

Technical Brief – Understanding the Women’s Movement in Ukraine



Women Leading Response and Recovery

Battered by the largest invasion in Europe since WWII, in February 2022, Ukraine faced an unprecedented humanitarian and social crisis damaging its social cohesion, community security and the resilience of local communities, especially women and girls who were faced with compounding vulnerabilities. In response to the unfolding crisis, Pact and the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) launched the Women Leading Response and Recovery (WLRR) in Ukraine project shortly after the start of the full-scale invasion.

WLRR’s purpose was to empower Ukraine’s *women’s rights organizations (WROs) to lead coordinated, gender-sensitive assistance to help meet the needs of women and girls affected by the war* and advance gender equality. WLRR’s approach was to strengthen the organizational, technical, adaptive, and influencing capacities of local WROs, enabling them to pursue their own local agenda to support internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to support implementation of United National Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security in the country. Pact implemented WLRR alongside five implementing partners (IPs)¹ that, together, operated in 26 pilot territorial communities in six regions in Western and Central Ukraine.

KEY WLRR ACHIEVEMENTS



25
women

launched their own businesses (18 with program funding support)



1,252
women

improved their psycho-emotional states through psychological consultation and coaching assistance



26
communities

improved integration of IDPs and strengthened cohesion, in collaboration with local government

¹ The Center for Supporting Civic Initiatives Chaika; D.O.M.48.24; Gender Creative Space; Oleksandriya Gender Information Center, and TMGK Vidrozhennia Natsii.

Rapid Assessment

Russia’s invasion forced the displacement of millions of Ukrainians, putting internally displaced women (IDW) into precarious conditions. Scattered, vulnerable and often beyond the reach of government assistance, understanding the needs of IDW, in order to strategize meeting those needs, was an urgent early priority of the project. WLRR collaborated all five IPs to conduct a rapid assessment to: 1) assess the newly evolved needs of women; 2) inform programming to address the specific needs of IDWs and local women in the Eastern and Southern parts of Ukraine; and 3) communicate those needs to local authorities as well as other stakeholders for immediate action. The assessment team rapidly deployed a survey using online Google Forms and paper-based survey forms. Each IP was asked to survey at least 30 women (IDW and local) in the 26 target communities resulting in a total sample size of 783 women of whom 392 (50%) were internally displaced women and 391 (50%) were local women.

INITIAL RESULTS

Completed in October 2022, the results of this rapid assessment showed high levels of distress among IDW and local women. When asked about their current financial situation, 43% of the women surveyed noted that they could only afford basic necessities like food, hygiene products and/or medication; and 20% of women had lost their jobs. Extreme emotional distress was evident with 37% of women experiencing permanent stress and/or depression and only 17% in constant contact with relatives. Over 90% of women identified victory and peace as their first need, 71% noted the need to obtain steady income and 60% were worried about providing their family with basic necessities.

DIFFERENCES IN NEEDS IDENTIFIED BY IDW AND LOCAL WOMEN

Overall, providing their families with basic necessities and ensuring that they have stable accommodation was the top priority for IDW, whereas local women’s focus was focused on managing trauma and address psychological and emotional needs followed closely by improving their professional skills. All women immediately identified the need to gain new professional skills and all women identified a need for psycho-emotional support. Interestingly, among the women who identified a need to provide basic necessities for their families, only 70% indicated that they plan to apply for support.

ADDITIONAL TARGETED NEEDS ASSESSMENTS

The WLRR team engaged presented findings of the rapid assessment to local authorities and informed women of existing services in their communities to help respond to their needs. The team also identified issues raised by the rapid assessment for further investigation, namely; assessing women’s psychosocial and informational needs and assessing why certain women did not want to seek external support. Accordingly, the WLRR team conducted two additional rapid assessments in January 2023 and February 2023. The January assessment aimed to further understand these issues and the February assessment aimed to understand how to effectively communicate the needs of women to local authorities and other stakeholders for immediate action.

VARIANCES IN THE NEEDS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED AND LOCAL WOMEN



IDWs’ biggest priorities are “providing family with basic necessities” and “having a stable accommodation situation”, while local women are “improving one’s own psychological/emotional state” and “improving their professional skills and acquiring new ones”.

IDWs have a greater need of obtaining their own permanent source of income via employment, while local women are more interested in opening their own business. Among those who want to open their own business, there is no clear understanding about the direction of the business. Women in both groups need the development of professional skills.

IDWs need medical assistance, examinations, or medicines more regularly than local women.



Every third women (predominately 18-60 years old) noted the importance of receiving informational and legal support.



The need of IDWs and local women in psycho-emotional support is at the similar level.

Educational needs (admission to school or kindergarten) also exist at almost the same level in the two mentioned groups of women.



Evidence based adaptive management

All three rapid assessments provided evidence to help WLRR adapt program strategies, interventions, and priorities. The results led to increased mental health support specifically related to stress and trauma. Project IPs provided individual psychological counseling and coaching, organized transformational games aimed at self-discovery and strategies for coping with emotional and psychological trauma. To respond to the interest in developing professional

skills revealed by the rapid assessments, WLRR developed skills-building programs on employability and entrepreneurship. The project supported women to access funding to launch new businesses and encouraged networking. The project supported community integration for IDW by facilitating community-based events and providing information and legal support.

Maintaining momentum

While WLRR closed in 2023, the program's interventions – adapted on the basis of its rapid assessments data – have paved the way for stakeholders to more effectively address the challenges that women in Ukraine are confronted with. WLRR increased funding to implementing partners focused on mental health and emotional wellbeing. It has ensured that organizations support populations who have been internally displaced and/or relocated abroad. WLRR encouraged the use of rapid assessments and pulse-polls to understand changing needs

in a rapidly changing conflict environment. Finally, WLRR demonstrated and enabled rapid programming shifts in communities close to the frontline and active areas of combat.

In a short period of just one year, partner WROs provided **relief and recovery assistance to 2,750 women and girls, facilitated 259 events for women and girls** and **75 coordination and working meetings with local authorities and activists**.

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- [Pact's Learning & Evidence](#)
- [Adaptive Management: A practical guide to mitigating uncertainty and advancing evidence-based programming](#)
- [Making Adaptive Management Work](#)
- [Rhetoric or redundant? Making the most of adaptive management](#)

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