Cabinet of
Ministers of Ukraine

UNDP

HUMANITARIAN SECTOR IN UKRAINE: FROM HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO DEVELOPMENT AGENDA THROUGH TIMES OF PANDEMIC

UNDP PROJECT "CRISIS COORDINATION MANAGEMENT IN UKRAINE"

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INTRODUCTION

Ukraine can consider the crisis caused by COVID-19 not only as a threat, but also as an opportunity to consolidate and apply its experience and lessons learned in the crisis context, as well as to stimulate transitional and transformational processes in public administration, social relations and development.

The comparative feature of Ukraine in the global and regional contexts is that the negative impact of the coronavirus crisis (COVID-19 crisis) is complemented by other factors directly related to the humanitarian sector.

First, it is the armed conflict that has been ongoing since 2014, and the loss of Ukraine's state control over the territories in the two eastern regions and in Crimea due to involvement of the Russian Federation – another UN Member State and a permanent member of its Security Council – as well as resulting security and humanitarian crisis. There are almost 1.5 million internally displaced persons in Ukraine[1], and more than three million people are in need humanitarian assistance[2]. At the same time, the internationally recognized government does not exercise control over about 7% of the internationally recognized territory of the state.

Second, it is a large-scale reform of the government and socio-economic system, including the areas of public administration and health care that are the priorities of domestic policy. One of key impetus for such reform, along with a strong public demand, is international commitments in the framework of regional integration with the European Union. Therefore, the reform of state and public institutions in the country is carried out in parallel with the response to large-scale humanitarian challenges. Ukraine currently has a commitment to political association and economic integration with the European Union. It is clear that the response and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis is affecting Ukraine's ability to meet these commitments, including the allocation of resources to the relevant sectors.

The COVID-19 crisis hit Ukraine at a time when the humanitarian response in the context of the armed conflict that began in 2014 was shifting from the modality of emergency humanitarian assistance to long-term recovery programmes focused on strengthening the links between humanitarian and development processes. The COVID-19 epidemic has not only suddenly expanded the landscape of the humanitarian sector in Ukraine, but has given additional impetus to the government, civil society and the international community to develop integrated approaches to link humanitarian and security priorities with the development aspects.

Effective humanitarian response mechanisms that emerged both from state-building and regional development, and the activities of the international community, were developed in Ukraine especially in the period from 2014 and had their scope expanded during the fight against the COVID-19 crisis in 2020. The proposals listed below focus on improving such mechanisms and their harmonization in the broader context of crisis management, especially its strategic and coordination aspects, taking into account and focusing on

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[1] According to the Ministry of Social Policy: Internally Displaced Persons – Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine

[2] According to UN data, https://www.unocha.org/ukraine

complementarity with the diverse experience gained over the last half-decade.

The proposals are based on the second of three programmatic pillars identified by the United Nations Development System in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, in particular the humanitarian response to support and assist the most vulnerable and affected persons. According to this framework, they should complement the efforts of the first and third pillars that focus on health sector response and socio-economic recovery, respectively.

CONCEPTUALIZING HUMAN SECURITY

The armed conflict that began in 2014 with the Russian Federation's occupation of the Crimean peninsula and has defined the country's main security paradigm over the past half-decade, stems from the region's geopolitical context at the turn of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Accordingly, the military political component is key to the prospects for its settlement. The conflict in Donbas and the Azov Sea features classic kinetic warfare with a 550-kilometer front line and the use of a wide range of weapons and ammunition, from small arms to multiple rocket launcher systems. However, Ukraine does not stay away from current trends in the discourse of international security, including the dichotomy of two key aspects of security – hard security (armed conflict, weapons of mass destruction, terrorism) and human security (environmental security, biomedical security, gender equality). Modern approaches to the development of national security strategies increasingly take into account such aspects as security and defense (or military-political security or national security) and human security. These concepts complement and integrate with each other, forming a system in which the security of the national political community is based on the security of social and economic communities and units, territorial communities and families, individual citizens and ecosystems. Paying due attention to human security enables the state not only to more effectively ensure rights and freedoms and promote sustainable development, but also to accumulate and demonstrate soft power and attractiveness of its national idea and way of life.

The concept of human security, in turn, is based on three elements – freedom from fear, freedom from want and respect for human dignity[3]. This approach echoes the comprehensive approach to security declared by the OSCE and consists of politico-military, economic and environmental and human pillars.

According to Article 26 of the Law on National Security of Ukraine, the National Security Strategy is developed upon instruction of the President of Ukraine within six months after his/her inauguration[4], so it is high time to start developing a new strategy. The current Strategy adopted in May 2015 has become a landmark document for its time, but now needs to be updated both with regards to its achievements and the new challenges that have arisen since its adoption. Such challenges are:

- the conflict in Donbas becomes chronic;

- processes of demographic and infrastructural engineering on the part of the Russian Federation in relation to the Crimean peninsula;

- democratic change of power in Ukraine against the background of the opposite process in the Russian Federation;

- the problems of internally displaced persons, the number of which is unprecedented for the European region, despite the fact that this category is not protected by targeted international conventions and thus relies on the state to a much greater extent than the refugees;

- the problems of migrant workers who were forced to return during the pandemic;

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[3] https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/

[4] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2469-19#Text

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- prospects of Ukraine's integration into the European space in the context of COVID-19 crisis, etc.

On 17 January 2020, the National Security and Defense Council considered the draft National Security Strategy of Ukraine *Human Security – Country Security*[5], the declared title of which reflects the focus on the concept of human security. Further strategic planning documents to be developed on the basis of the Strategy include human development strategy, military security strategy, public security and civil defense strategy, defense industrial development strategy, economic, environmental, information security strategy, cyber security strategy, national intelligence programme, strategy on foreign policy security, strategy on state security, counterintelligence and counter-terrorism, etc.

The effective version of the National Security Strategy was adopted in times of existential threat to Ukrainian state and bears a clear imprint of such specificity. Realizing that such a threat has not passed, but that significant progress has been made in terms of the state's preparedness to respond to it, the expansion of the human security component in national strategic planning instruments should be considered. Security and defense, managed by the President of Ukraine in coordination with the National Security and Defense Council, and human security, which falls under the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers with a coordination mechanism represented primarily by the State Commission for Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergencies, should become two full strategic components of the national security system.

In the context of transformation of conceptual framework of human security into specific practices of strategic planning and crisis management, it is advised:

- to draft a national human development strategy directly linked to national indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals;
- to adapt the Strategy of the State Migration Policy of Ukraine until 2025[6], taking into

account the problems of mass forced return of Ukrainian labour migrants from abroad and forced internal displacement caused by the armed conflict;

- to develop the national mine action strategy in accordance with the Law of Ukraine on Mine Action in Ukraine and current international standards in this sector;
- to develop the national strategy for environmental safety in regions affected by the armed conflict, as neglecting this aspect can have far-reaching consequences, including for public health, which is unacceptable in the context of the national epidemic security situation.

There is also a need for both further strategic planning and conceptual and doctrinal support in the area of internally displaced persons, as its number is Ukraine is unprecedented for European region[7]. The effective Strategy for Integration of Internally Displaced Persons and Implementation of Long-Term Decisions on Internal Replacement that expires in 2020[8] actually considers one of the three options for long-term decisions on internal displacement – local integration, while the world practice offers two more options – voluntary resettlement and voluntary return. Voluntary return – which is a preference for the humanitarian community regardless of the context – is a more distant prospect in Ukraine due to current security and political situation. However, in the broader context of reintegration of currently non-Government-controlled territories, strategic planning at the national level should consider this long-term alternative – specifically, an appropriate national strategy for certain territories in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts and the Crimean peninsula should be developed and implemented.

At the same time, consideration should be given to developing voluntary resettlement programmes that should be implemented through the government's cooperation with international development partners. The majority of internally displaced persons have moved to highly urbanized areas of Kyiv,

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5 https://www.president.gov.ua/news/rnbo-rozglyanula-proekt-strategiyi-nacionalnoyi-bezpeki-ukra-59321

6 https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/482-2017-%D1%80#Text

7 The number of IDPs registered in Ukraine is more than twice the number of IDPs in Azerbaijan that ranks the second in Europe and Central Asia.

8 Approved by the Ordinance of the Cabinet of Ministers of 21 November 2018 # 944.

Kharkiv, Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhia oblasts that features high competition in the labour market before the armed conflict, which can increase further in the context of the COVID-19 crisis. Many of those displaced within Donetsk and Luhansk regions stay in large frontline cities (Sloviansk, Bakhmut, Mariupol, Sievierodonetsk, Toretsk, etc.) that have their local socio-economic problems related to the impact of the armed conflict. The development of additional options and programmes for voluntary resettlement of internally displaced persons within regions with lower levels of economic activity would serve to make more productive use of the IDPs' potential, revitalize local economic development, increase social cohesion and socio-cultural diversity at the national level. The key principles should be promoting voluntary resettlement as a long-term solution, the ability to create jobs for skilled employees, the encouragement and support of appropriate conditions for the movement of capital (investment, starting up a business).

Along with socio-economic component, integrated security in terms of forced internal displacement in Ukraine have a political dimension. Following the adoption of relevant amendments to the Electoral Code, it is necessary to ensure full participation of internally displaced persons in the local elections scheduled for 25 October 2020 in their host communities in accordance with effective election legislation and the Laws on Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Internally Displaced Persons and on the State Register of Voters. To do this, it is necessary to train the staff of local election commissions to ensure full participation of IDPs in elections, taking into account current administrative territorial reform, the creation of amalgamated territorial communities and changes in the boundaries of administrative districts. At the same time, an awareness raising campaign among the IDPs on opportunities and procedures should be conducted encouraging them to participate in local elections.

In this context, it should be noted that currently, there is no universal convention at the global level guaranteeing the rights of internally displaced persons, like the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the provisions of which sometimes apply by analogy to the IDPs[9]. The current UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement[10] are not legally binding, while there are tens of millions of people in the world in forced internal displacement caused by both armed conflicts and natural disasters and climate change. Ukraine as a country facing a particularly large-scale and complex problem in this area should consider initiating and adopting a legally binding international legal instrument on the status of internally displaced persons. Such an initiative could serve to significantly streamline the mechanisms of international cooperation and assistance in this area, as well as be a striking example of humanitarian diplomacy and soft power of the country on international arena.

Development of a comprehensive national policy for the protection of civilians in armed conflict remains an important priority. This process started in 2018-2019 under the interagency coordination of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration. After the leadership of this structure changed, it is advised to resume such activities, in particular in terms of:

- development and approval of a national strategy for the protection of civilians in armed conflict and assigning a public authority responsible for its implementation;

- creation of a unified national database of civilians affected by the conflict;

- adaptation of legislation to enable local administrations to quickly rebuild private homes and infrastructure damaged during the conflict;

- establishment of reserve funds at the regional level for prompt assistance to civilian victims of the conflict; and

- providing civilians with the as much information on the threats and risks of explosives as possible – publishing maps of contaminated areas, updating, restoring and expanding information and education of the population on the risks of living in explosive areas, in parallel with the establishment of national mine action institutions.

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9   The thematic convention is only available at the regional level in Africa (Kampala Convention).

10   https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GuidingPrinciplesDispl.pdf

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATION

Key difference between Ukraine and the vast majority of other countries in the region in the context of the COVID-19 crisis is that Ukraine has already experienced a complex humanitarian emergency over the past six years. Despite the UN Secretary-General's call for a ceasefire in all armed conflicts during the pandemic, fighting in Eastern Ukraine intensified in recent months. According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, March 2020 was the period of the sharpest increase in the number of civilian victims since September 201911. Observance of the provisions of international humanitarian law in the armed conflict area is a critical challenge that only becomes more important during the epidemic. In July 2020, the Ukrainian media reported the death of a combat medic during the shelling, and before that – in April – the highest number of incidents related to harm sustained by education institutions from the hostilities since July 2019 was recorded.

While in 2014-2019, the humanitarian sector focused on the groups who were vulnerable primarily due to the circumstances of the armed conflict, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, the range of vulnerable groups has expanded significantly. Along with the people living in conflict area and the IDPs, the groups of special vulnerability and increased risks of marginalization include:

- migrant workers who have been forced to return to Ukraine;
- population below the poverty line, including children;
- unemployed;
- medical staff and representatives of other COVID-19 frontline groups;
- elderly people in all regions of the country;
- single-parent families;
- persons with special needs/disabilities, including children (especially in specialized institutions);
- victims of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence;
- persons in need of regular medical services (including patients with HIV, tuberculosis, certain non-communicable diseases (diabetes, cardiovascular), chronic respiratory diseases);
- pregnant and lactating women;
- ethnic minorities, especially Roma;
- sexual minorities;
- homeless;
- informal labour market workers;
- persons in places of detention and imprisonment (places of non-freedom);
- legal and illegal migrants;
- refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons;
- residents of remote rural areas; and
- veterans of armed conflict.

A significant number of people evidently fall under multiple categories. Thus, the COVID-19 context is layered on the challenges caused by a complex humanitarian crisis lasting more than half a decade, related to the course and consequences of the armed conflict.

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11 Humanitarian Response Plan Ukraine 2020. Revised Requirements due to the COVID-19 Pandemic (June 2020).

In particular, difficult circumstances due to restrictions on the freedom to movement are created for internally displaced persons and persons living in non-Government-controlled territories. Their access to social benefits and public services depends on the ability to cross the contact line, which – according to the UN – was crossed by an average of 1.2 million civilians each month in 2020. While the operation of checkpoints on Ukrainian side was restored, on the non-Government-controlled side, the checkpoints do not operate in a stable manner. As of the end of June 2020, the Ukrainian government has abolished the requirement for self-isolation or observation of people coming from the non-Government-controlled territories of Eastern regions and the Crimean Peninsula who test negatively for COVID-19 after arrival[12.] It is necessary to engage the Ministry of Social Policy and the Ministry of Reintegration of the Temporarily Occupied Territories to optimize the system of providing public services to internally displaced persons and persons living in non-Government-controlled territories, taking into account disruptions in the work of checkpoints and relevant additional restrictions of their mobility. Given that the elderly people are a large share of such groups, it is critical to promptly improve the pension mechanisms that currently require from the pensioners to be present at their place of registration as IDPs to be eligible to receive their pensions. It is particularly important not only in the context of human rights, but also in view of the uncertainty and lack of reliable information on the epidemic in non-Government-controlled territories. Prisoners and hostages in the non-Government-controlled territory are a separate risk group with regard to COVID-19.

Since 2014, Ukraine has deployed a system of humanitarian response to crises in accordance with the UN cluster architecture. The cluster architecture entails creation of working forums/clusters on certain areas of humanitarian activity within international organizations, representatives of civil society and the government under the general leadership of the relevant UN thematic agency. The main objective of such clusters is the exchange of information and coordination in their thematic area. The overall coordination of the cluster system

is entrusted with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA).

The attention of the clusters is focused primarily on the population identified as in need of humanitarian assistance, which in Ukraine is more than three million people. Given the risks associated with COVID-19, the UN is reviewing its Humanitarian Needs Overview and Humanitarian Response Plan in the context of the pandemic for an area that has been experiencing a complex humanitarian crisis for six years. In particular, a review of the 2020 Humanitarian Response Plan reflective of the COVID-19 outbreak identified additional needs of USD 47 million. In addition, an increased importance of individual clusters – and, hence, of donor attention and fundraising opportunities – compared to 2014-2019 is anticipated. It is especially true for the health cluster (coordinated by WHO) and the cluster of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH, coordinated by UNICEF).

The national government should take active role in this process, as the possibilities for providing assistance to certain populations in a regular manner are limited. In particular, this is due to irregular access to communities in the conflict area in Eastern Ukraine, as well as the fact that many healthcare institutions, including leading regional health facilities, remain in the non-Government-controlled territory. In addition, a significant share of population in need of humanitarian assistance in the conflict area belong to risk groups with regard to COVID-1.9. These are the elderly who make 36% of this population (which is significantly higher than the national share of the elderly, 23%) and people with occupational chronic diseases caused by industrial and post-industrial specifics of the region. A significant share of older people in the area adjacent to the contact line have limited mobility or live there alone, as young people have left the conflict area in greater numbers than the older generations. 90% hostilities take place within 5 kilometres from the contact line. 41% civilians living in this area are elderly, most of them are women.

Although during the summer of 2020 the rate of spread of COVID-19 in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts remained lower compared

[12] On amendments to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 20 May 2020 # 392

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to other regions of Ukraine, the potential consequences of an outbreak there could be more severe and far-reaching, primarily due to the destruction of local health systems as a result of the armed conflict. According to findings of Ukraine Compounded Vulnerability Index – UNDP study on COVID-19 vulnerability – local health care system in Luhansk oblast is the most vulnerable among all the regions of Ukraine in terms of resources available to healthcare facilities, including beds, medical equipment and medical personnel. At the same time, Luhansk oblast is the one where the peak decline in industrial production was recorded in early summer 2020 after the transition to an adaptive lockdown modality[13].

It is advisable that the humanitarian community recognize Ukraine as a country dealing with a double complex humanitarian crisis, and plan international assistance in the context of humanitarian response accordingly. It is suggested that the Cabinet of Ministers (Prime Minister's Office) or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine apply to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Ukraine on it, and the relevant needs and plans – in particular in terms of funding and humanitarian response – be reviewed and updated. There is currently no authority in Ukraine that would coordinate various areas of humanitarian response at the national level. The proposal that the Cabinet of Ministers and the Office of the Prime Minister take the leading role stems from the Prime Minister's leadership in the State Commission on Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergencies that could be a prototype of such a coordinating body. Technical support to the Commission and the Prime Minister's Office in this regard could be provided by the Crisis Management Coordination Body for gender-sensitive monitoring and coordination of crisis response measures established under the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers.

Such a national coordinating body (National Emergency Management Authority) is not available in any country of the world. However, given the size of Ukraine, the variety of potential challenges, including natural disasters (in recent months – from floods in the West to forest fires in Luhansk region) and man-made emergencies,

the complexity of existing humanitarian problems, as well as a wealth of experience – especially since 2014 – that can be applied in cross-sectoral context, the establishment of such body is recommended. In fact, limited institutional effort is necessary to established it.

The establishment of a functional inter-agency and cross-sectoral body for crisis response and coordination entrusted with humanitarian coordination on behalf of the government will strengthen and consolidate the state's representation in cooperation with international humanitarian organizations – something that it still missing. It will also help develop approaches to interacting with international donors on demand-driven approaches rather than supply-driven.

To date, there is also no clearly defined single agency in Ukraine that would serve as a liaison for the full range of humanitarian response issues. For example, the Ministry of Social Policy coordinates humanitarian assistance; the Ministry of Defense, the State Emergency Service, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Border Guard Service are authorized central executive authorities in the field of mine action, but there is no inter-agency coordination body determined by law, etc. It is recommended that the government appoint representatives for permanent work in the UN humanitarian response clusters at the inter-agency level in order to ensure their actual coordination rather than purely representative function. Such designated representatives may be appointed by the State Commission on Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergencies or by the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers and operate with consolidated plans for humanitarian needs and proposals by liaising the humanitarian programmes and projects with appropriate coordination platforms.

There is also a need to develop special approaches and measures to improve sanitation for populations that are vulnerable to infection due to social or domestic circumstances. Such populations include Roma, the homeless and refugees, whose living conditions are poor. With regard to these populations, it is proposed to conduct special awareness raising activities along with targeted projects and humanitarian response programmes.

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[13] State Statistics Service. Economic statistics, http://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/express/expres_u.html

RECOVERY OF CONFLICT-AFFECTED REGIONS

The crisis related to COVID-19 has both national and regional dimensions. Expected and already existing socio-economic and security challenges (including complicated crossing of the contact line) in the conflict area in Eastern Ukraine require that the government support sectoral initiatives to balance the humanitarian component with development agenda of post-conflict and post-crisis recovery. In this context, the government should consolidate and intensify its efforts, with assistance of international partners, to establish national structures for mine action and humanitarian demining to reduce security risks in economic activities in the conflict-affected regions. Establishment of such structures in accordance with international conventions and standards would be a logical and timely continuation of the process that got impetus with the adoption of the Law of Ukraine on Mine Action in Ukraine[14] in 2019.

Mine action is a component of the humanitarian sector that merges security, socio-economic issues and humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable and conflict-affected populations. It has a clear cross-sectoral nature and can be considered a kind of bridge between the sectors such as the humanitarian response, socio-economic recovery and development. That is for the reason that the coordinating function in the sub-cluster of mine action within the UN cluster system in Ukraine is entrusted with UNDP. From the perspective of human security concept, mine action embodies:

- freedom from fear of physical injury or death from the kinetic effects of lethal munitions;

- freedom from need – making land available for agricultural cultivation and recreational activities, roads for transport and infrastructure projects, as well as creation of jobs for local population; and

- promoting respect for human dignity through the recognition and protection of the rights and needs of victims of explosives, and creating opportunities for displaced persons to return to their homes.

In the context of international legal obligations, mine action serves as a platform for implementation of key instruments of both international humanitarian law (Ottawa Convention[15]) and international human rights law (Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[16]). After all, while mine action is directly linked to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, a study conducted by UNDP and Geneva Centre for Humanitarian Demining has identified at least eleven other SDGs that the mine action contributes to[17].

The Law on Mine Action in Ukraine provides a definition of mine action in accordance with international standards[18] in this area, as it is aimed at reducing and eliminating the consequences of the negative impact of explosive devices on the socio-economic conditions of life and the environment. For practical imple-

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14 https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2642-19#Text

15 The Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on their Destruction was ratified by Ukraine in 2005.

16 Ratified by Ukraine in 2009.

17 Leaving No One Behind: Mine Action and the Sustainable Development Goals. GICHD-UNDP, June 2017.

18 International Mine Action Standards: https://www.mineactionstandards.org/en/standards/

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mentation of effective law legislation, further steps are needed such as:

- development of a national mine action strategy and an action plan for its implementation;

- establishing national institutions and guidelines for mine action provided by law, in particular the national mine action body, the mine action centre and the national mine action standards; and

- creation of national mechanisms for accreditation and quality management in the activities of mine action operators.

As the Law – following the most common world practice – defines a national mine action body as a permanent inter-agency collective body established by the Cabinet of Ministers, it is proposed to use the existing platform – the State Commission for Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergencies – as such.

Mine action in conflict-affected regions can also be a powerful tool for integrating different sectors of post-crisis recovery, including outreach and community liaison. Since 2014, numerous operators in the conflict area and adjacent regions have been providing information on the dangers of explosives and training on the risks of living in contaminated areas. The experience and operational modalities gained during this period should be used in the information and communication component of response and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

It is particular about the conflict-affected regions in Ukraine that these have dense industrial facilities, high number of hazardous industries, and high population density. The environmental risks posed by the destruction and damage of industrial infrastructure during the conflict create a threat to the health of local populations and life systems, increasing in terms of their vulnerability to COVID-19, along with threats to the environment.

According to a study[19] conducted by OSCE in 2017, at the beginning of the armed conflict, there were about 4,500 potentially dangerous industrial facilities in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, with over 500 cases of damage, destruction and emergencies during the first three years of hostilities recorded there. Cases of flooding of mines (36% of those available in the region) due to dysfunction of drainage systems have become especially common. In addition to the imminent risk of flooding for nearby human habitats and infrastructure, such emergencies pose a risk of contamination of groundwater with radioactive substances[20]. After the outburst of the armed conflict, the water reservoirs in Donbas show elevated concentrations of non-radioactive strontium and barium – substances widely present in heavy industry and ammunition – as well as significantly elevated concentrations of mercury, vanadium, cadmium and gamma radiation levels in the soil. About sixty conservation sites within two oblasts have been damaged by the hostilities, and the uncontrolled spread of certain wildlife species poses additional epidemiological risks. Therefore, it is necessary that the National Security Strategy determine the environmental and man-made consequences of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine as one of the threats to national security, and that the national strategy for environmental security in conflict-affected regions be developed. This strategy should inter alia aim to pursue Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean water and sanitation and Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of *terrestrial* ecosystems, as well as to establish the coordination centre for environmental rehabilitation and restoration. Similar to mine action area, the State Commission for Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergencies can serve as a groundwork for such a coordination centre. The Commission needs to improve its existing functionality to achieve these goals. In particular, the government should consider the establishment of a permanent secretariat of the commission that would provide inter-agency (within the government) and external (with international organizations and civil society) coordination and management of information on human security. The same role is played by the Secretariat for the National Security and Defense Council for the security sector. The prototype of such a focal point and secretariat could be the Crisis Management

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[19] Environmental Assessment and Recovery Priorities for Eastern Ukraine: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/3/362566_0.pdf

[20] In particular, in case of a flood of the Yunyi Kommunar mine near Yenakiieve where an underground nuclear explosion took place in 1979.

Coordination Body for gender-sensitive monitoring and coordination of crisis response measures established under the Secretariat of the Cabinet of Ministers in 2020.

The reform of the administrative territorial division is underway in Ukraine. It particularly concerns the creation of amalgamated territorial communities and the change of boundaries of administrative districts that has been implemented since July 2020. In particular, seven of the newly identified districts in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts under control of the Ukrainian authorities – Bakhmut, Volnovakha, Kramatorsk, Mariupol, Pokrovsk, Sievierodonetsk, and Shchastia – are adjacent to the contact line. Together with Svatove and Starobilsk districts, they are part of the Joint Forces Operation area established by the Law on Peculiarities of National Policy to Ensure State Sovereignty of Ukraine in the Temporarily Occupied Territories in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts[21] and derivative regulations. In the context of election campaign and election process, military administrations and public authorities should work cohesively with local military-civil administrations to organize and conduct local elections on 25 October 2020 in frontline areas where security features of the legal regime apply to make sure that the interests of local population are adequately represented in the elected authorities.

Humanitarian coordination in the regions that continue suffering day-to-day direct and consistently intense impact of the armed conflict has the most in common with regional development. Therefore, planning and implementation of programmes and activities in these two thematic areas should take place not only in the most coordinated manner, but also with a focus on finding and implementing opportunities for synergy and complementarity. The Ukrainian government has delegated significant powers and resources to regional authorities in terms of the fight against the epidemic. Crisis governance in conflict-affected regions has to combine the strategic dimension of decentralization and specific local features caused by the armed conflict and relevant legal regimes.

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[21] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=2268-VIII#Text

GENDER ASPECTS

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and especially since the introduction of lockdowns restrictions in the world, gender aspects are reflected in discourse of the COVID-19 crisis. Given the unusually long time spent in one space and limited mobility, the economic crisis and rising unemployment, psychological stressors and uncertainty, there has been an increase in domestic violence against women and children at the global level. The data available in Ukraine confirm this trend.

In the first five months of 2020, the National Police of Ukraine registered 84,237 complaints of domestic violence (63,964 of those who complained are women), which is 49% more than in the same period of last year (56,638 complaints). During the lockdown, calls to the national domestic violence hotline (1,547) doubled. The La Strada hotline (0 800 500 335 or 116-123) has seen a 20% increase in telephone calls since the beginning of COVID-19 epidemic. According to the data published as of May 2020, a total of 1,511 criminal proceedings for domestic violence were initiated in the current year (with 1,300 women having suffered), while in 2019, this number was 795 (632 women suffered). The burden and dysfunctions caused by the response to COVID-19 complicate the work of mechanisms for providing social, medical and legal assistance to victims of gender-based violence.

This trend makes the discussion on Ukraine's ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence[22]) signed by Ukraine in 2011 more intense. These are mostly technical issues (including the definition of the notion of gender) that are subject of discussions, while they are not critically important for the declared spirit and objectives of the Convention. Therefore, in parallel with the discussion on the adoption and subsequent entry into force of the Convention for Ukraine, it is necessary to focus on the possibilities of implementing the most critical elements of this instrument into national political and law enforcement practice. It can be achieved by making effective legislation on the prevention of domestic and gender-based violence (in particular, the Law on the Prevention and Combating of Domestic Violence[23]) more actionable and by developing the respective national strategies. In particular, effective State Social Programme for Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men is designed until 2021 and therefore needs to be updated to take into account the provisions of the Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men. The action plans for the implementation of the National Human Rights Strategy – that *inter alia* aims to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all areas of social life, to create an effective system to combat all forms of gender-based violence, human trafficking and slavery, providing quality assistance to the victims, as well as creating an effective system for preventing and combating domestic violence and improving the quality of assistance to its victims – and for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 Women, Peace, Security also need updating, as their effective versions expire in 2020.

[22] https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168008482e

[23] https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2229-19#Text

It is also critical to define basic principles and directions of national gender policy at the conceptual and doctrinal level. It is particularly due to the fact that given the primacy of international law over the national law it is important that Ukraine shares understanding of the growing number and variety of definitions, provisions and features of gender discourse emerging in international transactions with its international partners.

Gender-sensitive approaches to information management in crisis management are key to understanding gender aspects of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as at all stages of response and recovery. Gender sensitivity and awareness must be combined with human rights-based approaches to provide adequate assistance to the most vulnerable groups according to their degree of vulnerability, with leaving no one behind and reaching out first to those who are out of focus. The COVID-19 crisis context highlighted additional aspects of vulnerability of different groups of women, namely:

- rural women, especially in remote areas, who lack access to information and skills needed in the digital economy;

- homeless women who lack shelter facilities to meet their specific needs;

- women caring for elderly or chronically ill family members;

- women (as well as men) from sexual minorities, especially due to the unresolved civil law aspects of personal relationships;

- Roma women.

To get a clear picture of gender aspects of the course and response to the COVID-19 crisis in Ukraine, as well as its impact, it is necessary to process all data with distribution by sex and age. It concerns not only those who are infected, or the ratio of men and women among the frontline workers in the fight against coronavirus – health workers, police officers, employees of retail and pharmacies, etc. – but also socio-economic aspects of the crisis. Namely, it is necessary to determine the share of women among those who lost their jobs during the lockdown in Ukraine (as women dominate among those employed in the areas of public

dining, hotels and recreation, household services, entertainment), as well as among migrant workers who lost their jobs abroad and returned (since many of them apparently were the leading breadwinners in their families)[24]. At the same time, there are almost 200,000 single mothers in Ukraine (about 92% of total number of single-parent households)[25], and the share of women employed in health sector is over 82%[26]. Women make up the majority of such particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups as internally displaced persons and Roma.

Elderly people are constantly on the spotlight, since they are considered a risk group with regard to COVID-19. Elderly people in Ukraine, who make up a large share of the population, often have chronic illnesses that complicate the course of COVID-19. At the same time, they find it even more difficult to cope with the demands of social isolation, as for many of them, going to the store, pharmacy or public service providers is a traditional form of socialization. Women make up two thirds of the population of Ukraine over 65[27] and 62% of the total number of pensioners[28]. According to statistics, the average life expectancy of women in Ukraine is ten years higher than of men. Therefore, women make a particularly large proportion of the elderly living alone.

In recent years, Ukraine has made steady progress towards ensuring equal rights and opportunities for men and women, in particular in the professional and socio-political areas. For example, women started working as deminers and divers, and the number of female high-ranking officials has increased, particularly at the level of parliamentary leadership and strategic positions in the government. Men continue to make up the vast majority of the Armed Forces and other armed groups, including those in the Operation of United Forces in Eastern Ukraine. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is common among veterans of the armed conflict. It should be taken into account

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[24] Remittances from abroad to Ukraine in 2019 reached 12 billion US dollars and make approximately 10% of the GDP.

[25] According to the Ministry of Social Policy.

[26] World's average is about 70%.

[27] State Statistics Service of Ukraine. The population of Ukraine in 2018. Demographic Yearbook.

[28] National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. Ukrainian society: the migration dimension. National report, 2018.

when planning psychosocial support in the context of recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

Consideration of sex and age parameters enables only to more effectively plan the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, taking into account the specific needs of women, men, children and the elderly. Gender-sensitive approaches to information management also help in analysing the spread of the disease and operational monitoring of risk groups. Data on current patients and persons who recovered from COVID-19 should be divided by:

- sex – men, women;

- age – boys, girls (0-9, 10-15, 15-19); adults – 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70-79, 80+.

It is also advisable to conduct the most detailed assessment among risk groups using similar sex-disaggregated criteria.

In the future, it is necessary to enter such data into the relevant information systems directly during the registration of cases, as well as to analyse sex and age-differentiated data to identify patterns and use the findings of analysis in prevention and preparation to the new waves of the epidemic.

It is necessary to actively mainstream gender in the national mechanisms of crisis management by appointing the Minister of Social Policy as the head of the central executive authority responsible for gender equality in the State Commission for Technogenic and Environmental Safety and Emergencies. It is also possible to include the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy – upon her consent – to the State Commission in order to expand the Commission's capacity to analyse gender aspects of crisis and develop specialized proposals. Based on the experience gained during the response and recovery from the armed conflict and the COVID-19 crisis, it is necessary to develop a national algorithm for assessing gender aspects of crises and emergencies, as well as data collection and distribution and information processing based on gender-sensitive approaches.

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UNDP PROJECT "CRISIS COORDINATION MANAGEMENT IN UKRAINE"