada, EU Member States, UK, etc.), insist on the necessity of gender mainstreaming. The strategic documents of key European institutions – namely, the Council of Europe’s Gender Equality Strategy for 2018-2023 and the European Union’s Gender Equality Strategy for 2020-2025 – should also be a guideline for integrating gender perspective in the recovery processes.

The agreement between the Government of Ukraine and development partners on integrating gender (along with anti-corruption and digitalization) as a cross-cutting strategy in all areas of governance was enshrined in the October 2020 Partnership for Development Forum Statement.

2. Ukraine undertook commitments on gender mainstreaming and women’s empowerment in decision-making and must deliver on its commitments.
The national legal framework stipulating mandatory mainstreaming of gender in the activities of working groups at the National Council is provided for by the following acts:

1. The Law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” of 8 September 2005 #2866-IV provides for integrating gender in all areas of national policy; this is necessary to ensure the parity of women and men in all sectors of society.
3. The Order of the Ministry of Social Policy “On Approval of Methodological Guidelines for Gender Impact Assessment of Sectoral Reforms” of 14 April 2020 #257 defines an algorithm for assessing potential and/or existing results and consequences of sectoral reform on the situation of different groups of women and men.

3. Gender mainstreaming is a pe-requisite for the working groups to effectively perform tasks entrusted with them by the National Council. It provides the following advantages in developing the action plans, proposals for priority reforms, strategic initiatives, draft regulations relating to the post-war recovery and development of Ukraine:

1. **Taking the needs of different population into account**
   Gender mainstreaming is not limited to women and men, it also identifies and takes into account specific needs of people with disabilities, young people, the elderly, minorities and all groups of population who may be vulnerable or disadvantaged. That is, the national policy on post-war recovery and development of Ukraine will be more effective in fulfilling its main function – meeting the needs of its target groups.

2. **Capitalizing on the opportunities and potential of different populations**
   Different groups of Ukraine’s population are unevenly involved in the socio-economic and political processes, and it slows down the development of the economy, political processes and social progress. Namely, before the full-scale Russia invasion on 24 February 2022, women made up less than a third of entrepreneurs and 29% heads of companies in various fields of business; only 25% of workforce in information technologies and a disproportionate minority in other sectors that foster the advancement of Ukraine’s economy, including export-oriented economy; and as few as 16% military servants of the Armed Forces of Ukraine were women. At the same time, men were seeking medical treatment and prevention twice less often than women, and this is one of the reasons why men’s life expectancy at birth was 10 years lower than women’s: 66.4 and 76.2 years, respectively. These are just some of the hundreds of examples of gender gaps – unbalanced participation of women and men in various areas of life. Such gender gaps are observed in all 23 areas that the working groups deal with. Gender gaps mean that the economy in general and its critical sectors in wartime in particular make insufficient use of women’s talents, professional and entrepreneurial skills, thus jeopardizing economic development. Similarly, the security and defence sector does not sufficiently take into account the potential of women both in ensuring the country’s defence and in the post-war recovery process.

3. Mainstreaming gender in the post-war recovery and development policy is a must to ensure Ukraine’s international and national commitments in the field of human rights.

4. Gender mainstreaming is a component of democratic policy and European values, which help accelerate moving away from the patriarchal models of “Russian world” imposed by Russia as an aggressor country.
Yet another advantage is that gender mainstreaming does not require significant resource and does not slow down the overall process of planning and implementing the post-war recovery and development, as it is not an additional stage of this process, but takes place directly during consultations and drafting the action plans, strategic initiatives and regulations.

4. The methodology for gender mainstreaming in the activities of working groups at the National Council has been developed and extensively piloted in Ukraine. It includes the following steps:

1) *Making sure that the working groups include gender experts* who have knowledge of the needs of different groups in the context of post-war recovery and development, as well as knowledge and experience on how such needs were taken into account during the development and implementation of similar post-war recovery programmes in Ukraine and abroad. A team of experts with expertise in each of the 23 areas of recovery is ready to join the activities of the working groups;

2) *Use of gender-disaggregated statistics* in main sectors of socio-economic, political and humanitarian areas, security and defence sector (such statistics is provided annually by the State Statistics Service, other agencies), as well as the findings of specific gender surveys conducted by the public authorities, NGOs, academic and research institutions, international development partners;

3) If necessary information and data in certain areas is not available, *conducting the respective consultations and rapid assessments/surveys* (whenever possible);

4) In cooperation with international and non-governmental organisations, development partners, *conducting gender analysis* in each of 23 areas for which the working groups have been established, for:
   a. identifying gender gaps and imbalances in these areas that should be addressed in the post-war recovery and development;
   b. outlining barriers that prevent certain populations from fully benefiting from and participating in post-war recovery and development;
   c. identifying opportunities related to the involvement of specific populations in the processes of post-war recovery and development;
   d. assessing the impact of post-war recovery and development on the situation of different groups of women and men;
   e. ensuring that the processes of post-war recovery and development create equal benefits for different populations;

5) *Development of proposals* to ensure that the documents to be drawn up by the working groups (action plans, proposals for priority reforms, strategic initiatives, draft regulations on post-war recovery and development) are gender-sensitive in their wording and content – that is, not only that they do not create barriers for the participation of different populations in the processes of post-war recovery and benefitting from them, but also help eliminate existing barriers;

6) *Use of gender-sensitive language*, in particular gender-marked titles, in accordance with modern Ukrainian spelling;

7) *Use of indicators* that will assess the impact of the developed documents on the situation of women and men, as well as the *development of proposals* for equal involvement of women and men in monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of these documents.
**Examples of gender mainstreaming in working groups:**

**1. Working group on construction, urban planning, modernization of cities and regions**

After the war, construction standards will clearly provide for equipping bomb shelters in residential, administrative and other types of buildings. At the same time, unless gender is not considered, there is a significant risk that these shelters will be designed in such a way that they remain inaccessible to people with disabilities and low-mobility groups, and do not take into account the needs of families with children. Involvement of gender expertise will ensure that construction standards and norms will guarantee the availability of shelters (as well as all other parts of buildings) for all groups of the population.

**2. Working group on digitalization**

In 2020, [58% men and 49% women](http://example.com) used public digital services, which is an example of a 9% gender gap. The effective national policy on digitalization does not create barriers for women or other groups of people, but neither it helps overcome existing barriers. This is an impediment to achieving the goal of digitalization – to make digital services accessible to everyone. Gender mainstreaming can identify why women use digital services less often than men, and develop and implement solutions to address these reasons.

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**5. Expected results of gender mainstreaming**

The documents developed by the working groups:

- are not focused on an average citizen, but take into account the needs and potential of different groups of people;
- describe, identify and target specific problems that specific groups of people – rather than society as a whole – face due to the Russian invasion;
- create tangible equal opportunities for the development and self-fulfilment of all people, regardless of age, gender, place of residence and other characteristics;
- are understandable to international partners, meet donor standards and, accordingly, enjoy trust from international partners.

**6. Urgent steps to take. To ensure gender equality and non-discrimination in the development of documents, we recommend** that all working groups promptly involve gender experts in their activities and jointly identify existing gender gaps in the area under their responsibility, barriers preventing women and men from participating in, contributing to and benefitting from this area, as well as identify measures to address these gaps/barriers.