

THEMATIC REPORT

Gender Dimensions of SMM Monitoring

1 January 2017 – 1 November 2018



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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	- 2 -
INTRODUCTION	- 3 -
1. SMM integrating a gender perspective	- 3 -
2. Women’s participation in peace negotiations and local dialogues	- 6 -
3. Women’s local political participation and impact of the conflict.....	- 7 -
4. Gender perspective on recruitment, retention and reintegration of those in military roles and in the armed formations.....	- 10 -
5. Conflict-related trends in gender-based violence	- 13 -
6. Conflict-related trends in trafficking in human beings	- 17 -
7. Gender equality rallies and opposition	- 19 -
CONCLUSION.....	- 20 -

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite harsh realities resulting from the crisis in and around Ukraine, women continue to play a particularly active role in local social cohesion activities and in Ukraine's civil society, including as human rights defenders. The SMM continued to monitor initiatives implemented by women and women's groups at the community level, including those related to dialogue and peacebuilding. The Mission noted that networks of women play an important role in ensuring access to humanitarian assistance as well as education and healthcare facilities on both sides of the contact line.

Women remain underrepresented on the decision-making level in the political and security spheres. Some of the barriers identified relate to traditional views on women's roles and the unequal distribution of economic resources. While some interlocutors voiced concerns about women's achievements in local politics going unnoticed and the insufficiency of gender policies to address more systemic issues, the general outlook of local elected officials across regions was supportive of increased participation of women in politics. Several women's organizations have also expressed interest in finding ways to better connect local level dialogue with higher level dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives, as well as create synergies accordingly.

Considerable changes occurred with regard to equal treatment in the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF). A number of discriminatory regulations, mainly affecting women, were abolished. Despite legislative changes, women in the UAF, or female veterans, did share experiences relating to overprotective or over-challenging treatment by their male colleagues. This report also sheds light on some of the different experiences male and female veterans have and touches upon issues flagged with regard to services available to former members of armed formations in non-government-controlled areas.

The Mission monitored conflict-related trends in gender-based violence (GBV) and trafficking in human beings. Underreporting to police and health workers, including due to fear of stigmatization or of more harm, makes it extremely difficult to collect reliable data on these issues. Nonetheless, the SMM was able to assess that the conflict has exacerbated risks and prevalence of GBV in particular, affecting also internally displaced persons (IDPs), including those in collective centres in non-government-controlled areas. Available services for survivors have also been affected by the conflict.

The Mission monitored various assemblies and rallies across government-controlled areas of Ukraine in support of gender equality. On a number of occasions, the SMM has observed members of radical groups intimidating participants of rallies in support of women's rights and/or rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals. Regarding non-government-controlled areas, the Mission was made aware of the introduction of measures further limiting space for freedom of expression and assembly, in particular with regard to LGBTIQ rights.

In March 2018, the SMM adopted a Gender Equality Action Plan (GEAP), which aims at strengthening the Mission's contribution to OSCE commitments in the sphere of gender equality by ensuring systematic gender mainstreaming in all the SMM's activities. The SMM's network of Gender Focal Points (GFPs) continued to deliver internal training and external outreach activities in the sphere of gender equality, peace and security.

INTRODUCTION

In line with the Mission's [mandate](#) and OSCE commitments, as well as based on the understanding that existing gender inequalities are often exacerbated during times of conflict, the SMM integrates a gender perspective in its monitoring and reporting work. Gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting is deemed essential by the Mission to better understand protection concerns of women, men, boys and girls, as well as to further their meaningful participation in dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives. Conflict prevention, management and resolution can only be effective when both women and men play a role in them.

Building on the SMM's first Thematic Report on Gender Dimensions to Monitoring¹, this report provides new information on SMM observations with regard to topics such as women's involvement in local dialogue initiatives and the impact of the conflict on women's political participation. The report also focuses on gender dimensions of recruitment, retention and reintegration of those in military roles. Moreover, the report highlights particular protection issues in the sphere of conflict-related trends in GBV and trafficking in human beings. Lastly, it looks into gender equality initiatives, rallies and assemblies in particular, as observed by the Mission.

The findings in this report are based on monitoring activities carried out by the SMM from January 2017 to November 2018. It includes results of direct observations as well as expert group discussions and (semi-structured) interviews with relevant interlocutors across Ukraine, including non-government-controlled areas. The SMM, however, continued to note a very limited scope for freedom of expression in non-government-controlled areas. Keeping in consideration the principle of "do no harm", the SMM's ability to monitor and support respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and to establish contact with civil society and members of the local population in areas not controlled by the Government remained limited.

1. SMM integrating a gender perspective

The OSCE recognizes that upholding equal rights of women and men is essential to fostering peace, sustainable democracy and economic development.² The SMM has developed an internal GEAP which aims to strengthen the Mission's contributions to OSCE commitments in the sphere of gender equality by ensuring systematic gender mainstreaming in all of the SMM's activities and by creating a working environment where men and women enjoy the same rights, resources and opportunities, and can equally contribute to Mission outputs.³ The four main deliverables identified, which are linked to a corresponding set of activities and indicators to measure progress, are indicated below:

- 1) A gender perspective is integrated in all the Mission's activities, in particular throughout the monitoring and reporting cycle, which contributes to a more in-depth understanding of security, socio-economic and political dimensions in the respective areas of operations.

¹ Gender Dimensions of SMM's Monitoring: One Year of Progress, June 2015, available at: <https://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/165806?download=true>

² OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2004), OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2003) and OSCE Ministerial Council Decisions, including on women's involvement in conflict management.

³ Based on Mission-wide consultations taking place from September 2017 until February 2018. The GEAP itself was adopted by the Mission in March 2018.

- 2) Co-ordination and liaison with national and international stakeholders on gender equality issues, in particular civil society, is an established practice, making effective information sharing and referrals possible.
- 3) The Mission has improved gender balance in all spheres and levels of the Mission and has actively ensured equal opportunities for men and women within a professional working environment which respects diversity.
- 4) The Mission ensures a regular evaluation process identifying progress, best practices and remaining challenges in the implementation of the GEAP.

Gender Office and Focal Points

To enhance gender-mainstreaming – a Mission-wide responsibility – a gender expert structure has been established. It includes a Senior Gender Adviser and, as of August 2018, two Gender Officers (one based in Kyiv and one in Kramatorsk). The Senior Gender Adviser, reporting directly to the Chief Monitor, takes part in SMM senior management meetings and is therefore able to directly provide gender mainstreaming advice at the strategic and decision-making levels. The Senior Gender Adviser represents the Mission in a number of external co-ordination forums, is responsible for induction briefings for new staff and is involved in specialized training initiatives. Finally, a network of 13 SMM GFPs supports the Gender Office in different Monitoring Teams (MTs) throughout Ukraine.

The GFPs are selected from the pool of Monitoring Officers, and the network includes men and women, although male GFPs are currently underrepresented.⁴ They advise and support their colleagues to ensure that the contributions and concerns of men, women, boys and girls are captured in Mission reports and activities. GFPs also conduct specific patrols aimed at gathering information on topics covered in this report and form the interface of the particular team or hub with local NGOs and relevant governmental authorities on gender equality and particular protection issues. The GFPs, moreover, play an important role in providing and supporting gender trainings to colleagues in the field, at times in co-operation with external actors such as international NGOs.⁵

On a bi-annual basis, an SMM GFP Gender Co-ordination Meeting is held in order to discuss related developments in Ukraine, including inputs from external experts, such as UN Women and local NGOs, with a particular focus on outstanding issues in relation to GEAP implementation. Due to rather high Mission-wide rates of staff turn-over, the GFP network, and its professionalization, faces challenges with capacity building, which requires constant attention. Another challenge is that sex- and age-disaggregated data is often unavailable when requested from the SMM's interlocutors. This, for example, applies to data on internally displaced persons (IDPs), on persons crossing entry-exit checkpoints (EECP) and on support requests for free legal aid, and negatively impacts options for gender-sensitive analyses.

Gender parity

SMM monitors often speak about the added value of mixed teams and have shared experiences of, for instance, local civilians specifically asking to share their concerns, including about human rights, with female monitors. During the reporting period, women were represented in nearly all the teams and units, but underrepresentation on different levels

⁴ Currently, ten female GFPs and three male GFPs are appointed within the Mission.

⁵ For instance, the International Medical Corps provided training sessions to SMM monitors on understanding GBV in Mariupol on two occasions during the reporting period.

throughout the Mission remains a reality. In its 2015 publication, the SMM reported about the low percentage of female monitors in the Mission (19 per cent). However, this number further dropped to 15 per cent (as of January 2017) before rising again to 19 per cent (as of 31 October 2018). Regarding senior and field management, the percentage in representation of women showed a small decrease during the reporting period: from 28 per cent to 25 per cent in Kyiv Head Office and from 26 per cent to 21 per cent in field management positions. Given the fact that the Mission is dependent on nominations from participating States for seconded positions, which comprise 97 per cent of the overall international Mission staff, there is less space to influence gender parity, compared to organizations that rely on different staffing models. By contrast, national staff are contracted, and a 50/50 gender balance has currently been reached for this category.

The Mission is taking actions to improve gender parity among its staff. Measures being implemented by the SMM currently include: ensuring participation of both female and male board members on interview panels; ensuring gender-sensitive language is used in job advertisements, and, in several cases, specifically encouraging female applicants to apply; close monitoring of the nomination of female candidates for managerial positions, with the additional measure that the Mission can extend deadlines in cases where nominated candidates are all male or all female; and rolling out a webinar called Monitoring Officer Outreach Campaign, with a specific focus on attracting female candidates. Finally, all candidates are tested on gender mainstreaming skills during the SMM recruitment processes.

Outreach

The Mission has regularly conducted outreach events with a particular focus on gender equality, implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution⁶ 1325 and combating human trafficking in a conflict context. As an example, during the reporting period, the SMM hosted eight OSCE Cafés on either Women, Peace and Security or Ending Gender-Based Violence throughout Ukraine, in which an estimated total of 400 men and women participated.⁷ Such outreach activities, intensified during the global 16 Days Campaign to End Gender-Based Violence (25 November – 10 December 2017) and International Women’s Day (8 March), brought together different stakeholders, including representatives from the UN⁸ and NGOs, as well as government and law enforcement officials in order to facilitate dialogue on relevant issues and answer questions from the general public.



OSCE Café on Women, Peace, Security in Lutsk during the global 16 Days of Activism Campaign to End Violence against Women in 2017

⁶ UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, 31 October 2000, available at: [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325\(2000\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1325(2000))

⁷ With women being overrepresented at an average ratio of 80-20 per cent (female/male attendees)

⁸ The SMM co-operated in particular with UN OHCHR as well as with UNFPA for the OSCE Cafés.

2. Women's participation in peace negotiations and local dialogues

Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security

Ukraine adopted its National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 (Women, Peace and Security) in early 2016, aiming to eliminate barriers hindering the full participation of women in all matters of peace and security, including negotiations and conflict resolution.⁹ The SMM has been in regular contact with Regional State Administrations (RSAs) with regard to the development and implementation of Regional Action Plans (RAPs) on UNSCR 1325, a task flowing from the Cabinet of Ministers to the RSAs. The SMM was updated by regional Departments of Social Protection (DoSP), police and local NGOs involved in setting priorities and implementing the regional plans that either are one or multiple year plans. Further to Regional Action Plans, the SMM was also informed by local interlocutors about a small number of city-level action plans, like the one in Zolotonosha city, with local women council members and/or civil society activists being key drivers behind such plans.ⁱ

Based on meetings with the aforementioned interlocutors, in nearly all regions of Ukraine (government-controlled areas), the SMM observed different situations with regard to RAPs, depending on the region.ⁱⁱ Firstly, some regions never adopted a RAP, such as Donetsk region (government-controlled areas).ⁱⁱⁱ Certain regions have a dedicated budget for RAP implementation while other regions do not. In certain regions, such as Odessa, Ternopil and Luhansk (government-controlled areas), civil society has been actively involved in the development and subsequent implementation of the RAP, whereas in other regions, civil society representatives told the SMM that they were unaware or had been excluded from the drafting and implementation process.

Interlocutors noted that the “localization” of UNSCR 1325 could provide unique opportunities for strengthening women's roles in conflict prevention and resolution. However, they also mentioned a low understanding of UNSCR 1325 within RSAs, the heavy workload that DoSPs face, the RAPs being almost exact copies of Ukraine's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 and several RAPs being almost exclusively focused on protection issues, especially domestic violence, and being less focused on peace, security and participation. Interlocutors also noted the importance of including conflict-affected groups, such as IDPs, in RAP development and implementation discussions.

In November 2017, the SMM supported an OSCE Gender Section's workshop for 20 participants from five regions¹⁰ in which they analysed barriers to women's participation in peace and security in their regions and assessed the effectiveness of their RAPs or the potential to develop such plans in the near future. The participants included representatives from regional administrations, the national police and civil society.^{iv}

⁹ Ukraine's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 was reviewed, and an updated version was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 5 September 2018. The Action Plan includes focus areas such as: activation of regional interagency coordination councils on prevention of domestic violence and combating trafficking in human beings, ensuring the appropriate response to GBV cases in the ATO zone and areas with large numbers of IDPs, training for armed forces and law enforcement personnel on the issue of combating sexual violence in conflict situation, having more women in peacekeeping missions, etc.

¹⁰ From Dnipro, Odessa, Volyn and government-controlled regions of Donetsk and Luhansk.

Women's local dialogue and peacebuilding activities

Although underrepresented at higher levels, women have played an essential role at the community level in providing concrete solutions to conflict-related problems and issues. The SMM regularly met with female activists and community members on the local level – on both sides of the contact line – and observed women playing an active role in lowering tensions and mitigating conflict-related social issues, including with regard to education and healthcare, on the community level. Women are well-represented within Ukraine's civil society including among human rights defenders. Several local elected officials in government-controlled areas pointed to the roles that women can play as peacebuilders and emphasized their potential to work on effective conflict resolution.^v In addition, women civil society representatives have often raised with the Mission their active interest in the increased participation of women in the negotiations in Minsk, including on security issues.

The SMM was informed about various activities implemented by women and women's groups at the community level, including those with a particular focus on dialogue and peacebuilding. For instance, different organizations of soldiers' mothers informed the SMM about their cross-contact line outreach efforts and their willingness to engage in formal peace talks and detainee exchanges, mainly with the aim to locate missing sons.^{vi} Women in a village close to the contact line in Donetsk region appealed repeatedly to the sides, via the SMM, to ensure safe access to visit their local cemetery across the contact line during the Easter holidays. However, no agreement was reached on a local ceasefire, and the area remains heavily mined.^{vii}

The SMM met, multiple times, with a group of women in a government-controlled area in Luhansk region who shared their experiences of having successfully negotiated and facilitated repairs to a gas pipeline in their communities after actively reaching out to local authorities and national-level decision-makers over a period of ten months.^{viii} There are other examples of where local women joined forces and, for example, mobilized community members to protest against a military activity that had occurred close to residential areas.^{ix}

Regarding the connection between local and higher-level peace initiatives, women's organizations have expressed interest in finding ways to create greater synergies.^x The SMM has engaged with women involved in dialogue initiatives, including in cross-contact line initiatives, and has, for instance, provided briefings to women about the SMM's mandate and activities with regard to dialogue facilitation. At the same time, certain women civil society representatives and other individual interlocutors have expressed considerations that cross-contact line dialogue initiatives can be risky for those involved,^{xi} as well as could be subjected to manipulation and therefore not necessarily serve women, peace and security objectives.^{xii}

3. Women's local political participation and impact of the conflict

Overall, the SMM observed that representation and participation of women in legislative branches of local government bodies remains low. Despite the 30 per cent gender quota for electoral party lists, stipulated in the Law of Ukraine on Local Elections of 14 July 2015, women make up less than 30 per cent in regional, city and district councils, with participation levels highest on the district level and lowest on the regional level.^{xiii} At the same time, administrative branches were observed to be often dominated by female staff members.

SMM interlocutors at the local level regularly refer to a number of female Members of Parliament who have established a cross-factional Gender Equality Caucus that is advocating for gender equality issues at the national level. Members of the Caucus have spoken out in favor of local civil society initiatives and, for example, supported a recent rally in front of Parliament where women from different regions of Ukraine came together to advocate for a 50/50 gender quota to be included in future electoral laws.^{xiv}

Progress and remaining barriers

During June and July 2018, the Mission met with 98 local elected officials¹¹ throughout Ukraine, with the exception of areas not under control of the Government, to discuss developments with regard to equal participation in local politics and the impact of the conflict in this regard.^{xv} Most elected officials – especially women – attributed women’s increased political participation over the last years to the aforementioned 30 per cent gender quota for electoral party lists. Some women deputies cited the quota as their reason to run for council positions. Despite an overall positive response to the quota, several interlocutors denounced its lack of enforcement mechanisms and criticized the failure of parties to actively identify and train female leaders. Others argued that the quota missed its point by promoting “unqualified” female deputies, thus giving ever more space to men in decision-making processes. Some female deputies added that a change in attitudes, the decentralization process and increasing recognition of their work are further reasons for their enhanced political engagement.

Elected officials identified five main barriers for men and women’s equal participation in local politics. Firstly, 40 per cent of the answers given by women and men alike show that “traditional views”, including on family-work balance and the lack of support by partners and families, are the main obstacle for women’s equal participation in local politics. While women were reported to be seen as mothers first, “brought up to raise a family” instead of being politically active, respondents also mentioned that men in rural areas were sometimes less politically involved due to their role as breadwinners, which often entails time-consuming farming activities or moving to larger cities in hopes of finding work with higher salaries.

Secondly, unequal distribution of economic resources and opportunities; they argued that it is more difficult for women to run costly election campaigns and assume unpaid council positions given the lack of economic security and childcare facilities. Thirdly, several interlocutors, stated that powerful economic and political actors maintain influence over access to political posts and that women remain reluctant to engage in politics because they perceive it as a “dirty business”. Fourthly, a small number of female deputies mentioned discrimination and sexism in the workplace (including the use of offensive language and disrespectful behaviour towards female colleagues) as an obstacle potentially discouraging women from taking up and keeping political posts. Finally, a rather high number of elected officials, mainly male, stated that there are no barriers to men and women’s equal participation in local politics.¹²

¹¹ Interlocutors, 65 women and 33 men, represented 23 different parties, with, however, the majority of local elected officials indicating that they were not party affiliated. Most interlocutors were active at the municipal level, followed by representatives from hromadas, and district-level deputies. The SMM also met with village and town council representatives.

¹² A closer look at the respondents’ statements, however, did reveal a lack of awareness about the very nature of gender-specific-barriers, with women often being expected to take on more care-taking responsibilities besides work, but this was not identified as challenging for equal participation.

Impact of the conflict

Asked about the impact of conflict on men and women's participation in local politics, a number of elected officials, political party members, as well as NGO representatives said that women have become more active in local communities, particularly regarding social, youth and humanitarian issues – but not necessarily in politics. The SMM, though, was at the same time informed by city council members in a city in Zhytomyr region that several women did run for political office as a result of the conflict, i.e. to carry on the activities of their husbands (former deputies) after they were deployed in military roles in eastern Ukraine.

An elected official in Vuhledar (Donetsk region, government-controlled) noted she was motivated to run for a council position due to the effect of the conflict on the situation in her town, including an influx of IDPs. Another female council member in Velyka Novosilka (Donetsk region, government-controlled) said she ran in the elections because she wanted to “prevent the separatists from seizing power”.

The SMM observed an increasing number of gender-related positions, committees, trainings and initiatives put forward by local NGOs, local government bodies, administrations and local party branches. A number of interlocutors stated that the increased interest of international organizations and the availability of international funds related to the conflict are conducive to these activities and will contribute to a further increase in the number of women in local politics.

Outlook

While some respondents voiced concerns about women's achievements in local politics going unnoticed and the insufficiency of gender policies to address more systemic issues like corruption, SMM interlocutors across regions were generally supportive of the increased participation of women in local politics. They underlined that women are well-trusted in their communities, bring in a different perspective and are widely regarded as disciplined, communicative and committed toward solving practical issues and benefitting their constituencies. While three elected officials were pessimistic about men and women's equal participation in the future, most of the 98 elected officials stated they expect more women to take on political responsibility.



Rally observed by the SMM in front of the Ukrainian parliament where women advocate for a 50/50 gender quota to be included in Ukrainian election laws, 6 September 2018

Military-civil administrations

Within the area of the Joint Forces Operation (JFO), the SMM is in regular contact with representatives from military-civil administrations.¹³ As of June 2018, only one out of 18 military-civil administrations was being led by a woman.¹⁴ The under-representation of women as military-civil administrations heads, even on the village-level, can at least in part be linked to the under-representation of women in higher-level security positions throughout Ukraine. However, the SMM observed that women tend to make up a large share, if not the majority, of staff within such administrations.^{xvi} Interlocutors from different military-civil administrations (district- and village-level) pointed out to the SMM that the lack of men in their communities due to the conflict was one of the reasons behind women's increased participation in administrative positions within these administrations.

4. Gender perspective on recruitment, retention and reintegration of those in military roles and in the armed formations

The Mission, throughout the reporting period, in monitoring the security situation, regularly interacted with representatives of the UAF. Between mid-June and mid-August 2018, the SMM spoke to nearly 100 UAF personnel and/or veterans specifically about gender issues.

During the reporting period, the Mission also observed how the armed formations are organized and conversed with members and former members of armed formations, both men and women.

Recruitment and retention

In Ukraine, men aged between 18 and 27 years can be conscripted into military service.^{xvii} Regarding contracted military service, considerable changes have taken place when it comes to the recruitment of men and women. The 2015 SMM Thematic Report on Gender Dimensions to Monitoring focused mainly on women in self-defence groups and volunteer battalions, establishing that women were not allowed to serve in active combat roles in the UAF. Legislative changes in 2016 and 2018, though, have led to a number of discriminatory regulations, mainly affecting women, coming to an end.¹⁵ These changes have opened up many formerly closed positions to female candidates and, at the same time, addressed differences in regulations for men and women, including ending the practice of giving women, not men, the option to opt out of certain training and fatigue duties.

A number of women previously serving in volunteer battalions have now been integrated into the UAF as part of the wider process of integrating members of volunteer battalions into official structures. The SMM met with such women on a number of occasions, and some noted that they had already wanted to join the UAF in 2014 but had not been allowed at the time.^{xviii} Women the SMM met with^{xix} identified a diverse mix of considerations for joining

¹³ The status of Military-Civil Administrations (MCAs) is defined by the law "On Military-Civil Administrations" adopted in February 2015 (available at: <http://zakon2.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/141-19>). Military-civil administrations (MCA), according to this law, are defined as temporary state structures in the villages, towns, cities and regions operating under the Joint Operations Staff of the UAF. MCAs are formed, on an as-needed basis, by the decision of the President of Ukraine. According to a Decree of the President of Ukraine, certain positions in MCA must be occupied by military or law enforcement personnel, and certain positions can be occupied by them depending on the administrative division of the MCA.

¹⁴ This entails the military-civil administration for Pikuzy (Donetsk region, 30km north-east of Mariupol).

¹⁵ The SMM has consistently monitored debates in Parliament on this topic and has followed up on the implementation of new regulations.

the UAF, including career opportunities, patriotism, childhood dreams of joining, aspirations and searching for new challenges, as well as a lack of other available job opportunities.¹⁶

An officer from the UAF General Staff informed the SMM in August 2018 that the harmonization of criteria for men and women entering the reserves was also ongoing and she confirmed public statements by senior officials that the number of women being recruited by the UAF has increased substantially since 2016.¹⁷ In meetings with representatives from Military Commissariats in several regions throughout Ukraine, interlocutors also told the Mission that they had observed an increase in the number of women signing contracts with the UAF since positions began opening to female candidates in 2016.^{xx} However, no particular recruitment strategy targeting women is in place, based on information received from interlocutors working for the UAF or Ministry of Defence.

On remaining barriers to equal treatment, female interlocutors at times indicated that they experience differential treatment from men that is either overprotective of or overly challenging their capabilities.^{xxi} Male UAF interlocutors regularly commented to the SMM that combat positions were “too dangerous” for women and that, at times, local commanders consciously decide not to deploy women from their unit into operational positions deemed dangerous.^{xxii} Or, as male UAF interlocutors in Lviv commented, “we try our best to keep women out. If a man dies in combat, his fellow soldiers can accept it. When a woman dies, it demoralizes the whole battalion”.

The SMM met with a woman who had first served within a volunteer battalion in eastern Ukraine and was later integrated in the UAF. She said that she had been involved in several combat operations but was officially enlisted as a “seamstress” due to limitations in place in 2015 affecting women. She informed the SMM that she pretended to be male, including by wearing a balaclava etc., after her commander had refused to send her to what she described as “the front lines”. The interlocutor said that “girls need to fight twice as hard as boys do, just to be considered a reliable part of the battalion”. She did note that equal treatment of men and women in the UAF had been improving since 2016.^{xxiii}

Overall, both male and female interlocutors from the UAF noted that currently women are still mainly active in medical, kitchen, human resources, communications or administrative positions, and few have leadership roles.^{xxiv} The SMM was also informed on several occasions about women in combat positions. Regarding retention, active UAF personnel, veterans and service providers alike noted that women may face more societal pressure than men on giving up their role in the UAF in order to start or support a family.^{xxv}

Non-government-controlled areas

Regarding the armed formations, the Mission observed that language and messages used in recruitment posters for armed formations in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region appear to be addressing men only, and some are directly stressing expectations

¹⁶ A substantial share of male and female interlocutors noted that during the initial stages of the conflict (in 2014 and 2015) men and women were more driven by self-defined “patriotic” motivations but that economic motivations now increasingly play a role in signing up for a military career.

¹⁷ According to the interlocutor, as well as based on information provided by senior defence officials to the press, about 10,000 women served in the UAF in 2016, about 20,000 in January 2017 (52,000 women overall if civilian positions are included) and about 25,000 in January 2018 (55,000 women overall if civilian positions are included).

regarding men and their roles as protectors and combatants. For example, one poster observed in at least two locations is depicting a female sniper with the caption: “For how long are you going to hide behind my back?” Another poster observed reads “Daddy, some day you will be asked: where were you when our town was ravaged (...)?” When reasons for joining armed formations came up in conversations with SMM in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, both young men and family members of armed formations members, often quoted economic incentives as a key motivator for men to join.^{xxvi}

The SMM followed up on social media reports that women were being dismissed from operational roles in the armed formations in Donetsk region and observed that women were being mainly assigned to auxiliary tasks, with few exceptions, in the armed formations in both Donetsk and Luhansk region.

Reintegration

Over the reporting period, the SMM met with ATO veterans, veterans’ organizations, legal professionals, (physical) rehabilitation specialists, as well as psychologists working with ATO veterans in different regions of Ukraine. In many regions, including in the cities of Kramatorsk, Sievierodonetsk, Zhytomyr and Lviv, interlocutors informed the SMM about a range of services available at the local level for male and female veterans in government-controlled areas, such as free legal aid, public transportation, land plots and discounts on utility bills.^{xxvii} Whereas many veterans have successfully reintegrated back into their communities, challenges also exist and were at times raised with the SMM. Facing unemployment and struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, aggression and/or alcohol abuse were repeatedly cited as challenges to the reintegration of a number of veterans into civilian life.^{xxviii}

Regarding psychological and psychosocial support, both veterans and service providers highlighted the importance of this type of support to veterans, yet noted that the availability of such support is limited in certain regions and that due to social stigmatization, veterans, in particular males, are hesitant to request such support.^{xxix} As one psychologist from Mariupol said: “Men are ashamed of asking for psychological support in Ukraine, as it amounts to admitting that they are weak and that there is a social stigma associated with consulting a psychologist”.^{xxx}

Another service provider noted that a large number of demobilized women held medical positions and have better access to (mental) health care due to their medical knowledge and networks.^{xxxi} Interlocutors working with demobilized soldiers noted though that female veterans face particular issues with regard to, as one interlocutor described it, “going back to feminine life” after having been part of a very masculine environment while in service.^{xxxii} Both male and female ATO veterans said that they benefitted from the support of their peers, but the SMM established that in certain regions, gathering places for veterans to visit without an appointment do not exist as of yet.^{xxxiii}

ATO veterans on a number of occasions referred to the impact of having additional leave entitlements, by law, actually making them less attractive for employers. A number of interlocutors commented though that many female veterans held medical and administrative positions before and while participating in the ATO and were able to find similar employment upon return. Facing unemployment has been described as particularly challenging on men given their traditional societal role as breadwinners and the expectation

to economically provide for the family.^{xxxiv} Those suffering from psychological problems, including PTSD, noted how extremely difficult it is to secure employment. Alcohol abuse was referred to as a coping mechanism used in particular by male veterans struggling with issues such as PTSD.^{xxxv}

In non-government-controlled areas, several interlocutors told the SMM they are unaware of any mechanism in place to provide assistance and support to former members of the armed formations. Former armed formations members told the SMM about the struggle to secure their livelihoods as a result of impediments such as combat-related injuries.^{xxxvi}

5. Conflict-related trends in gender-based violence

Armed conflict tends to aggravate and exacerbate GBV¹⁸, including domestic violence. While the SMM is not an expert organization on GBV, the Mission is mandated to support the respect for human rights and monitor the security environment. Based on conversations with regional police heads and Departments of Social Protection; Departments of Family, Youth and Sports; and Departments of Public Health, as well as NGOs and individual interlocutors, the Mission has a repository of qualitative and anecdotal observations that provide a picture of the conflict's impact on the prevalence and types of GBV occurring in communities across Ukraine. In keeping within its parameters, the Mission can make referral information available to interlocutors in need of assistance, based on information from the GBV Sub-Cluster¹⁹, though it does not provide services as an organization.

Conflict-related sexual violence and harassment

According to leaders in the NGO and social services communities that the SMM speaks with on a regular basis, stigma surrounding GBV and in particular conflict-related sexual violence persists as a major factor in the lack of reliable data on this phenomenon.^{xxxvii} Women as well as men underreport to officials such as police and health workers due to reasons including fear of stigmatization or of more harm.^{xxxviii} It is therefore extremely difficult to get a realistic picture of the prevalence and types of GBV occurring. A small number of interlocutors nonetheless referred to having witnessed or having heard about incidences of conflict-related sexual violence in their communities, mainly, but not only, dating back to the early phase of the conflict (2014/2015).^{xxxix} The SMM was not able to verify these, at times, detailed accounts but has referred information and/or requests for assistance in certain instances to other organizations, based on interlocutor's consent.

On a few occasions during the reporting period, cases of sexual harassment were reported to the SMM. In one instance, a female interlocutor reported to the SMM that she was being harassed by two drunk male military personnel in Donetsk region who offered her money in exchange for sex. She noted she was too afraid to leave her location. The SMM called the Joint Centre for Control and Co-ordination (JCCC), and within 30 minutes, other military personnel arrived and took the two intoxicated soldiers away. The local commander

¹⁸ The Inter-agency Standing Committee Guidelines on GBV in humanitarian settings defines GBV as an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed gender differences between males and females. It notes that women and girls are the primary victims of GBV. (<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1474-terminology-and-definitions.html>) GBV can take different forms of violence, including sexual violence, domestic violence, trafficking, forced/early marriage and harmful traditional practices.

¹⁹ The UNFPA-led GBV Sub-Cluster establishes mechanisms for inter-agency and cross-sectoral coordination and operationalization of GBV-related interventions, promoting effective data and information collection, sharing and analysis. The SMM attends the GBV Sub-Cluster meetings in Kyiv, Kramatorsk, Sievierodonetsk and Kharkiv.

personally came to apologize to the woman for the behaviour of his personnel. In a second case, a woman living close to a UAF checkpoint in eastern Ukraine reported to the SMM that she had been threatened with rape by military personnel. After the woman made the SMM aware of the issue during a follow-up meeting, she said she told the checkpoint commander what had been happening and that the SMM was now aware. The SMM also spoke with the commander. The woman later reported that the harassment subsequently ceased. Similarly, in May 2017, in a non-government-controlled area of Donetsk region, a man, armed with an assault rifle, intimidated a female member of an SMM patrol by making demands of a sexual nature and threatened to stop the patrol from moving forward.

Harmful survival practices

Health professionals and representatives from NGOs and international organizations active in eastern Ukraine, as well as local residents, informed the SMM that a number of at-risk women have resorted to offering services, including sexual, in exchange for food, alcohol or money in villages and towns located close to the contact line.^{xi} Some of these women have been reported as facing high security risks while visiting checkpoints or villages close to the contact line where soldiers or members of armed formations are based, including due to ongoing shelling and small arms fire occurring, especially after dark. Several NGOs as well as health professionals working in eastern Ukraine raised concerns with the SMM about women having to resort to harmful survival practices and their increased risks of contracting HIV.^{xli}

Reports from the field indicate that deterioration of the economic conditions, necessity to support a parent or a child and/or addiction to alcohol are major causes driving a number of women into harmful coping mechanisms.^{xlii} The SMM, for instance, met with a registered IDP who had fled her home town due to shelling and subsequently could not find a job in Mariupol. She shared that having to take care of her daughter and a grandmother with health issues, without sufficient funds, eventually led to her entering into sex work. She noted that the majority of her clients are soldiers.^{xliii}

Conflict and domestic violence prevalence

A centralized register to document data relating to domestic violence has not yet been established for the whole of Ukraine; however, at the regional level, relevant social departments and police departments track aspects of the phenomenon. Most regional interlocutors reported an increase in registered domestic violence cases over 2017 compared to 2016; however, there is insufficient data and analysis to conclude what variables have contributed to this increase and whether it entails an increase in reporting or an increase in actual abusive incidents.^{xliv} The increase in reported and registered cases is, according to a range of interlocutors, in part due to non-conflict related factors, such as strengthened legislation, impact of awareness-raising campaigns and investments in trainings of police and social workers dealing with such cases.^{xlv}

Conflict-related trends have also been flagged by interlocutors. NGOs, health professionals, local government and law enforcement officials often told the SMM they witnessed an increase in alcohol and drug abuse within conflict-affected populations trying to cope with consequences of the conflict and that such negative coping mechanisms have led to an increase in domestic violence.^{xlvi} Social service providers, NGOs and those working with veterans have, for instance, raised concerns regarding domestic violence incidents due to

PTSD amongst ATO veterans.^{xlvii} The SMM has, furthermore, been informed about several domestic violence incidents involving small arms or weaponry, including grenades, likely having flowed out of the conflict zone.^{xlviii}

In Lviv in 2017, the SMM analysed responses to a questionnaire regarding GBV which was distributed in co-ordination with the Lviv School of Judges to 118 judges and assistant judges in the regions of Lviv, Volyn, Rivne, Ivano-Frankivsk, Zakarpattia, Zhytomyr, Kyiv, Poltava and Dnipro. 117 respondents discussed their perceptions about domestic violence in particular and the impact of the conflict on this type of violence. Almost half of the respondents (48 per cent) assessed the conflict as having a negative impact on domestic violence levels in Ukraine. One respondent explained: “Based on my own experience and after interacting with ATO participants, I can assure you that the conflict has a great impact on domestic violence.” Another respondent considered the conflict a catalyst for higher crime levels overall, including domestic violence, because of the increase in small arms proliferation. Three respondents added that the conflict has not only led to an increase of violence against women but also against children and, sometimes, men.

Regarding groups residing in non-government-controlled areas that face increased risks of GBV, the SMM conducted individual interviews in the spring of 2018 with 16 internally displaced women living in four different collective centres²⁰ located in the non-government controlled parts of Donetsk region. Six of the women interviewed knew at least one victim of domestic violence in their centre. In the majority of cases, the victim was a woman.²¹ High levels of alcohol abuse among IDPs, particularly unemployed men and women, were identified as the main cause of this violence. One woman noted she is afraid to leave her youngest children alone and therefore cannot work. Another woman noted that since three drunken men were beaten up on her floor, she fears for her two teenage daughters and prefers to keep them inside their room. All the women interviewed said they are not able to move out of this environment because of the lack of money and the unavailability of jobs.

Access to support services

The SMM has been able to observe a few trends with regard to available support services for GBV survivors. Mobile units, established after the conflict broke out, for instance, provide support services to GBV survivors in several regions of Ukraine, including the five most eastern regions, (with the exclusion of areas not controlled by the government) where available services were affected negatively by the conflict. The units can provide psychological, legal and medical assistance or referrals. The Mission has referred questions and concerns to them from communities on a few occasions. During late November 2017, the SMM was informed that almost a quarter of survivors reaching out to the mobile units were IDPs, and 90 per cent of survivors were women.^{xlix}

The SMM on several occasions received information from interlocutors on the lack of availability of emergency shelters for survivors of GBV.²² In October 2017, the Mission met with a regional governmental representative for social assistance in government-controlled

²⁰ These centres are typically student dormitories that can accommodate, in addition to IDPs, people in need, conflict-related ex-detainees who were released as part of an exchange and former or actual members of the armed formations in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region.

²¹ In one case, the interlocutor referred to the victim as being an elderly man, and in another case, as being disabled children.

²² At times when the SMM was invited to visit safe shelters, the Mission adhered to ‘do no harm principles’.

areas of Luhansk region who noted that since the conflict began, no safe shelter had been operational in government-controlled Luhansk region.^{23 1} Before the conflict, a shelter was operational in Slovianoserbsk (non-government-controlled, Luhansk region). The Mission was informed that a “Centre for Women Facing Difficult Life Situations” is operational in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, but a small-scale shelter for victims of domestic violence in Donetsk city had been closed down in December 2017.^{li}

A lack of shelters for women in immediate need of protection remains a concern in other parts of Ukraine as well. In Lviv, a representative from the DoSP told the SMM that the Centre for Social and Psychological Assistance cannot meet the needs of victims living in rural areas outside Lviv.²⁴ Some shelters have an age limit on children staying with their mothers, depending on gender. For example, at a state-run shelter in Kyiv, the age limit is 13 years for boys, while for girls, no age limit exists.^{lii} In both Kherson and Ivano-Frankivsk, civil society representatives have highlighted to the SMM a lack of shelters in their regions on a number of occasions.

The SMM also established that a number of new shelters opened during 2017 and 2018. In February 2018, the SMM visited the new Centre for Social and Psychological Assistance for Victims of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Sloviansk.²⁵ In late 2017, the Mission observed that a new shelter had been opened in Mariupol. In addition, in Kharkiv city, a new shelter was inaugurated in 2017.

Over 2018, the Mission followed up with representatives from the police, social services and civil society throughout Ukraine, except for non-government-controlled areas, on newly adopted laws on preventing and combating GBV, which will come fully into force in January 2019.²⁶ Interlocutors, including in Dnipro, Odessa and Mariupol, noted that the adoption of the laws is a positive development which strengthens the survivor-centric approach and provides the police with more options to effectively respond to GBV.^{liii} The SMM met with representatives of centres for free legal aid throughout Ukraine, where victims of domestic violence, based on the new legislation, are now eligible for free secondary legal aid, who noted that several victims of domestic violence had already reached out for free legal aid since the adoption of the new laws.^{liv}

The SMM has utilized the OSCE’s broader network and lessons learned by other field operations to explore good practices in combating GBV in communities that have experienced armed conflict. The Mission, for instance, facilitated communication between the “POLINA” project²⁷ coordinator from the Ukrainian national police and the OSCE Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH). The “POLINA” project is aimed at strengthening responses to GBV. OSCE BiH shared experiences on database development and data collection with regard to domestic violence cases based on inputs by police, social

²³ The SMM confirmed this information through the GBV sub-cluster (September 2017).

²⁴ Lack of available services in rural areas for GBV victims were mentioned by interlocutors on several occasions.

²⁵ It can accommodate up to six women and children for a maximum period of one month.

²⁶ The Law of Ukraine on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence (already in force); The Law of Ukraine on amending Criminal Code of Ukraine and Criminal Procedural Code of Ukraine due to the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (coming fully into force Jan 2019)

²⁷ “POLINA” teams comprise of members of the national police (district and juvenile prevention officers), criminal investigation and patrol police officers, at times accompanied with staff from social services. Their aim is to strengthen prevention efforts and specialized responses to GBV cases. During the reporting period, the SMM observed “POLINA” pilot projects being launched in Darnytsa District in Kyiv, Malinovskiy district in Odessa, Left Bank district in Mariupol and Sievierodonetsk in Luhansk region. The “POLINA” project is reportedly planned to be replicated across Ukraine.

workers, safe houses and SOS call lines. The BiH database incorporates diverse information about perpetrators and victims and is grounded in a legislative framework which was deemed of high interest for Ukrainian interlocutors and national aims to strengthen data collection and analysis with regard to domestic violence cases and responses.

6. Conflict-related trends in trafficking in human beings

Trafficking in human beings (THB) is a serious human rights violation, with conflict tending to increase vulnerability to human trafficking risks in communities as a result of economic hardship, displacement and the weakening of rule of law and social cohesion.^{lv} The SMM has held regular meetings with a range of relevant interlocutors, governmental and non-governmental, in order to monitor conflict-related risks and concerns in this sphere.

Data made available by both the national police and DoSPs shows that the number of cases of human trafficking registered by the authorities (both police and social protection departments) and the number of persons that were granted formal THB victim social status²⁸ have increased substantially during the reporting period.²⁹ Cases entering the system via DoSPs in the regions tend to include more cases of labour exploitation, whilst the national police register more cases of sexual exploitation.^{lvi} A number of governmental and NGO interlocutors told the SMM that they noted an increase in trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation, which often targeted men.^{lvii} Women remain the majority of registered victims with regard to sexual exploitation.^{lviii}

Interlocutors identified non-conflict-related and conflict-related factors behind this increase in registered cases. With regard to non-conflict-related reasons, representatives from both DoSP and NGOs noted that awareness-raising activities and educational outreach by authorities and NGOs in government-controlled-areas had led to increased awareness which may have encouraged more survivors to come forward.^{lix} They also mentioned the implementation of the National Referral Mechanism for victim support and the availability of financial assistance for victims as factors having led to an improvement in the registration of cases.^{lx} At the same time, according to SMM interlocutors, stigma and fear of repercussions remain an issue for victims considering coming forward seeking support and justice.^{lxi}

With regard to conflict-related factors, expert interlocutors mentioned the lack of employment opportunities and economic hardship as a result of the conflict in eastern Ukraine as having increased vulnerability to THB, particularly for IDPs who are often struggling to find employment and build new social support networks.^{lxii} Also, reference to ATO veterans was made on several occasions, in particular to male veterans who face

²⁸ A person given the status of a THB victim is granted access to free informational, psychological, medical and educational support, as well as support in searching for employment or retraining. The status also provides for a one-time payment, equivalent to three subsistence minimums (approximately 5,200 UAH).

²⁹ According to public official data, during the second half of 2012 and 2013, MoSP granted 54 THB victim statuses; in 2014 – 87 THB victim statuses; in 2015 – 83 THB victim statuses; in 2016 – 110 THB victim statuses; in 2017 – 198 THB victim statuses; during first half of 2018 – 112 THB victims statuses. In the first half of 2018, National Police registered 186 criminal offenses related to THB. During 2017, Police registered 346 criminal THB-related offences, which is three times more than in 2016 (115 cases in 2016). Based on Reports on the implementation of the State Programme on CHTB for 2013 (available at: <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/8220.html>), 2014 (available at: <https://www.msp.gov.ua/news/8423.html>), 2015 (available at: <http://www.msp.gov.ua/files/tl/d.doc>), 2016 (available at: <http://www.msp.gov.ua/files/tl/z2016.doc>), 2017 (available at: <http://www.msp.gov.ua/files/tl/z2017.doc>) and for the first half of 2018 (available at: <http://www.msp.gov.ua/files/tl/zvit1-2018.doc>).

challenges reintegrating back into civilian life in their communities, who struggle to find or keep employment and who, in cases of exploitation, would rarely openly identify themselves as victims. SMM interlocutors in different regions of Ukraine, including Odessa and non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, pointed out the vulnerable situation of orphans and de-institutionalized orphans with regard to human trafficking risks.^{lxiii}

Representatives of the police and DoSPs in Lviv, Rivne, Khmelnytsky and Sievierodonetsk informed the SMM that formal THB victim status has been provided by the authorities in these regions to victims of labour exploitation reportedly having occurred in non-government-controlled areas.^{lxiv} It pertained mainly to ATO participants detained in non-government-controlled areas, but the SMM was also informed about a civilian, an IDP, who was formally recognized by the aforementioned authorities as a victim of human trafficking who suffered from labour exploitation in non-government-controlled areas.^{lxv} A Kramatorsk-based NGO told the SMM that they invest in raising awareness particularly at EECs, distributing THB awareness raising leaflets. One of the learning points recorded during their talks with civilians crossing is that men are often hesitant to share human rights violations that happened to them, including labour exploitation.

The SMM has not observed any indications that measures to prevent, combat or investigate human trafficking are being implemented in non-government-controlled areas, and the Mission continues to face access issues in speaking with potentially relevant interlocutors. In non-government-controlled areas, there are only a very limited number of international and non-governmental organizations permitted to operate, which has heavily affected any referral mechanisms and services that were in place pre-conflict. However, through individual interviews with IDPs living in collective centres in non-government-controlled areas, the SMM identified three presumed victims of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation. This number – rather high given the sample of people interviewed (16) – highlights the acute vulnerability of those who have lost their houses and means of livelihood as a result of the conflict.^{lxvi}

A single mother from a village in non-government controlled areas told the SMM that she used to live comfortably before her house was hit by shelling in 2016. In 2017, desperate to move out of the collective centre where she was renting a room, she responded to an advertisement for seasonal work on an apple farm abroad. She and two friends from the same centre boarded minivans two days later. When she met her employer, she was told that she would not be paid before the end of her three-month contract. Her passport was reportedly confiscated to prevent her from leaving the farm. Despite being promised decent working conditions on the phone, she worked on average 12 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week. She received less than the amount promised and was never paid for the overtime. On her last day, after missing her bus back to Ukraine and being forced to spend another night in the barracks of the farm, someone stole all her wages from her wallet. She financed her trip back by selling her phone.^{lxvii}

In addition to conflict-related risk-exacerbating factors and their impact on available services in non-government-controlled areas, interlocutors from the police in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Dnipro stated to the SMM that the conflict has had a negative effect on police co-operation between Ukraine and the Russian Federation with regard to information sharing on THB cases and criminal networks involved.^{lxviii} This has reportedly hampered investigations, as the

Russian Federation is considered one of the main destination countries for victims recruited by traffickers in Ukraine.^{lxxix}

7. Gender equality rallies and opposition

The SMM monitored various assemblies and rallies across government-controlled areas of Ukraine in support of gender equality. These events often have a particular focus on women's rights and/or rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals.^{lxxx} The Mission monitored a number of *Marches of Equality*, with the number of participants observed ranging from at least 30 to 3,500 people.^{lxxxi} The Mission also observed a number of rallies with regard to tackling GBV, such as a rally in Kyiv calling for Ukraine's ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ("Istanbul Convention").^{lxxxii}

The SMM also observed counter-demonstrations while monitoring these assemblies and rallies.^{lxxxiii} Often, participants of these counter-demonstrations voiced their opposition to gender equality initiatives and, more often, to activities in support of protecting the human rights of LGBTIQ individuals. The SMM observed that persons participating in such counter-demonstrations belonged to different groups, mainly radical groups and organizations that claim their main aim is to support traditional family values. On a number of occasions, the SMM has observed members of radical groups intimidating gender equality advocates with violence or threat of violence.

Security presence

Throughout Ukraine, law enforcement agencies were regularly present in high numbers during assemblies and rallies and engaged in dialogue with organizing parties. In Kyiv, for instance, during the *March of Equality* in June 2018 (about 3,500 participants), the Mission observed that about 5,000 police and National Guard officers were present and were conducting security checks of every person entering the cordoned-off march zone.^{lxxxiv} In Kryvyi Rih, as another example, during Kryvbass Pride in July 2018, the SMM observed around 600 police officers on duty and around 30 participants.

In most cases, the police were able to protect participants of *Marches of Equality*; however, scuffles and violence at times still occurred, including before or after events. While following up on attacks, the SMM was often informed by activists as well as police that incidents were being recorded and prosecuted as "hooliganism" under Article 296 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine versus being qualified and prosecuted as hate crimes.^{lxxxv}

Non-government-controlled areas

In non-government-controlled areas, the SMM did not observe any rallies for women's rights, gender equality or LGBTIQ rights. The Mission was made aware of the introduction of measures in non-government-controlled areas that may result in the limitation of activities for the LGBTIQ community. In addition, some interlocutors from the LGBTIQ community highlighted to the Mission that LGBTIQ persons and organizations had either felt forced to leave non-government-controlled areas or stay silent on their sexual orientation.^{lxxxvi} This is illustrative of a shrinking space in non-government-controlled areas for civil society, in particular for organizations in support of gender equality and LGBTIQ rights.

CONCLUSION

The crisis in and around Ukraine continues to affect the lives of individuals, families and society as a whole throughout the country. With regard to gender norms, the SMM has identified a number of developments in this thematic report.

In government-controlled areas, the SMM reported that, despite persisting challenges, the outlook for increasing women's political participation is positive among local elected officials. The conflict has also led to more space for women to formally take up roles in the UAF. The number and level of participation in rallies and assemblies promoting gender equality have increased despite intimidation by more radical groups at times occurring.

Despite women remaining underrepresented in higher-level political and security forums, they continue to set agendas and make a range of social cohesion activities possible on the local level, on both sides of the contact line. GBV and trafficking in human beings remain difficult phenomena to monitor and report on. Nonetheless, there are clear indications that the conflict has increased prevalence of GBV in particular. The Mission also observed that the conflict has had a negative impact on available services for GBV survivors, although several initiatives are being rolled out in government-controlled areas to improve the situation in this regard. Access restrictions to relevant interlocutors in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions continue to limit the SMM's observations.

The SMM will continue to promote gender mainstreaming across all the Mission's activities and remains committed to further building the capacity of its monitoring officers in general and the GFP network in particular. The SMM will continue to build on its current practices with regard to gender mainstreaming, including the implementation of its GEAP. The Mission will also further explore ways to facilitate dialogue in support of the synergy between women's local activities and high-level dialogues and peace negotiations.

ⁱ Meetings in Zolotonosha, including with local council members and the "School for Equal Opportunities", August 2017

ⁱⁱ Over 70 meetings held on (potential development of) UNSCR 1325 Regional Action Plans in government-controlled areas of Ukraine, with governmental and non-governmental interlocutors, in Zakarpattia, Chernivtsi, Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kherson, Odessa, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kharkiv, Dnipro, Zaporizhzhia, Zhytomyr, Poltava, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Mykolaiv and Kirovohrad regions

ⁱⁱⁱ Several meetings held in Donetsk region (government-controlled areas) with local authorities and NGOs on UNSCR 1325 localization, between 28 July and 24 August 2017

^{iv} See: <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/357361> (press release)

^v Includes meetings with female political party member, Poltava, 12 June 2018; regional council member, Khmelnytskyi, 13 June 2018; Chernihiv Women's Congress, Chernihiv, 4 July 2018

^{vi} Including meetings in Marinka and Kramatorsk in May 2018 as well as a meeting in Kyiv in June 2018

^{vii} Includes a request made to SMM representatives on 29 March 2018

^{viii} Number of meetings with group of women spearheading the initiative in Luhansk region in June and July 2017 and further follow-up meetings in May 2018

^{ix} SMM Weekly Report 26/2018, 3 July 2018

^x Meeting with Luhansk (government-controlled areas) NGO representative, Sievierodonetsk, 6 March 2017; Discussions at Kyiv Women's Centre including with internally displaced women, 24 April 2017; Monitoring of INGO-facilitated roundtable (WILPF) with Ukrainian women, Kyiv, 16 June 2017; Small-scale dialogue facilitation initiative with Shvchenkivsky District (Kyiv) Centre for Families and Women, NGO representatives and IDPs, 27 September 2017;

meeting with INGO, Kyiv, 3 August 2018; point also raised by attendees of OSCE SMM Café's on Women, Peace and Security in different regions of Ukraine

^{xi} Meeting with Luhansk (government-controlled areas) NGO representative, Sievierodonetsk, 6 March 2017; meetings with interlocutors having and/or aiming for cross-contact line dialogues in June 2017

^{xii} Press conference at Ukraine Crisis Media Centre on Women, Peace and Security by two female NGO representatives and the Head of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs, 12 January 2017

^{xiii} See for instance: Central Election Commission (2015): Gender Monitoring at Local Elections in Ukraine. Available at: <http://www.cvu.org.ua/eng/nodes/view/type:news/slug:2015%D0%BF%D0%BF%D0%BF%D0%BF%D0%BF> (last access: 1 September 2018)

^{xiv} OSCE SMM Daily Report, 6 September, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/393050>

^{xv} Meetings in Cherkasy, Chernihiv, Chernivtsi, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kharkiv, Khmelnytskyi, Kirovohrad, Kyiv, Luhansk, Lviv, Odesa, Poltava, Sumy, Ternopil, Zakarpattia, Zaporizhzhia and Zhytomyr regions.

^{xvi} SMM conducts meetings with MCA representatives regularly, including with for instance Toretsk, Novotoshivske, Seleznivka, Trokhizbenka, Popasna MCA representatives and staff

^{xvii} Law "On Military Duty and Military Service", available at: <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12>. Article 15 specifies: "Male citizens of Ukraine with a suitable health condition and who by the date of departure to military units reached 18 years of age as well as older men who are under the age of 27 and are not entitled to a dismissal or a deferral from the conscription, can be called upon regular military service"

^{xviii} This includes conversation within the period September 2017 – September 2018 with former volunteers now UAF serving in Donetsk and Luhansk region

^{xix} Conversations with circa 30 female UAF representatives in 2018 including in Luhansk, Donetsk, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk regions

^{xx} This includes meetings with Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Military Commissariat, 25 July 2018; meeting with Zhytomyr Regional Military Commissariat, 19 August 2018; Meeting with Dnipropetrovsk Military Commissariat, 21 August 2018; Meeting with Zaporizhzhia Military Commissariat, 21 August 2018

^{xxi} Based on a number of conversations with female UAF representatives between September 2017 – September 2018 including in Ivano-Frankivsk, Bakhmut, Mariupol and Dnipro

^{xxii} Meetings with ATO/JFO participants and veterans, including in Lviv, Shchastia, Velyka Novosilka and Pokrovsk, during July and August 2018

^{xxiii} Female former member of a volunteer battalion, Ivano-Frankivsk region, 5 August 2018

^{xxiv} Range of meetings including meeting with office for assistance for ATO veterans, Ivano-Frankivsk, 20 June 2018; meeting with ATO veterans in Lyubomil district, 15 July 2018; conversation with female AFU representative in Velyka Novosilka, 14 July 2018; meeting with AFU representatives at the soldier support centre at Odessa railway station, 25 July 2018; meeting with Ivano-Frankivsk Regional Military Commissariat, 25 July 2018; conversation with female officer, Uzhhorod, 8 August 2018; meeting with Kyiv City Military Commissariat, 22 August 2018

^{xxv} Meetings with female UAF representative, Sievierodonetsk, 26 June 2018; meeting with NGO working with (former) volunteers, 27 February 2018

^{xxvi} Includes conversations between January – August 2018 in nine different towns and villages in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region

^{xxvii} Meetings with veterans, veteran organizations and Departments of Social Protection, including in Dnipro, Lviv, Kharkiv and Luhansk regions, during 2017 and until September 2018

^{xxviii} Meetings with active UAF personnel, veterans, veteran organizations, rehabilitation centres and non-governmental organizations providing support to veterans, including in Luhansk, Lviv and Volyn regions, during 3 July – 7 August 2018

^{xxix} Meetings with veterans, rehabilitation specialists, psychologists as well as civil society working with veterans, including in Rubizhne, Lviv, Shatsk district, Artzys, Kirovograd and Mariupol, during 3 July - 31 August 2018

^{xxx} Meetings at a centre providing support to veterans in Mariupol, 9 August 2018

^{xxxi} Meeting with representatives of a rehabilitation centre for veterans in Luhansk region, 3 July 2018

^{xxxii} Meetings with rehabilitation specialist from Lviv, 16 July 2018; head of veteran organization in Kyiv, 24 July 2018

^{xxxiii} Meetings with AFU personnel and veterans (including those administering rehabilitation services) in Lviv and Volyn regions, during July 2018

^{xxxiv} Meeting with male veterans at a rehabilitation centre in Kharkiv, 4 July 2018

^{xxxv} Meetings with psychologists, rehabilitation specialists (including head of rehabilitation centre) in Chernivtsi and Lviv regions, July - August 2018

^{xxxvi} Conversations with former members of armed formations in a number of locations in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, June-August 2018

^{xxxvii} Range of meetings, including roundtable with non-governmental organizations (27 February 2017) and meeting in Kyiv with international organization (18 July 2017)

^{xxxviii} Based on meetings with experts from non-governmental organizations and Department of Social Protection (DOSP) in Donetsk, Kherson, Kyiv and Odessa regions, 31 January – 7 August 2018

^{xxxix} Range of meetings, including meetings with conflict-affected civilians, a journalist and representatives of non-governmental organizations in Donetsk, Kharkiv and Odessa regions, September 2017 – June 2018

^{xl} Meetings with staff of district state administrations, healthcare professionals, representatives of local and international non-governmental organizations and conflict-affected civilians in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, March – August 2018

^{xli} Range of meetings, including with healthcare professional involved in HIV programs and non-governmental organization working with HIV positive persons in Luhansk, Donetsk and Kyiv regions, July 2017 – August 2018

^{xlii} Meetings in Donetsk region, including with healthcare professional (6 April 2018), representative of district state administration (11 April 2018), internally displaced woman (26 June 2018) and a local NGO (8 August 2018)

^{xliiii} Meeting with female IDP in Mariupol, 26 June 2018

^{xliiv} Includes data made available by, for instance, DoSPs in Lviv, Volyn and Luhansk regions; SMM monitoring a press briefing titled “The risk of disruption of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention aimed at combating domestic violence against women and children” where participants discussed the increased number of calls related to DV to the NGO La Strada hot-line, Kyiv, 11 March 2017

^{xliiv} Based on the meetings with representatives of Department of Social Protection and Department for Family, Youth and Sports, national police working with POLINA project, including in Donetsk, Luhansk, Lviv and Kherson regions, January 2017 – March 2018

^{xlivi} Based on meetings with the national police (including those working with POLINA project), Departments of Social Protection, psychologist of a mobile unit and a representative of a Centre for Psychosocial support, including in Donetsk, Kherson, Khmelnytskyi, Luhansk and Lviv regions, March 2017 –April 2018

^{xliiii} Range of meetings, including with representatives of Departments of Social Protection and Department of Family, Youth and Sports in Lviv, Rivne and Volyn regions, interlocutors from non-governmental organizations and police in Odessa, Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson regions, January 2017 – June 2018; SMM monitoring NGO La Strada presentation at UNFPA-facilitated discussion, 28 March 2017

^{xliiii} For instance, the SMM followed up on a case of a woman being treated at the hospital due to grenade incident at her home, Donetsk region (for more details, see SMM Daily Report, 29 July 2017, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/333201>). Police informed the Mission about a call from a female resident of Sumy region who claimed that during a domestic quarrel, her husband threatened her with a weapon. Police noted on seizing a short assault rifle and three rounds of ammunition from the husband (15 April 2018). In addition, representatives of police in Kherson region informed the Mission on the increasing amount of DV cases in veteran families, including with weapons being used (25 May 2018). Similar issues were raised by interlocutors in Chernivtsi

^{xlix} Meeting with Ukrainian Foundation for Public Health, 24 November 2017

^l Based on meetings with representatives of Regional State Administration (24 October 2017) and Department of Social Protection (27 October 2017) in Luhansk region

^{li} Meetings with interlocutor providing support to GBV survivors in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, 31 January 2018 and 9 February 2018

^{lii} Meeting with the representatives of the Kyiv city centre for working with women, 18 January 2018

^{liii} Meetings in Dnipro, Odessa and Mariupol in January and February 2018

^{liiv} Meeting with Coordinating Center for Provision of Legal Aid, Kyiv, February 2018

^{liv} OSCE Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings (2005), DECISION No. 557/Rev., 2005 (on unresolved conflict and post-conflict situations); IOM announcing Ukraine 2017 Crisis Response Plan, 8 March 2017, available at: http://iom.org.ua/sites/default/files/iom_ukraine_2017_crisis_response_plan_final.pdf

^{lii} Meetings with police and Department of Social Protection representatives in Lviv region (3 January 2017), in Luhansk region (25 January 2018), Zaporizhzhia region (18 January 2018), Donetsk region (8 February 2018 and 24 July 2018), Chernivtsi region (27 February 2018 and 19 April 2018), Odessa region (4 May 2018), Mykolaiv region (16 May 2018), Ivano-Frankivsk region (31 May 2018), Kyiv region (19 July 2018)

^{liii} Range of meetings with interlocutors from Police CTHB Units, including in Dnipropetrovsk region (3 July 2017) and Odessa region (4 July 2018). The SMM has also facilitated CTHB dialogue (including discussions with Department of Social Protection, non-governmental organization and IOM), Sievierodonetsk, 25 July 2018

^{liiii} Range of meetings, including with interlocutors from Police CTHB Units in Kherson region (3 February 2017 and 25 May 2018), Dnipropetrovsk region (3 July 2017), Mykolaiv region (23 May 2018) and with representative of non-governmental organization working with THB victims in Odessa region (4 April 2018)

^{lix} Based on meetings of the SMM with police, Department of Social Protection and non-governmental organizations in Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv regions (30 May – 2 June 2018), CTHB Dialogues facilitated by the Mission in Kramatorsk (8 June 2018) and Sievierodonetsk (25 July 2018) with Department of Social Protection and non-governmental organizations in attendance, as well as SMM’s monitoring of the roundtable marking CTHB Day in Kharkiv with participation of police, Department of Social Protection and non-governmental organizations (30 July 2018)

^{lx} Based on meetings of the SMM with police, Department of Social Protection and non-governmental organizations in Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk and Lviv regions (30 May – 2 June 2018), CTHB Dialogues facilitated by the Mission in Kramatorsk (8 June 2018) and Sievierodonetsk (25 July 2018) with Department of Social Protection and non-governmental organizations in attendance

^{lxi} Meeting with interlocutors from non-governmental organization in Kyiv region (25 January 2017) and police in Volyn region (27 January 2017), Kharkiv region (27 February 2018), Kherson region (25 May 2018), as well as SMM’s monitoring of the roundtable marking CTHB Day in Kharkiv with participation of police, Department of Social Protection and non-governmental organizations (30 July 2018)

^{lxii} SMM meetings with Police and NGOs in Mariupol in context of visit of OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, 5 July 2017; SMM meetings with Regional State Administration representatives, including from DoSP, police and NGOs in Chernivtsi, Lviv and Ivano-Frankivsk in context of visit of OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, 30 May – 2 June 2018; SMM-facilitated roundtable on CTHB (with NGOs and DoSP) in Kramatorsk, 8 June 2018; range of conversations including with interlocutors residing in collective centres in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region; meetings with

representatives of Departments of Social Protection in Donetsk region (July 2018). With regard to IDP victims of THB being identified: meetings including with the national police in Lviv region (3 January 2017) and Dnipropetrovsk region (7 March 2017), two non-governmental organizations in Volyn region (30 March 2017), international non-governmental organization in Odessa region (27 March 2018) and Department of Social Protection in Kharkiv region (20 June 2018)

^{lxiii} Range of meetings, including with interlocutors from a non-governmental organization in Odessa region (27 March 2018) and Luhansk region (11 May 2018), three region-based shelters (31 May 2018) and national police in Donetsk region (14 May 2018)

^{lxiv} Range of meetings, including with representatives of Department of Social Protection and Police CTHB Units in Luhansk region (11 May 2018); Department of Social Protection representatives in Lviv and Rivne regions (several meetings April - June 2018); as well as based on meetings with RSAs in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi during the OSCE Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings visit (30 May – 2 June 2018)

^{lxv} Meeting with representative of Department of Social Protection in Lviv region (5 March 2018)

^{lxvi} In-depth interviews with 16 internally displaced women living in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, Spring of 2018

^{lxvii} In-depth interview with a presumed THB survivor in non-government-controlled areas of Donetsk region, 29 June 2018

^{lxviii} Range of meetings, including with national police in Dnipro region (17 January 2018 and 5 March 2018), Kyiv region (12 April 2018) and Kherson region (23 May 2018)

^{lxix} Meetings with representatives of police in Dnipropetrovsk region (5 March 2018) and IOM in Luhansk region (25 July 2018), where IOM's statistics on CTHB in Ukraine for June 2018 was shared with the Mission (available at: <http://www.iom.org.ua/en/countering-human-trafficking>)

^{lxx} For more information see: SMM Daily Report, 8 March 2017, available at: <https://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/304031>; SMM Daily Report, 18 June 2017, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/324026>; SMM Daily Report, 8 March 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/374908>; SMM Daily Report, 14 March 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/375460>; SMM Daily Report, 11 May 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/380968>; SMM Daily Report, 21 May 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/382279>; SMM Daily Report, 17 June 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/384909>; SMM Daily Report, 21 June, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/385602>; SMM Daily Report, 22 June 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/385638>; SMM Daily Report, 26 July 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/389228>; SMM Daily Report, 19 August 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/391046>

^{lxxi} See SMM Daily Report, 22 July 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/388826>; See SMM Daily Report, 17 June 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/384909>

^{lxxii} 21 September 2017, rally in front of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine by women's rights activists on the need to ratify the Istanbul Convention in Ukraine. On 29 Sept the Mission monitored a protest against the Istanbul Convention with demonstrators using slogans such as "Stop Gender"

^{lxxiii} For more information see: SMM Daily Report, 8 March 2017, available at: <https://www.osce.org/ukraine-smm/304031>; SMM Daily Report, 18 June 2017, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/324026>; SMM Daily Report, 8 March 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/374908>; SMM Daily Report, 14 March 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/375460>; SMM Daily Report, 11 May 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/380968>; SMM Daily Report, 21 May 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/382279>; SMM Daily Report, 17 June 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/384909>; SMM Daily Report, 21 June, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/385602>; SMM Daily Report, 22 June 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/385638>; SMM Daily Report, 26 July 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/389228>; SMM Daily Report, 19 August 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/391046>

^{lxxiv} For more information see: SMM Daily Report, 17 June 2018, available at: <https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine/384909>

^{lxxv} For instance, on 24 October 2017, the Mission followed-up with the organizers of the Festival of Equality in Zaporizhzhia, during which two women were attacked by the participants of the counter demonstration. The SMM was informed that the investigation under Article 296 on "hooliganism" was opened up by the police. In July 2018, LGBTIQ community centre in Kharkiv was torn down and the furniture was broken; police informed the SMM on opening an investigation under Article 296 on "hooliganism". Similarly, on 22 August 2018, the Mission was informed by the police that investigation of the attack on Art Platforma TU was under Article 296 on "hooliganism"

^{lxxvi} Meetings with representatives of LGBTIQ non-governmental organizations in Kyiv (13 February 2018) and Odessa (27 February 2018); member of LGBTIQ community in non-government-controlled areas (20 February 2018)