

POLICY REPORT
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Implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Lessons Learned from Ukraine

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Cover: A woman with children walks past a damaged exit of the Sviatoshyn Metro Station following a Russian strike with ballistic missiles and drones in Kyiv, Ukraine, on June 23, 2025. (Kyrylo Chubotin / Ukrinform / NurPhoto via Getty Images)



A woman stands among the rubble outside a house damaged by a drone attack in Odesa, Ukraine, in April 2025. (Nina Liashonok / Ukrinform / NurPhoto via Getty Images)

Foreword

Over the course of more than a decade of Russian aggression, and particularly since the full-scale invasion of 2022, Ukraine has emerged as a landmark case for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, becoming the first country to adopt a WPS National Action Plan (NAP) during active war. This effort has been largely led by civil society and women leaders who have become the country's bedrock of resilience against unimaginable destruction. They have successfully transformed the WPS agenda from a normative policy framework into a practical, essential mechanism for strengthening social cohesion, advancing institutional reform, supporting humanitarian response, and shaping inclusive recovery planning during wartime.

Led by the Ukrainian Women Lawyers Association "JurFem", New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy, and Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, this joint report outlines the evolution, impact, and lessons learned from instrumentalizing the WPS agenda in Ukraine. The publication arrives at a critical juncture. Globally, the foundational principles of U.N. Resolution 1325, which engendered the WPS agenda, face political backlash, deprioritization, and funding shortages from major allies and donors. Simultaneously, Russia continues to escalate its deadly attacks, with U.N. officials reporting that the war is becoming deadlier by the day. Against this uncertain backdrop, and as Ukraine prepares to launch its new WPS National Action Plan for 2026–2030, this report makes a compelling case for sustained engagement and funding. By highlighting Ukraine's milestones alongside the risks of backtracking, it underscores why addressing remaining structural vulnerabilities in advancing the WPS agenda is urgent for a just and sustainable future.

Furthermore, the report emphasizes how civil society has become both an operational partner to the state and its moral compass, steering national policy back on track whenever official commitments waver. This accountability mechanism is acutely needed today, as recent domestic legislative shifts threaten to roll back hard-won protections for women, families, and civic space. Ultimately, Ukraine's experience proves that when WPS principles are effectively localized and implemented through genuine multi-stakeholder collaboration, they strengthen institutional responsiveness and help anchor a more sustainable and inclusive recovery.

Ultimately, the partnership between JurFem, New Lines, and Georgetown Institute for WPS reflects the precise blend of local agency and international solidarity required to sustain Ukraine's wartime momentum. JurFem remains a trailblazer in advancing justice, accountability, and survivor-centered responses on the ground, while the New Lines Institute and the Georgetown Institute for WPS provide the rigorous strategic analysis needed to elevate these priorities globally. Most critically, this joint report shatters the outdated assumption that WPS is merely a secondary social policy issue or a good-to-have. It makes the undeniable case that the WPS framework is a hard national security and governance imperative, one that demands high-level interministerial coordination across defense, foreign policy, justice, and recovery sectors. For international partners committed to Ukraine's survival and victory, backing this agenda is no longer optional but a strategic requirement to secure a resilient, democratic, and just future for the region.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ukraine represents a unique case in which a state is implementing the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda under conditions of a large-scale, ongoing war. Since 2014, and particularly following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, the unprecedented scope and intensity of Russian armed aggression have simultaneously accelerated institutional development and exposed structural gaps in gender-responsive governance. This has placed enormous pressure on national structures and services. Concurrently, the war has exposed the essential role of civil society and women's organizations in the implementation of the WPS agenda in Ukraine, as well as the importance of localization and how women leaders shape this process.

Ukraine's experience demonstrates that when the WPS agenda is effectively localized, integrated into national reforms, and supported by adaptable civil society actors, it can function as a framework that strengthens institutional capacity, enhances community resilience, and enables survivor-centered responses, even under extreme wartime constraints.

As Ukraine prepares to enter the new phase of implementation with the adoption of a new National Action Plan for 2026-2030 and potentially transitions from active hostilities toward a peace and recovery phase, the institutional gains achieved during previous years provide a resilient foundation. International partnerships and donor support have been critical in scaling and sustaining these efforts. However, further development will require ensuring the sustainability of WPS mechanisms in a context where international donor support may gradually decline. This will require a strategic shift toward stronger domestic institutional ownership, integration of WPS priorities into national budgeting and planning processes, and the consolidation of cross-sector coordination mechanisms.

Overall, Ukraine's trajectory illustrates both the transformative potential and the structural limits of WPS implementation in active conflict settings. It highlights that progress is possible when driven by coordinated efforts among state institutions, civil society actors, and international partners. But it also underscores that long-term effectiveness depends on sustainability, inclusive participation, and a balanced approach that extends beyond immediate security concerns to comprehensively address broader dimensions of gender equality and recovery.

Contextual Framework

Political and Practical Preconditions: Three Stages of Conflict

The Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda originates from the 2000 United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, which recognizes the disproportionate impact of armed conflict on women and girls and calls for their meaningful participation in peace and security decisionmaking, the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV), and the protection of affected populations. Subsequent resolutions have expanded this framework, establishing WPS as a comprehensive policy agenda linking security, justice, and gender equality across conflict prevention, response, and recovery contexts. The WPS agenda is structured around four pillars: prevention of GBV and conflict through gender-sensitive approaches; protection of women and girls from conflict-related violence; participation of women at all levels of decisionmaking in peace and security processes; and relief and recovery, ensuring that post-conflict reconstruction and humanitarian responses address the specific needs of women and girls.¹

An analysis of Ukraine's implementation of the WPS agenda through three distinct phases of Russia's armed aggression shows how institutional responses developed under changing conflict conditions. Examining key institutional transformations across core sectors highlights how urgency, political will, international support, and institutional capacity interacted over time. This analysis is structured around cross-sector institutional changes and sector-specific developments in the security defense and justice arenas and in social, humanitarian, and medical systems, as well as the response to conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). This approach allows for an

¹ UN Women. 2025. "What Is the Women, Peace and Security Agenda?" UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2025/10/what-is-the-women-peace-and-security-agenda>

assessment of how WPS implementation in Ukraine evolved from emergency-driven responses in 2014 to more coordinated governance frameworks and how these frameworks were subsequently adapted and accelerated under conditions of full-scale invasion in 2022.

2014–2016: Emergence of the WPS Agenda and Urgent Mobilization

The 2014 Revolution of Dignity, known in the West as the Maidan Revolution, and the subsequent Russian invasion in the east of Ukraine and occupation of Crimea created a moment of heightened urgency to push WPS to the fore. They also accelerated Ukraine's momentum toward European integration. The signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement in 2014 established a framework for political association with the European Union and for legal approximation, meaning the gradual harmonization of Ukraine's laws, institutions, and policy practices with EU standards. This included commitments related to human rights, nondiscrimination, gender equality, justice reform, and good governance, creating pathways for reforms.² Women civil society leaders, together with a new wave of women parliamentarians, parlayed these conditions, along with donor support, to drive policy change and introduce WPS to Ukraine.³

Security and defense institutions began a slow evolution during 2014–2016 under pressure from women activists' advocacy. At the start of the war, women served in combat zones but without formal recognition or equal benefits. This disparity was continuously spotlighted by advocacy campaigns at the time. In response, the Ministry of Defence in 2016 amended its regulations to open up dozens of combat positions to servicewomen that had previously been restricted.⁴ By March 2016, 17,000 women (including 2,200 officers) were serving in Ukraine's Armed Forces (AFU), over 8% of all personnel.⁵ This constituted a foundational change in military culture and policy, driven largely by civil society advocacy and support from international partners. Although the political will to recognize women's contributions gradually emerged, gender integration in the security sector remained partial. Women's combat contributions were often underrecognized, access to military roles remained uneven with structural barriers not fully eliminated, and institutional culture, service conditions, and career advancement structures continued to reflect male-centered assumptions about military service.⁶

In the early years of Russian aggression, the justice and human rights sector planted the seeds for addressing conflict-related gender-based crimes. Ukrainian human rights organizations rose to document atrocities, including widespread CRSV, in the conflict-affected areas reporting their findings to law enforcement and international bodies. However, the judicial system's response lagged,⁷ reflecting a serious capacity gap when dealing with war crimes. In 2015, the government acknowledged these issues by including "combating sexual violence" as a priority in the future NAP on WPS and by developing a strategy that emphasized support for survivors.⁸ International donor initiatives

2 European Union and Ukraine. *Association Agreement between the European Union and Its Member States, of the One Part, and Ukraine, of the Other Part*. 2014. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A22014A0529%2801%29>.

3 Santoire, Bénédicte. 2025. "We Will Be Standing as Long as We Can and as Long as It Takes"—Resilience and Resistance in Ukraine's Women, Peace, and Security Agenda." *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, October 9. <https://ua.boell.org/en/2025/10/09/we-will-be-standing-long-we-can-and-long-it-takes-resilience-and-resistance-ukraines> (Santoire 2025).

4 Suslova, Olena, and Emma Roos. 2018. *Gender Impact Assessment of the Security and Defense Sector in Ukraine, 2017*. UN Women Ukraine. https://ukraine.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ECA/Attachments/Publications/2018/Gender%20Impact%20Assessment%20Ukraine%202017_EN_fin.pdf, pp. 66–67.

5 Makarenko, Olena. 2016. "Ukrainian Women Receive Right to Serve in Combat Positions." *Euromaidan Press*, June 26. <https://euromaidanpress.com/2016/06/26/ukrainian-women-receive-right-to-serve-in-combat-positions/>.

6 UN Women Europe and Central Asia. "Invisible Battalion: Women's Participation in ATO Military Operations in Ukraine." 2016. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/08/invisible-battalion-womens-participation-in-ato-military-operations-in-ukraine-europe>.

7 Iarmoshchuk, Tetiana, and Tony Wesolowsky. 2020. "For Victims of Sexual Violence in Ukraine's Donbas, Justice Seems Distant." *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, December 8. <https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-sexual-violence-donbas-victims-justice/30990565.html>.

8 Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). n.d. "Ukraine – 1325 National Action Plans." *PeaceWomen*. <https://1325naps.peacewomen.org/index.php/ukraine/> (WILPF, Ukraine – 1325 National Action Plans).

Human rights advocates and government representatives participate in the international conference “Restoring the Rights of Victims of Conflict-Related Sexual Violence: An Element of Peace and Global Security” in Kyiv, in March 2024. (Pavlo Bagmut / Ukrinform / Future Publishing via Getty Images)



also began to bolster the justice sector’s approach, including providing training for police and prosecutors in handling GBV cases and supporting mobile justice teams. While the political will to pursue accountability for gender-based war crimes was nascent, the documentation efforts and the incorporation of CRSV into national policy frameworks laid the groundwork.

Meanwhile, social and humanitarian sectors underwent a rapid, if improvised, transformation driven by women’s organizations. The hostilities-related displacement of over 1 million people by 2015 created urgent protection and assistance needs,⁹ which women-led civil society organizations (CSOs) were among the first to address. Often working in partnership with international partners, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), these organizations took on much of the burden of care for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and conflict survivors.¹⁰ Gender-responsive humanitarian aid funded by international donors but implemented by local Ukrainian CSOs became a hallmark of Phase I. Crucially, these efforts were increasingly implemented into national policy: Issues like domestic violence, human trafficking, and women’s health in conflict entered the central government’s agenda, aligning with Ukraine’s EU-integration reforms. By 2016, Ukraine’s Parliament was considering stronger laws against domestic violence and had adopted a National Human Rights Strategy that, for the first time, acknowledged the gendered impacts of the conflict.¹¹

Overall, this period marked a transition from the near-absence of a WPS framework in Ukraine to an initial recognition of gender as a relevant dimension of national security and conflict response. Triggered by the sudden outbreak of armed aggression in the east of Ukraine in 2014, WPS-related action emerged primarily as an emergency response driven by civil society and informal networks rather than by established state institutions. Political attention to gendered security needs was reactive and fragmented, while institutional capacity remained limited. Nevertheless, the urgency

9 Santoire 2025 (*supra* note 3).

10 United Nations Population Fund. 2016. “Door-to-Door Service: Home Visits Help Fight Gender-Based Violence in Conflict-Impacted Eastern Ukraine.” *UNFPA*, May 12. <https://www.unfpa.org/news/door-door-service-home-visits-help-fight-gender-based-violence-conflict-impacted-eastern>.

11 The Advocates for Human Rights, and Center “Women’s Perspectives.” 2017. *Joint Stakeholder Report for the 28th Session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Ukraine*. https://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/Res/ukraine_28th_upr_domestic_violence.pdf.

created space for women's CSOs to assume operational roles and for the state to acknowledge the relevance of the WPS Agenda to Ukraine's security, humanitarian, and recovery challenges.

At the same time, progress under the participation pillar remained limited. Within the Minsk ceasefire negotiations – the internationally mediated framework aimed at securing a ceasefire and outlining political and security arrangements concerning Russia's armed aggression in the East of Ukraine – women were not meaningfully represented at the highest levels of political decisionmaking; their involvement was confined to specific working-level structures. Notably, in 2016, two women participated in the working subgroups of the Trilateral Contact Group, the negotiation platform composed of representatives of Ukraine, Russia, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), established to facilitate dialogue on the conflict in eastern Ukraine. Iryna Herashchenko, serving as President Petro Poroshenko's representative on peaceful settlement, was engaged in the humanitarian subgroup, while civil society representative Olha Aivazovska contributed to the political subgroup. In parallel, women from civil society, including human rights advocates, family members of detainees, and survivors of captivity and sexual violence, were involved primarily in advocacy efforts surrounding the negotiations.¹² The Minsk process underscored that, despite initial openings for WPS engagement, early implementation did not translate into women's meaningful participation in high-level peace processes, revealing a structural disconnect between emerging WPS commitments and political practice.

2016–2021: Institutionalization, Sectoral Reforms, Early Localization

In February 2016, the government approved the first WPS NAP for 2016–2020, marking Ukraine's official transition from emergency-driven engagement with WPS principles toward a national policy framework. Notably, Ukraine became the first country to adopt a WPS NAP during an active armed conflict. The process reflected the central role of civil society in placing WPS on the state agenda. It was initiated by the Gender Strategic Platform, a coalition of more than 45 women's CSOs. The Ministry of Social Policy took the lead, and the NAP incorporated inputs from 15 CSOs. It signaled the state's formal recognition of WPS but also revealed the limits of early institutionalization. The first NAP had several important gaps. These included limited funding, coordination problems among implementing authorities, paralyzed activities at the local level, insufficient inclusion of conflict-affected women, and unclear outcome indicators. Together, these weaknesses prompted a midterm review of progress.¹³ Incorporating lessons learned in October 2020, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted a second WPS NAP for 2020–2025, which was more comprehensive and inclusive.¹⁴ It expanded WPS priorities to include issues such as post-conflict recovery, transitional justice, and gender-based violence. It also involved broader consultations across government and civil society, demonstrating that beyond merely adopting policy instruments, Ukraine was gradually refining WPS implementation through experience, evaluation, and broader stakeholder engagement.

From 2016–2021, Ukraine also began establishing the institutional architecture to coordinate WPS implementation across the government. In 2017, the Cabinet of Ministers created the position of Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy (Gender Commissioner), a national gender ombudsperson charged with promoting a unified state gender policy and

12 Herashchenko, Iryna. "31 жовтня 2000 року Рада Безпеки ООН прийняла резолюцію 1325..." Facebook, October 31, 2023. <https://bit.ly/4sNtjGQ>

13 Santoire 2025 (*supra* note 3); Kähkönen, Mari. 2025. "Transformative Peace for Women in Ukraine? Implementing the WPS Agenda in a War." *International Affairs* 101 (6): 2019–36. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaaf186> (Kähkönen 2025), pp. 2026–2027.

14 Santoire 2025 (*supra* note 3).

“In the Armed Forces of Ukraine, women’s roles expanded dramatically following a 2018 reform that gave Ukrainian women the same legal status as men and officially allowed them to serve in 63 combat specialties.”

supporting all ministries on gender issues.¹⁵ High-level leadership was also bolstered: As a result of the mid-term review, the responsibility for overseeing WPS implementation and interagency coordination was given to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, elevating WPS coordination beyond a sectoral social policy framework and enabling a more strategic, cross-government approach.¹⁶ The Ministry of Social Policy continued to serve as the NAP’s focal point, responsible for monitoring its implementation, but WPS increasingly became part of a broader governance agenda.¹⁷ Taken together, these structural changes indicated that WPS implementation moved toward formal coordination, institutional learning, and more systematic integration into Ukraine’s governance architecture.

Ukraine’s security and defense sector reforms in this period increasingly incorporated WPS principles. In the Armed Forces of Ukraine, women’s roles expanded dramatically following a 2018 reform that gave Ukrainian women the same legal status as men and officially allowed them to serve in 63 combat specialties.¹⁸ By December 2021, women constituted around 12.5% of Ukraine’s Armed Forces 32,569 persons. Among them were 1,054 senior officers.¹⁹ The Ministry of Defence, with NATO’s guidance, also introduced measures aligned with WPS commitments, including creating gender adviser positions and integrating gender training into military education.²⁰ These reforms led to a shift beyond formal access for women toward beginning the more profound changes in institutional practice and security-sector governance with the aim of institutionalizing gender equality within military structures, professional standards, and operational culture.

The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the justice sector likewise advanced WPS goals through reforms. Following the adoption of the 2017 law criminalizing domestic violence, specialized police units were established and trained in survivor-centered, multiagency approaches (with the support, among others, of U.N. Women,²¹ UNFPA,²² and OSCE²³). This marked an important internalization of the WPS protection pillar, which no longer was limited to conflict-related harms or battlefield security, but included the GBV response. This became increasingly embedded in policing, referral pathways, and internal security reform and governance. In parallel, the Prosecutor General’s Office, with the support of international organizations, developed CRSV investigation guidelines and trained prosecutors. Although transitional justice mechanisms remained underdeveloped, the inclusion of CRSV and survivor assistance in the second NAP signaled recognition within the justice sector’s WPS mandate.²⁴

15 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2018. “Cabinet of Ministers Appoints Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy.” February 15. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/250574602/>.

16 Kähkönen 2025, p. 2027 (*supra* note 12).

17 WILPF, Ukraine – 1325 National Action Plans (*supra* note 7).

18 Trisko Darden, Jessica. 2023. “Ukrainian Wartime Policy and the Construction of Women’s Combatant Status.” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 96: 102665. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2022.102665>, p. 4.

19 Kozubenko, Olena. 2021. “Скільки жінок-військовослужбовців служать у Збройних Силах України – нові дані Кадрового центру [How Many Women Serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine—New Data from the Personnel Center].” *ArmyInform*, December 4. <https://armyinform.com.ua/2021/12/04/skilky-zhinok-vijskovosluzhbovciv-sluzhat-u-zbrojnyh-sylah-ukrayiny-novi-dani-kadrovogo-czentr/>.

20 North Atlantic Treaty Organization. 2025. “Relations with Ukraine.” June 26. <https://www.nato.int/en/what-we-do/partnerships-and-cooperation/relations-with-ukraine/> (NATO Relations with Ukraine).

21 UN Women Europe and Central Asia. 2017. “Police Officers in Ukraine Trained to Be Responsive to Gender-Based Violence.” March 14. <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/03/police-officers-in-ukraine-trained-to-be-responsive-to-gender-based-violence>.

22 United Nations Population Fund Ukraine. 2020. “(Un)safe Home: How the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine Counteracts Domestic Violence under Quarantine.” *UNFPA Ukraine*, May 4. <https://ukraine.unfpa.org/en/news/unsafe-home-how-ministry-internal-affairs-ukraine-counteracts-domestic-violence-under-quarantine/>.

23 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2017. “OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine Supports Training Courses for Mobile Police Teams on Combating Domestic Violence.” OSCE, May 31. <https://www.osce.org/project-coordinator-in-ukraine/320622>.

24 Kurinna, Mariia. 2025. “The Women, Peace and Security Agenda in Ukraine Is a Case of Unexpected Progress.” *Heinrich Böll Stiftung*, November 3. <https://www.boell.de/en/2025/11/03/women-peace-and-security-agenda-ukraine-case-unexpected-progress> (Kurinna 2025).

A notable achievement during this time was the localization of the WPS agenda. The more that activities are promoted and conducted at the local level, the more effective service provision becomes. Access and ability to influence decisionmaking is also most open at the local level. The WPS Agenda emphasizes the need for measures that “support local women’s initiatives aimed at achieving peace” and “involve women in all implementation mechanisms of peace agreements.”²⁵ As such, ensuring greater representation of women at all levels of decisionmaking on conflict prevention, management, and resolution, as well as increasing the number of women in all peacekeeping operations and processes, strengthens the quality and durability of peace outcomes and increases the likelihood that gender-sensitive provisions, including measures addressing violence against women, are incorporated into peace agreements.²⁶

Ukraine became one of the first countries to develop regional action plans (RAPs) on WPS, ensuring that national commitments were translated into concrete measures on the ground. By late 2017, 16 of Ukraine’s 24 oblasts (regions) had adopted their own RAPs.²⁷ This innovative approach recognized the reality that needs in frontline regions differed from those in the rest of the country, allowing local authorities to tailor activities to their context. Recognizing the value of local ownership, the second NAP required that every region implement RAPs.²⁸ By 2021, virtually every oblast – as well as Kyiv – had an updated RAP, supported by regional WPS coordination councils. Local level implementation was further bolstered by regional Coalitions 1325 – networks usually initiated by civil society, which also include officials from oblast administrations, police, and other governmental services. These coalitions acted as platforms for joint problem-solving and training. With support from U.N. agencies, at least 19 regional Coalitions 1325 had formed across Ukraine by 2019 in partnership with the security and defense sector.²⁹ This bottom-up dimension complemented national policy through feedback loops between local practice and WPS strategy.

International partners and donor programs supported Ukraine’s WPS institutionalization between 2016-2021 by providing coordinated technical, educational, financial, and political support across sectors. For the donors, the agenda aligned with several overlapping strategic priorities: strengthening Ukraine’s democratic resilience, supporting European integration, and operationalizing partners’ own WPS commitments in a conflict-affected setting.

For instance, the OSCE’s engagement, aimed at addressing institutional capacity gaps, reflected its broader mandate on conflict prevention, comprehensive security, democratic governance, and gender equality. The EU, through the European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine, integrated WPS into its broader reform agenda: Gender mainstreaming in policing, justice, and security sectors was treated as part of building more accountable, rights-based, and responsive institutions.³⁰ NATO’s engagement reflected its

25 United Nations Security Council. Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security, S/RES/1325 (2000), adopted October 31, 2000. United Nations. <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n00/720/18/pdf/n0072018.pdf>.

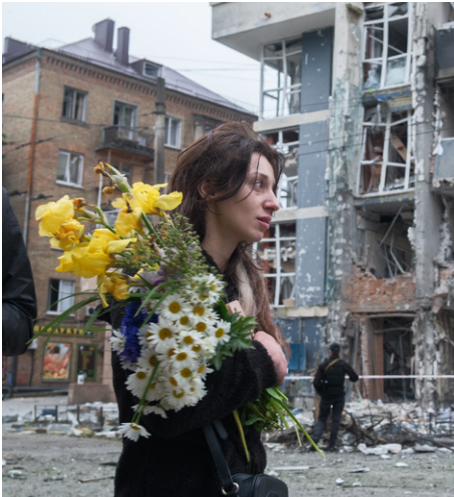
26 See, for example, Krause, Jana, Werner Krause, and Pia Bränfors. “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace.” *International Interactions* 44, no. 6 (2018): 985–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>; Good, Elizabeth. “Power Over Presence: Women’s Representation in Comprehensive Peace Negotiations and Gender Provision Outcomes.” *American Political Science Review* 119, no. 3 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305542400073X>; Sabrina Karim and Kyle Beardsley, “Explaining Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Peacekeeping Missions: The Role of Female Peacekeepers and Gender Equality in Contributing Countries,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 1 (2016): 100–115, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343315615506>.

27 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2017. “OSCE and Inclusive Security Support Ukraine’s Regions in Implementing Their Local Women, Peace and Security Action Plans.” OSCE, November 17. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/357361> (OSCE and Inclusive Security Support 2017).

28 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2023. *National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” (2020–2025) (Amended December 16, 2022)*. https://uwf.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/nap-1325_eng.pdf.

29 Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network. n.d. “Ukraine.” <https://wpsfocalpointnetwork.org/ukraine/>.

30 European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine. 2024. “UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security 1325 Twenty-Five Years On: What Does It Mean for Ukraine?” EUAM Ukraine, May 2. <https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/news/un-security-council-resolution-on-women-peace-and-security-1325-twenty-five-years-on-what-does-it-mean-for-ukraine/>.



KYIV, UKRAINE - MAY 25: A woman with a bouquet of flowers walks past a high-rise residential building in the Shevchenkivskiy district heavily damaged by a Russian drone strike on May 25, 2025 in Kyiv, Ukraine. Russia launched a mass combined drone-and-missile attack on Ukraine, resulting in the destruction of civilian infrastructure and deaths in Mykolaiv, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Khmelnytskyi and Zhytomyr Oblasts. In Kyiv, which is celebrating City Day this day, the strike resulted in the destruction of residential infrastructure in three districts - Holosiivskiy, Dniprovskiy and Shevchenkivskiy. At least eleven people were injured. (Photo by Vitalii Nosach/ Global Images Ukraine via Getty Images)

broader policy commitment to integrate gender perspectives across security cooperation and to support partner countries in aligning defense institutions with WPS principles. Bilateral partners, including Canada and the United Kingdom, similarly approached WPS as part of their foreign policy and security agendas, linking support for women in Ukraine's security sector to broader commitments on gender equality and democratic governance and supporting leadership development and capacity-building for servicewomen.³¹ Collectively, these international partnerships provided vital resources, expertise, and political backing for Ukraine's WPS agenda.

This period before Russia's full-scale invasion marks a transition from ad hoc, crisis-driven engagement with WPS principles to their gradual institutionalization within Ukraine's governance architecture. As the conflict became protracted rather than acute, political will shifted from reactive problem-solving toward structured policy development and institutional coordination. During this period, donor engagement became more programmatic, institutional capacity expanded unevenly across sectors and regions, and early localization efforts laid the groundwork for multilevel implementation. Despite the gaps, a strong foundation for responding to the significantly intensified challenges that emerged with Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022.

2021–2025: Wartime Acceleration and Reorientation of the WPS Agenda

The full-scale war created urgency to advance WPS commitments, dramatically increasing women's participation in defense and prompting swift legal and policy reforms. The number of women in Ukraine's Armed Forces nearly doubled within a year – from about 33,000 in late 2021 to roughly 60,000 by November 2022 – and continued to rise thereafter. By early 2026, over 70,000 women were serving voluntarily, including at least 5,500 on the front lines.³² Women have become indispensable to national defense and resilience, taking on roles once dominated by men.³³ This surge has challenged traditional gender norms and accelerated Ukraine's integration of gender perspectives across the security sector.

Wartime realities also pushed progressive legislative changes that had stalled in peacetime. In June 2022, Ukraine ratified the Istanbul Convention on preventing violence against women, and in 2024, the Parliament ratified the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.³⁴ Overall, the full-scale war reoriented WPS implementation to focus on immediate security and humanitarian needs: women's safety, their role in the war effort, and justice for atrocities. This represented a sharp pivot from the 2016-2021 period, shifting WPS from a longer-term reform agenda into an essential component of Ukraine's wartime resilience strategy.³⁵

Accordingly, Ukraine's institutional framework had to adjust to the new context. By late 2022, it was evident that the existing NAP for the period of 2020-2025 no longer reflected wartime realities, leading to a comprehensive midterm update.³⁶ In December 2022, the government, in collaboration with leading women's CSOs, revised the NAP to address mass displacement, a surge in gender-based violence, including CRSV committed by Russian forces, and the need for more gender-sensitive risk assessment and early warning mechanisms capable of identifying threats to different groups affected by

31 NATO Relations with Ukraine (*supra* note 19).

32 Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. 2025. "Формування майбутнього з урахуванням голосу жінок: розпочато розробку Національного плану дій «Жінки, мир, безпека» до 2030 року [Shaping the Future with Women's Voices: Development of the National Action Plan 'Women, Peace and Security' to 2030 Has Begun]." April 1. <https://www.msp.gov.ua/press-center/news/formuvannya-maybutnoho-z-urakhuvannyam-holosu-zhinok-rozpochato-rozrobku-natsionalnoho-planu-diy-zhinky-myir-bezpeka-do-2030-roku/> (Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine 2025).

33 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

34 *Ibid.*

35 Santoire 2025 (*supra* note 3).

36 *Ibid.*

the full-scale invasion. Accordingly, the NAP's objectives, target groups, and principles were refocused. New target groups were expanded to include those directly affected by the full-scale invasion: IDPs, residents of combat zones, people in occupied territories, CRSV survivors, prisoners of war and civilian detainees, families of service personnel, persons disabled by war, and others.³⁷ The changes signaled a more comprehensive and war-responsive understanding of the WPS agenda.

To operationalize these goals, institutional mechanisms expanded and adapted. The Gender Commissioner and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration became more important coordination actors in practice, as wartime WPS implementation required rapid inter-agency coordination, engagement with women's CSOs and international partners, and alignment of the updated NAP with new security, humanitarian, and survivor-support priorities. Each oblast continued to implement its own WPS RAP, allowing tailoring to local wartime realities.³⁸ Sectoral reforms in defense and law enforcement accelerated under wartime pressures as gender-related gaps affected institutional effectiveness and survivor protection. The Ministry of Defence resumed implementation of gender policies, including mechanisms addressing sexual harassment, once immediate existential threats subsided. Broader efforts to address gender inequalities within Ukraine's Armed Forces (e.g., dedicated gender adviser posts in military units) also continued despite incomplete institutionalization. In the civilian security sector, the National Police and State Emergency Service both adopted new anti-discrimination and gender-based violence measures in 2023-2024, supported by internal gender assessments and awareness trainings led by the newly established Gender Unit.³⁹ The Head of the Gender Unit in the State Emergency Service of Ukraine described this outcome as a "point of no return" in recognizing the importance of gender equality for effective emergency response.⁴⁰ Wartime exigencies fast-tracked institutional change, from legal equality in military service to updated standards for equipment, healthcare, and psychosocial support for servicewomen. By 2025, these developments indicated that gender inclusion was no longer treated only as a formal equality commitment but increasingly understood as necessary for institutional effectiveness across the security and defense sector. In this sense, WPS principles moved from policy commitments and training initiatives into the operational logic of wartime security governance.⁴¹

Even amid ongoing conflict, Ukraine began embedding WPS principles into recovery and transitional justice plans, making them a strategic pillar of the updated NAP.⁴² In practice, this meant recognizing women as key stakeholders and leaders in recovery on all levels. As such, women's CSOs, who were often first responders in the humanitarian crisis, have been increasingly involved in shaping recovery policies.⁴³

Transitional justice initiatives and security-sector responses have likewise increasingly adopted a gender lens, with accountability efforts explicitly encompassing CRSV and other gendered harms. Civil society documentation, including JurFem and the 5 AM Coalition (a coalition of NGOs that document Russian crimes), have complemented state prosecutions by systematically

37 WILPF, Ukraine – 1325 National Action Plans (*supra* note 3).

38 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

39 Jacobsen, S. D. 2025. "Gender, War, and the Limits of Reform inside Ukraine's Military." *International Policy Digest*, December 15. <https://intpolicydigest.org/gender-war-and-the-limits-of-reform-inside-ukraine-s-military/> (Jacobsen 2025).

40 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2023. "Women Leaders Fearlessly Serving People in Need in Ukraine." March 8. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/563112>.

41 Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine 2025 (*supra* note 29).

42 WILPF, Ukraine – 1325 National Action Plans (*supra* note 3).

43 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. 2023. *Ukraine Inclusive Recovery Brief – 2023: Toward Inclusive Recovery in Ukraine: Engaging Women and Civil Society in Ukraine's Relief, Recovery, and Reconstruction*. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Ukraine-Inclusive-Recovery-Brief-2023.pdf> (Ukraine Inclusive Recovery Brief 2023).

collecting evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including CRSV.⁴⁴ At the institutional level, the 2022 U.N.-Ukraine Framework of Cooperation on CRSV, an agreement signed by the U.N. secretary general's special representative on sexual violence in conflict and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, resulted in the establishment of coordinated mechanisms, including an interagency working group. The Framework also called for national CRSV experts to be embedded across key state institutions to ensure survivor-centered responses throughout justice, security, and holistic support. Carried out through multi-stakeholder implementation plans involving law enforcement, healthcare, social services, international organizations, and CSOs, this bilateral framework has enabled Ukraine to scale up emergency psychosocial, medical, legal, and other services for CRSV survivors despite active hostilities.⁴⁵ Expanded services, often delivered through state-civil society partnerships, have addressed CRSV, trafficking risks, and wartime surges in domestic violence, building on post-2014 approaches. These include mobile psychosocial support teams, survivor-centered case management, and integrated GBV service provision, initially implemented with respect to GBV and subsequently scaled to respond to CRSV across all regions of Ukraine.⁴⁶ Together, these measures illustrate how WPS principles have been embedded into Ukraine's accountability, protection, and recovery architecture amid ongoing war.⁴⁷

Concurrently, increased women's participation within Ukraine's security forces has driven internal reforms to better support female personnel. The ministries of Internal Affairs and Defense, in cooperation with CSOs, have strengthened mechanisms to address sexual harassment and misconduct, including the creation of an Office of the Military Ombudsman in 2023 as a broader oversight and complaint mechanism for service members. As a part of its mandate, the office provides a channel for reporting gender-related grievances, including sexual harassment and discrimination. While full implementation has faced wartime challenges, the reforms have continued.⁴⁸ On March 16, 2026, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a law amending the disciplinary statutes of Ukraine's Armed Forces and the Civil Protection Service to strengthen mechanisms for preventing discrimination and sexual harassment. It requires service members to respect human dignity, comply with equal rights legislation, refrain from discriminatory conduct, and prevent sexual harassment, GBV, and offences against sexual freedom and integrity. It also obliges commanders to initiate internal investigations in cases of sex-based discrimination, sexual harassment, or GBV, while protecting those who report such violations. This legislation moves gender-related misconduct into enforceable disciplinary obligations, demonstrating that Ukraine's internal security-sector reforms are continuing even under wartime pressure.⁴⁹

In parallel, the justice sector expanded capacity through specialized war-crimes units focusing on sexual violence and the initiation of trials for gender-based war crimes. Police, often with international support, continued efforts to combat trafficking and exploitation of displaced women, treating these as security issues integrally linked to the WPS agenda. These institutional shifts demonstrate how Ukraine's security and justice institutions have simultaneously pursued national defense and the integration of WPS

44 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

45 United Nations Development Programme. n.d. "Ukraine Joint Programme on Conflict-Related Sexual Violence." *UNDP Ukraine*. <https://www.undp.org/ukraine/projects/ukraine-joint-programme-conflict-related-sexual-violence/> (Ukraine Joint Programme on CRSV).

46 United Nations Population Fund. 2022. "UNFPA Provides Social and Psychological Services to Gender-Based Violence Survivors in 21 Regions of Ukraine." *UNFPA Ukraine*, December 9. <https://ukraine.unfpa.org/en/pss-mt-dec22-eng/> (UNFPA 2022).

47 Calvet-Martínez, Elisa. 2023. "Transitional Justice in the Context of the War in Ukraine." *Groupe d'études géopolitiques*. <https://geopolitique.eu/en/articles/transitional-justice-in-the-context-of-the-war-in-ukraine/>.

48 Jacobsen 2025 (*supra* note 36).

49 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, Law of Ukraine No. 4797-IX, *On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, Preventing and Countering Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Gender-Based Violence, and Other Offenses*, March 16, 2026, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4797-20#Text>.



Female members of the Ukrainian Army's 128th Carpathian Mountain Assault Brigade train in different combat scenarios, including various obstacles in simulated frontline as they prepare to deploy to the frontline in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine in July 2023. Over sixty thousand women, including military press officers, health specialists, and psychologists, are a part of the brigade. (Ercin Erturk / Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)

principles, while embedding gender responsiveness within the broader security response.

As the 2020-2025 NAP approached its conclusion, Ukraine launched an inclusive process to develop a third NAP for 2026-2030, ensuring that lessons from the full-scale war inform the next phase of WPS implementation.⁵⁰ In early 2025, the Ministry of Social Policy convened government officials, local authorities, women's CSOs, and international partners to define priorities, continuing and deepening the collaborative approach established during the 2022 NAP update. As of February 2026, public discussions on the draft NAP have been completed.⁵¹ The emerging strategic goals signal a forward-looking agenda focused on women's equal participation in security and recovery decisionmaking; gender-responsive threat identification, response, and prevention; comprehensive post-conflict recovery; and strengthened protections for CRSV survivors.⁵²

Throughout the war, international partnerships were central to sustaining and reorienting Ukraine's WPS agenda under wartime pressure. With EU-backed funding, the U.N. supported urgent CRSV responses through technical and analytical assistance, while the EU and NATO increasingly framed Ukraine's gender reforms as integral to Euro-Atlantic integration.⁵³ Gender mainstreaming is now a formal requirement in Ukraine's EU accession process, and NATO has both supported gender adviser training in Ukraine and drawn lessons from Ukrainian servicewomen into its own WPS policy development.⁵⁴ At the same time, it should be noted that NATO's own recent WPS policy and engagement has become uneven, with persistent gaps in accountability, gender-disaggregated data, and the integration of WPS into the alliance's response to Russia's war against Ukraine.⁵⁵ Bilateral donors and international CSOs, however, have been funding a range of WPS initiatives, with a growing emphasis on localization.⁵⁶ A defining feature of this period has been the reliance on women-led civil society as implementing partners, reflecting the maturation of Ukraine's domestic WPS capacity and the recognition that sustaining progress depends on leveraging this expertise.⁵⁷

During the full-scale war, the WPS agenda has undergone a transition from gradual institutionalization to an accelerated adaptation. Political will intensified, donor engagement scaled up (albeit somewhat unevenly), and institutional capacity was both stress-tested and strengthened under extreme pressure. As Ukraine prepares to adopt a new NAP for 2026-2030, and, prospectively, a transition from active hostilities toward peace, the institutional shifts achieved during the full-scale war provide a resilient foundation for continued WPS implementation. At the same time, the next iteration of WPS implementation will face two interconnected emerging challenges. The first is financial: Sustaining WPS mechanisms in a context where international donor support gradually declines will require greater reliance on domestic institutional capacity and on nationally owned financing and implementation models. The second is normative and political: In the international system, WPS deprioritization and backlash, including declining investment in women peacebuilders, limited women's participation in peace talks, and uneven implementation within multilateral security institutions, have risen. This

50 Kurinna 2025 (note *supra* 22).

51 Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine. 2026. *Report on the Results of the Public Discussion of the Draft Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace, Security" for the Period up to 2030 and the Plan of Measures for Its Implementation in 2026-2030."* Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, January 30, 2026. <https://www.msp.gov.ua/legislation/regulatory-framework/regulatory-framework-259>.

52 Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine 2025 (supra note 29).

53 Ukraine Joint Programme on CRSV (supra note 41).

54 Ukraine Inclusive Recovery Brief 2023 (supra note 40).

55 Cegielski, P.A. "A La Carte Feminism: The Limits of NATO's WPS Commitments in a Time of Crisis." *Small Wars Journal*, January 13, 2026. <https://smallwarsjournal.com/2026/01/13/a-la-carte-feminism/>.

56 UNFPA 2022 (supra note 43).

57 Santoire 2025 (supra note 3).

creates a deeper constraint for Ukraine's WPS agenda, as the country seeks to consolidate gender-responsive reforms even as some international actors narrow or weaken their own commitments to gender equality in peace and security.⁵⁸

WPS and EU Integration

Advancing the objectives of the WPS agenda aligns with integrating European standards on gender equality, human rights, and security sector reform into Ukrainian national policy. As such, promoting the WPS agenda reinforces Ukraine's commitments under the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement and supports the broader path toward EU integration. Specifically, the implementation of the WPS agenda is closely linked to several sections of the Association Agreement, including Chapter 1 (General Principles), Chapter 5 (Cooperation in the Field of Employment, Social Policy, and Equal Opportunities), Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), and Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom, and Security).

Chapter 1 enshrines fundamental values such as respect for human rights, nondiscrimination, democracy, and the rule of law, providing the overarching framework for all national policies. Chapter 5 obliges Ukraine to advance gender equality and promote equal opportunities in social, economic, and employment policies, creating a supportive framework for women's empowerment. Chapter 23 establishes standards for an independent judiciary, human rights protection, and nondiscrimination, providing the legal basis for protecting women and ensuring their participation in peace and security processes. And Chapter 24 focuses on reforming law enforcement and security institutions, preventing violence, and integrating women into security structures. By aligning its WPS NAP with these principles, Ukraine ensures that gender equality, the protection of women's rights, and their full participation in peace and security processes are not only national priorities but also consistent with European standards, which is a key aspect of European integration.

Pursuant to the 2025 Rule of Law Roadmap for Ukraine defining the specific steps the country must take to achieve EU integration, Ukraine has committed to introducing an effective mechanism in the first quarter of 2026 to guarantee the equal participation of women and men in peacebuilding and post-conflict recovery.⁵⁹ This entails approving the WPS NAP through 2030, with the aim of creating conditions to ensure the equal participation of women and men in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, recovery processes, responses to security challenges, and the systematic prevention of GBV and conflict-related violence. In February 2026, Ukraine adopted the third NAP for the period until 2030.⁶⁰ In general, the draft document aims to ensure equal participation of women and men in decisionmaking on conflict prevention, security, and post-conflict recovery, establish a gender-sensitive system to identify and address security challenges, and apply a gender-responsive lens across policies and programs. It highlights the importance of addressing structural gender inequalities in education, childcare, and the labor market to unlock Ukraine's full human capital potential while promoting coordinated national and international action, including against CRSV. In particular, the Rule of Law roadmap lays out a section on "Gender Equality and Violence against Women," which is crucial for achieving the objectives of the third NAP for 2026-2030. This section emphasizes the need to establish effective

58 See Björkdahl, Annika, Jenny Lorentzen, and Inger Skjelsbæk, eds. *Backlash against the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: Contesting Gender Norms*. Cham: Springer, 2026. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-032-10853-1_Tabbush. Constanza. *Understanding Backlash against Gender Equality: Evidence, Trends and Policy Responses*. Edited by Laura Turquet. New York: UN Women and United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2025. <https://knowledge.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/09/understanding-backlash-against-gender-equality-evidence-trends-and-policy-responses>.

59 DPMO, Roadmap on the Rule of Law (*supra* note 55).

60 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. *Order No. 214-2026-r, On Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" for the Period until 2030*. March 2026. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/214-2026-%D1%80> (CMU, Draft Resolution on NAP until 2030).

“The NAPs’ intersectional lens and commitments to supporting women in the security sector were shaped by civil society advocacy and research that exposed systemic barriers and challenges across all aspects of WPS agenda implementation.”

national mechanisms that ensure equal rights and opportunities for men and women across all spheres of life, in line with the EU acquis and international standards, and protect individuals from GBV, including conflict-related and military-related violence, with guaranteed access to justice. The draft NAP highlights the response to CRSV, while a separate government framework addressing broader GBV is anticipated. Strengthening the capacity of law enforcement agencies to respond to cases of GBV and sexual harassment is also a key focus. Implementing the WPS agenda enables Ukraine to practically harmonize national standards of gender equality and human rights protection with European norms as a part of EU integration, and vice versa.

The Essential Role of Women’s Organizations and Women Leaders in WPS Implementation

Continuity of Leadership from 2014 to Today

Since the outbreak of the Russian armed aggression in 2014, Ukrainian women’s CSOs and women leaders have been at the forefront of national resilience and WPS implementation. They led frontline humanitarian efforts, filled critical gaps in service delivery, and steadily transitioned from crisis responders to institution-builders by shaping policies and strategic frameworks, forging coalitions, and ensuring that the WPS agenda took root in Ukraine’s institutions.⁶¹ While women-led CSOs were not always included in formal coordination mechanisms and at times faced stigmatization or limited access to decisionmaking, their influence is clearly visible in the development and content of Ukraine’s NAPs. All Ukrainian NAPs list civil society as implementing partners. Women’s groups have also played a critical role in data collection, public education, and monitoring. Their impact is substantive: The NAPs’ intersectional lens and commitments to supporting women in the security sector were shaped by civil society advocacy and research that exposed systemic barriers and challenges across all aspects of WPS agenda implementation. Thus, despite structural constraints during the initial phases, the active and independent engagement of women’s organizations has laid a strong foundation for the transformative implementation of the WPS agenda in Ukraine.⁶² Today, Ukrainian women’s organizations are widely recognized as institutional actors operating across local, national, and international arenas. They often serve as a bridge between communities and the state, implementing on the ground while also holding officials accountable to national and international WPS commitments.⁶³

Influence on Policy and Global Advocacy

Ukrainian women’s organizations and female leaders have also become pivotal voices in international forums, shaping global agendas and donor engagement in line with WPS principles. Since 2014, Ukrainian women have sought inclusion in peace negotiations and justice processes. For example, the inclusion of two Ukrainian women in the Trilateral Contact Group’s working subgroups on humanitarian and political issues in 2016 set a modest but important precedent. After the full-scale invasion, formal negotiations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation held in Belarus and Türkiye in March 2022 were limited in scope, sporadic, and ultimately stalled. Notably, women were largely absent from official delegations and core decision-making structures in these processes, reflecting the continued marginalization of gender considerations in high-level wartime diplomacy.⁶⁴

61 Council on Foreign Relations. 2020. “Ukraine | Women’s Participation in Peace Processes.” <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/ukraine/> (Council on Foreign Relations 2020).

62 Kähkönen 2025, pp. 2035-2024 (*supra* note 12).

63 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

64 Dickinson, Peter. “Putin’s 2022 Peace Proposal Was a Blueprint for the Destruction of Ukraine.” Atlantic Council, March 28, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/putins-2022-peace-proposal-was-a-blueprint-for-the-destruction-of-ukraine/>

Subsequent efforts to revive negotiations, mostly advanced through the U.S.-led mediation, have been forced to prioritize reaching a rapid political settlement through security and territorial trade-offs, despite a highly constrained and politically sensitive negotiating environment.⁶⁵ This has increased pressure on Ukraine to engage with a transactional model of peacemaking, while broader elements of a just and sustainable peace, including women's participation, gender-sensitive approaches, and accountability for conflict-related harms, have remained largely absent from the negotiation agenda. These dynamics reflect wider new trends in the external context for WPS. Shifts in the policy priorities of key international partners, including the United States,⁶⁶ have contributed to a more uncertain and less supportive environment for gender perspectives. Although multilateral institutions continue formally to endorse WPS, uneven implementation and signs of deprioritization have made it more difficult for Ukraine to advance gender-sensitive approaches to peace and security at the international level, even as domestic WPS implementation has continued to progress.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian civil society continued to press for a gender-responsive approach to any peace settlement and women's inclusion in any future peace talks. For instance, JurFem, the Ukrainian Women Fund, and the Gender Commissioner co-organized a high-level strategic consultation in October 2025 focused on enhancing women's participation in building a sustainable and just peace. The event convened representatives from the security and defense sectors, government institutions, and civil society to develop concrete proposals to increase women's participation in negotiations and recovery efforts. The recommendations have been shared with national authorities and international partners as a foundation for any future peace process but have yet to be substantively implemented.⁶⁷ The Women's Information Consultative Center sent open letters to both President Zelenskyy and negotiators in 2025, urging women's representation at the peace table and a gender-sensitive agenda in talks.⁶⁸ This advocacy reflects a broader trend of recognizing that a lasting peace must reflect the voices of women peacebuilders from conflict-affected regions and not just "traditional" high-level actors, which often translates into male-only peace negotiators.⁶⁹

On the global stage, Ukrainian women leaders – including civil society experts to members of parliament and government officials – have become advocates for the WPS agenda.⁷⁰ They have engaged U.N. forums and international initiatives to rally support for Ukraine and for women's rights. Ukraine's female officials and activists often work in tandem, exemplifying a "whole-of-society" diplomacy. One example is Ukraine's representation at the annual U.N.'s annual Commission on the Status of Women sessions, where government representatives and civil society work in synergy to advocate for Ukraine's needs on the global stage.⁷¹ In another example, in late 2025, a Ukrainian delegation of women activists and officials advocated at the U.K. Parliament and the Foreign Office for directing frozen Russian assets toward survivor reparations and rejecting any peace deal amnesty for perpetrators

65 Gozzi, Laura. "Difficult' Russia-Ukraine Peace Talks End Without Breakthrough." *BBC News*, February 18, 2026. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0k1xj0d708o>.

66 The White House, "Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government," January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/defending-women-from-gender-ideology-extremism-and-restoring-biological-truth-to-the-federal-government/>.

67 JurFem. 2025. "Strategic Consultations: Enhancing the Participation of Women in the Process of Achieving a Sustainable and Just Peace." October 13. <https://jurfem.com.ua/en/strategic-consultations-enhancing-the-participation-of-women-in-the-process-of-achieving-a-sustainable-and-just-peace/>.

68 Women's Information Consultative Center. 2025. "Negotiated Process—Advocacy for Inclusion of the WPS Agenda." August 7. <https://www.wicc.net.ua/en/post/negotiated-process---advocacy-for-inclusion-of-wps-agenda/>.

69 Ibid.

70 Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2015. "Need for Women to Be Included in Conflict Prevention and Resolution Processes Stressed at OSCE-Supported Workshop in Ukraine." OSCE, April 24. <https://www.osce.org/secretariat/153321>.

71 United Nations. 2025. *Building Back Better: Gender-Sensitive and Inclusive Post-War Recovery in Ukraine* [Concept note]. March 7. https://unwlostorage.blob.core.windows.net/csw/55edc760-94bb-4e56-bbe3-4dc3dd110d52_Final%20draft%20Concept%20Note%20Side%20event%20march%20%20Recovery_07.03.2025.pdf.

of CRSV crimes.⁷² This cooperation often extends across political divides. Examples include Ukraine's cross-party parliamentary gender caucus "Equal Opportunities,"⁷³ advocacy for the cross-faction law on urgent interim reparations for CRSV survivors,⁷⁴ and advocacy work through the Ukrainian Women's Congress.⁷⁵ This kind of diplomacy and campaigning around women's rights illustrates the power of an issue-based coalition model rather than party-bound advocacy.

Such advocacy has elevated Ukraine as a norm-setter in the WPS field, highlighting the role of Ukrainian women as agents crafting solutions in the midst of active conflict. It has also begun to shift donor engagement. Women's organizations have argued to international partners that funding must reach local women-led groups on the ground, rather than large international organizations. Yet, challenges remain: Despite their outsized impact, Ukrainian women's organizations remain severely underfunded within the international aid architecture for Ukraine. Recent data cited by U.N. Women and partners show that only 14% of official development assistance to Ukraine in 2022–2023 included gender equality objectives, while less than 1% of funding went to projects directly targeting gender equality.⁷⁶ There is a persistent gap between donor rhetoric and practice, as local women's CSOs "statistically suffer greater funding scarcity" even as they carry out critical, risk-heavy work in war zones.⁷⁷ Bridging this gap is essential to sustain women's contributions going forward.

Women at the Center of Recovery and Peacebuilding

Perhaps most importantly, the continuous engagement of women's organizations since 2014 has laid the groundwork for a more inclusive peace and reconstruction process in Ukraine. As the country looks toward eventual recovery, women's groups and leaders are some of the key architects of Ukraine's future.⁷⁸ They bring years of experience in community dialogue, justice advocacy, and rebuilding livelihoods. For instance, throughout the war, networks of women lawyers and human rights defenders, including JurFem, have meticulously documented atrocities, laying the legal groundwork for war crimes prosecutions and truth-telling.⁷⁹ Their work directly informs peacebuilding, ensuring that justice for victims and survivors and accountability for offenders remain nonnegotiable pillars of any peace agreement.

Women's organizations are also helping shape Ukraine's postwar reconstruction vision to be more inclusive and equitable. In September 2023, women leaders in government, together with women activists, launched a Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusive Recovery to ensure that women at all levels participate in rebuilding plans.⁸⁰ In mid-2024, Ukrainian ministries, together with U.N. agencies and international partners, formed an

72 McMahon, Caitlin. 2025. "No Amnesty, No Silence: Ukrainian Women Urge Accountability for War-Time Sexual Violence." *Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security*, December 18. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/2025/12/18/no-amnesty-no-silence-ukrainian-women-urge-accountability-for-war-time-sexual-violence/>

73 Inter-Parliamentary Union. n.d. "Ukraine: Specialized Bodies." <https://data.ipu.org/parliament-UA/specialized-bodies-UA-LC-SB08/>

74 Ukrainian Women's Fund. 2025. "Maryna Bardina: New Law to Protect the Rights of CRSV Survivors since 2014." <https://uwf.org.ua/en/maryna-bardina-new-law-to-protect-the-rights-of-crsv-survivors-since-2014/>

75 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. 2025. «Ukrainian women have unique courage.» Deputy Speaker Olena Kondratiuk opened the Ukrainian Women's Congress. https://www.rada.gov.ua/en/news/News/top_news/267504.html

76 United Nations in Ukraine. "Major Funding Cuts Undermine the Ability of Ukraine's Women's Rights Organizations to Provide Humanitarian Aid at a Crucial Time of Insecurity." March 12, 2025. <https://ukraine.un.org/en/290757-major-funding-cuts-undermine-ability-ukraine%E2%80%99s-women%E2%80%99s-rights-organizations-provide>

77 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

78 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. 2025. "Ukraine — WPS Conflict Tracker." <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/conflict-tracker/country/ukraine/> (Georgetown Institute for WPS 2025).

79 European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine. 2024. "Specialisation Is Critically Important: Investigators and Prosecutors Handling CRSV Cases Should Not Simultaneously Deal with Other Categories of War Crimes." *EUAM Ukraine*, March 29. <https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/news/specialisation-is-critically-important-investigators-and-prosecutors-handling-crsv-cases-should-not-simultaneously-deal-with-other-categories-of-war-crimes/>

80 Platform for Ensuring Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery. n.d. "Platform for Ensuring Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery." *Ukrainian Women's Fund*. <https://genderplatform.org.ua/en/domashnya-storinka/>



KYIV, UKRAINE – JULY 12: Women prepare for a live-fire exercise on a training ground of one of the military battalions during the final testing of women's army combat uniforms in July 2023, in Kyiv. (Vitalii Nosach / Global Images Ukraine via Getty Images)

Alliance for Gender-Responsive Recovery to channel global support toward women's economic inclusion and community-level recovery projects.⁸¹ On the societal level, women activists are running public campaigns to shift attitudes and highlight women's roles in peace and security. For example, Ukraine's national Coalition 1325 of CSOs recently launched the "1325 Strengthens the Country" campaign to underscore the vital role of women's leadership in security, reconstruction, and violence prevention in Ukraine.⁸² Such initiatives reinforce the narrative that women's participation is a core component of national strength and postwar recovery.

Women veterans-turned-activists from the "Invisible Battalion" have broken gender barriers in the armed forces and are now prominent in veteran reintegration and demining efforts.⁸³ International compacts and policy forums – from the U.N. Security Council to donor conferences – now frequently cite Ukrainian women's 10-point Compact for Ukraine's Just and Sustainable Peace that safeguards human security and gender equality.⁸⁴ These efforts are gradually shifting the peacebuilding landscape.

High Level of WPS Localization: Role of Municipalities and Community-Level Adaptation

Regional and Local Action Plans on WPS

The territory of Ukraine is divided into 24 oblasts, two cities (Kyiv and Sevastopol) with special status, and one autonomous republic (Crimea). During 2014-2020, Ukraine underwent an active phase of administrative-territorial reform known as "decentralization reform." In essence, this involved the transfer of significant policymaking powers to the local level, referred to as "territorial communities," which are groupings of cities and villages with wide decision-making discretion and authority. These completely new units of the administrative-territorial structure appeared in Ukraine through the voluntary

81 Council on Foreign Relations 2020 (*supra* note 66).

82 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

83 German Marshall Fund of the United States. 2025. "No Longer Invisible: How a Veterans Organization Is Securing a Place for Women in Ukraine's Armed Forces." <https://www.gmfus.org/no-longer-invisible-how-veterans-organization-securing-place-women-ukraines-armed-forces>.

84 Georgetown Institute for WPS 2025 (*supra* note 78).

unification of territories subordinate to different local government bodies

While the number and borders of the oblasts in Ukraine did not change, the role of these regions shifted from main administrators of state policy for local self-government to facilitators and coordinators helping implement the framework established by the central government, as local communities gained broad authority and flexibility in developing their own approaches to implementing the national framework.

The implementation of the first and second WPS NAPs coincided with this period of active formation of a new administrative-territorial structure and changes in the decision-making process. The need for reform in Ukraine was linked, in particular, to its large territory and the significant population dispersed across it. Therefore, innovating and localizing RAPs was a response to existing logistical needs and operational challenges in the context of implementing the NAP, as with any other state policies. Regional-level actors participated in various activities organized by the Ministry of Social Policy and international organizations to ensure quality implementation.⁸⁵ These activities in 2017 were called a “globally innovative step.”⁸⁶

By late 2017, 16 of the 24 oblasts had adopted their own WPS RAPs, with more to follow. Twenty-two regional administrations and Kyiv localized and adopted action plans until the end of 2021. Even communities in the embattled Donetsk, Luhansk, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, which were considered close to the combat zone at that time, adopted 26 local action plans.⁸⁷ By the end of 2025, all oblasts had developed their own RAPs. The Donetsk and Luhansk regional administrations, currently operating remotely due to Russian occupation, have approved and are implementing activities related to the WPS agenda.

RAPs differ from NAPs in that they take into account specific security risks and social challenges in different regions of Ukraine, including proximity to combat zones, concentration of IDPs, level of infrastructure destruction, and other detailed considerations. RAPs are also a key reference point for local communities when developing their own action plans. At the same time, the development and implementation of Local Action Plans (LAPs), which occur at the level of territorial communities, is not yet widespread. Communities in each region have adopted a LAP, or the plan for implementing the RAP. However, the coverage of such measures is uneven and depends on many factors, especially awareness by local authorities of the WPS agenda and their interest in implementing specific WPS-related activities.

While the Cabinet of Ministers⁸⁸ recommends that local-level authorities implement the NAP, it is not mandatory. Thus, local authorities can independently determine the priorities and scope of activities to be implemented. At the same time, for the regional administrations of oblasts, the development and implementation of RAPs is obligatory.

An analysis of RAP implementation reports and most available LAPs leaves no doubt about the leading role of women’s CSOs and Coalitions 1325 in each region. They cover a significant portion of the activities mandated by the WPS NAP and are widely included as implementers in regional and local plans.

It is also important to note that the activities planned in the RAPs must cover all the strategic objectives of the NAP. It often leads to wholesale copying from the NAP rather than adapting to the specific needs and challenges of the

85 OSCE and Inclusive Security Support 2017 (*supra* note 24).

86 OSCE and Inclusive Security Support 2017 (*supra* note 24).

87 UN Women Ukraine. n.d. “Women, Peace, and Security.” <https://ukraine.unwomen.org/en/shcho-my-robymo/zhinky-myr-ta-bezpeka>.

88 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2020. *National Action Plan for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” for the Period until 2025*. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua> (CMU, NAP 1325 until 2025).

regions. At the same time, at the local level, activities are more often focused on specific areas, such as humanitarian response, the development of services for survivors of GBV, participation in training on the implementation of gender equality principles, and conflict resolution.⁸⁹

At the end of 2022, in response to the full-scale war, the Ukrainian government adjusted the NAP, in particular to expand the range of key target groups.⁹⁰ As a result, many people in vulnerable situations who had not previously been visible in the document (e.g., military families and former prisoners of war) became the focus of activities. This also significantly expanded the range of humanitarian response measures, most of which are implemented at the local level and were included in the LAPs. Issues surrounding CRSV response were also added to the NAP, as a significant number of such cases became known.^{91,92}

Reports on the implementation of RAPs usually contain data on both regional- and community-level activities. The regional level usually has more opportunities for interagency coordination, as it can more actively seek to involve departments of various entities from the security and defense sectors that are not subordinate to the regional level but are usually interested in effective cooperation. Often, entities from the national security and defense branches have their own action plans, but their regional offices are not always aware of such commitments. This usually applies to the police, the prosecutor's office, defense education institutions, the State Emergency Service, the migration service, and sometimes military units, if they decide to develop cooperation in this area.

As of early February 2026, public discussions on the new draft NAP for 2026-2030 have been completed,⁹³ and it was adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on Feb. 25.⁹⁴ Before that, based on the draft NAP, a training session organized by the Gender Commissioner, the Ministry of Social Policy, and the Ukrainian Women's Fund was held in January 2026 to update the RAPs and prepare for their subsequent adoption and implementation.

The development of a new NAP and its localization may provide an opportunity to address the challenges and shortcomings. For example, these include the often symbolic status of RAPs, as well as the low adaptability of the measures included in NAPs to be able to address the real challenges or needs of people in different oblasts.⁹⁵

89 Ukrainian Women's Fund, and UK Government. 2025. *Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Opportunities for Improving Ukraine's National Action Plan on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. Kyiv: EU Neighbours East, May 2. https://euneighbourseast.eu/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/1325_analysis.pdf, p. 29 (UWF and UK Government 2025).

90 CMU, NAP 1325 until 2025 (*supra* note 95).

91 European Union Advisory Mission Ukraine. 2024. "UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security 1325 Twenty-Five Years On: What Does It Mean for Ukraine?" *EUAM Ukraine*, May 2. <https://www.euam-ukraine.eu/ua/news/un-security-council-resolution-on-women-peace-and-security-1325-twenty-five-years-on-what-does-it-mean-for-ukraine> (EUAM 2024).

92 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2025. "Kateryna Levchenko Participates in Strategic Meeting of Regional Coalitions 1325 'Women, Peace, Security,'" *Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine*, August 15. <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/kateryna-levchenko-vziala-uchast-u-stratehichnii-zustrichi-oblasnykh-koalitsii-1325-zhinky-my-Bezpeka> (CMU, Strategic Meeting of Regional Coalitions 1325 'Women, Peace, Security, 2025).

93 Ministry of Social Policy, Family and Unity of Ukraine. 2026. *Report on the Results of the Public Discussion of the Draft Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 'Women, Peace, Security' for the Period up to 2030 and the Plan of Measures for Its Implementation in 2026-2030"*. Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine, January 30. <https://www.msp.gov.ua/legislation/regulatory-framework/regulatory-framework-259>.

94 Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. 2026. *Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 'Women, Peace, Security' for the Period up to 2030 and the Plan of Measures for Its Implementation in 2026-2030"*. Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/214-2026-%D1%80#Text>

95 UWF and UK Government 2025 (*supra* note 96).

“When women are actively and meaningfully involved in responding to conflict, it leads to effective leadership and greater efficiency.”

A significant barrier to the effective implementation of the WPS agenda across Ukraine is identifying the entity coordinating these efforts. At the national level, the coordinating function is performed by the Ministry of Social Policy, which creates challenges in establishing that WPS should also be part of Ukraine’s security policy. There is a tendency for regional and local coordination structures to be determined in the same way. At the local level, WPS is often integrated into, for example, the youth department or child welfare service, making it difficult to achieve full localization and implement many of the key provisions of the agenda.

Practical Impact at Local Level

Status of women’s participation in decision-making process in implementation of the WPS agenda

A significant challenge that may hinder the effective implementation of NAP or RAP measures is the dependence on the quality, resources, and capacity of local women’s organizations. This component can be both an advantage and a weakness. Implementing public policy must primarily be the responsibility of government authorities; however, in Ukraine, civil society often implements important reforms while the government participates and follows the path established by the women-led CSOs. This has created inconsistent local implementation that relies heavily on local women’s organizations and often places undue pressure on them.⁹⁶

The situation regarding women’s presence in decision-making processes has changed given the conditions of the full-scale war. Many women fled with their children and families in the early days of the war.⁹⁷ However, evidence indicates that women are actively involved in community management processes across the country and that the greater the proportion of women involved, the more effective the management. As of the end of 2024, the deputy prime minister’s office reported that women held approximately 35% of leadership positions at the local level and 41.3% in communities with populations under 10,000.⁹⁸ However, these data are based on the 2020 elections, and it is difficult to assess their current relevance. Finally, in 2025, the composition of the government changed, and women took over the posts of prime minister and two deputy prime ministers.⁹⁹

When women are actively and meaningfully involved in responding to conflict, it leads to effective leadership and greater efficiency. For example, First Deputy Minister for Development of Communities and Territories of Ukraine Alyona Shkrum stated that “according to statistics, communities with a higher proportion of female deputies submit more projects for recovery and are more likely to receive funding.”¹⁰⁰ Out of 40 communities that were occupied or affected by hostilities, only 13 have women leading their recovery working groups.¹⁰¹ The study, led by the CSO Common Good, describes numerous

96 Kurinna 2025 (*supra* note 23).

97 Harasym, Andrii. 2024. “The System of Permits for Travel Abroad for Deputies of Different Levels and Officials Harms Democracy and Western Support for Ukraine.” *Texty.org.ua*, February 20. <https://texty.org.ua/articles/111812/systema-do-zvoliv-na-vyizd-deputativ-riznyh-rivniv-i-chynovnykiv-za-kordon-shkodyt-demokratyi-i-zahidnij-pidtrymci-ukrayiny/>; Latysh, Iryna. 2023. “Граблі Шмигалья: Як Працює Заборона на Перетин Кордону для Місцевих Депутатів? [Shmyhal’s Rake: How the Ban on Crossing the Border for Local Deputies Works].” *CHESNO*, April 10. <https://www.chesno.org/post/5578/>.

98 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine. 2026. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/UA.EUNATO/posts/pfbid0Ptc5Nkj8bEvpmjJo6MJXDDn6ey6E15i961ppPVGmhNRPsNBwooihH5nGqpcCSd32I>; Ukrainian Women’s Fund. 2025. *Gender Equality Index in Ukraine: Kyiv – 2025*. Kyiv: Ukrainian Women’s Fund. https://uwf.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/gender_index_05_2025_eng_web.pdf.

99 Romanenko, Valentyna, and Anhelina Strashkulych. 2025. “Zelenskyy Presents New Government to Ruling Party.” *Ukrainska Pravda*, July 16. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/07/16/7522077/>.

100 Mosorko, Anastasiia. 2025. “How Women Are Transforming Culture, the Economy, and Politics in the Regions.” *Ukrainska Pravda – Life*, April 6. <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/yak-zhinki-transformuyut-kulturu-ekonomiku-i-politiku-v-regionah-307342/> (Mosorko 2025).

101 Common Good. 2025. *Women’s Dimension of Recovery: Analytical Report*. Ukrainian Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery. https://genderplatform.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/zvit_zhinochij-vimir-vidnovlennya-splina-korist.pdf, p. 16 (Common Good, *Women’s Dimension of Recovery*, 2025).

challenges, including a low level of community readiness to fully organize the processes for conflict resilience. The challenges associated with women's participation in conflict recovery include a lack of resources to set their own agenda, lack of political weight, lack of supporters, and pressure from colleagues who promote their own interests. The role of women leaders is rarely highlighted when it comes to the successes of the community due to patriarchal and conservative societal structures in Ukraine.^{102,103,104}

In many communities near to the front line, governance is exercised not through traditional governing bodies but through military administrations. Community leaders are most often appointed as heads of local military administrations. However, this means that governance is carried out not through a collective body like a council, but only through militarized executive bodies. Even when the community leader is a man, women are often appointed to positions as heads of departments, municipal enterprises, and similar roles in recognition of the effectiveness of their work.^{105,106,107}

Role of Coalitions 1325 in implementing the WPS agenda

Coalitions 1325 often provide significant support to local women leaders. At the regional and local levels, the number of women leaders is limited. The groups began to be established in 2018 with support from the Ukrainian Women's Fund and were created by and with the involvement of the most active women in the region. Often, these women were already united in working groups or were members of Interagency Coordination Councils on Combating GBV and Human Trafficking, which operate at the regional level and in most communities. The creation of the Coalitions 1325 was a natural extension of the sphere of interest of local women leaders, with the possibility of also involving actors who do not work in the field of combating GBV or human trafficking, whose participation is important in implementing the WPS agenda. (e.g., the State Emergency Service or departments of the law enforcement agencies specializing in war crimes, etc.). Coalition meetings are often held following Coordination Council meetings, which are designed to facilitate local coordination among all agencies responsible for responding to domestic violence.¹⁰⁸ This activity is also typically closely linked to the activities of IDP Councils within regional or local government bodies. Regional authorities and the national government generally highly value the effectiveness of the coalitions' activities.¹⁰⁹

In 2025, a separate website was created by the Ukrainian Women's Fund to track the current situation regarding all RAPs, the activities of Coalitions 1325, and other relevant news.¹¹⁰ The main tasks of the coalitions are

102 Ukrainian Decentralization Portal. 2024. "Leadership of Women Drives the Country: A Series of Inspiring Quotes from Women Heads of Hromadas." *Decentralization.ua*, March 7. <https://decentralization.ua/news/17771>.

103 Ukrainian Civil Society Platform (Hromads'kyi Prostir). 2026. "Women Sustain Communities, but Who Will Support Them? Research Findings in Kyiv and Chernihiv Regions." *Hromads'kyi Prostir*, January 14. <https://www.prostir.ua/?news=zhinky-trymayut-hromady-a-hto-pidtrymaje-jih-rezultaty-doslidzhennya-v-kyivskij-ta-chernihivskij-oblastyah>.

104 Zaporizhzhia City Council. 2026. "Implementing the 'Strength of Women' Program." *Zaporizhzhia City Council*, January 5. <https://zp.gov.ua/news/284509-realizujemo-programu-sila-zinok>.

105 Common Good, *Women's Dimension of Recovery*, 2025 (*supra* note 110).

106 Mosorko 2025 (*supra* note 109).

107 Association of Ukrainian Cities. 2024. "Ukrainian Municipalities Promote Entrepreneurship and International Business Cooperation." *Association of Ukrainian Cities*, August 27. <https://www.auc.org.ua/novyna/ukrainian-municipalities-promote-entrepreneurship-and-international-business-cooperation>.

108 Department of Family, Youth, and Sport of the Chernihiv Regional State Administration. 2026. "Meeting of the Interagency Council on Family, Gender Equality, and Prevention of Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking." *Department of Family, Youth, and Sport of the Chernihiv Regional State Administration*, January. <https://dsms.cg.gov.ua/index.php?id=493548&tp=0>.

109 CMU, Strategic Meeting of Regional Coalitions 1325 'Women, Peace, Security', 2025 (*supra* note 99).

110 National Action Plan 1325. 2026. "National Action Plan 1325: Women, Peace and Security in Ukraine." *Ukrainian Women's Fund*. <https://1325ukraine.org.ua/en/home/>.



Volunteers of the U.S.-based food charity World Central Kitchen distribute hot meal to local residents in a residential area of Kyiv that had been left without electricity and water due to Russian strikes on Jan. 22, 2026. (Sergei Gapon / AFP via Getty Images)

localizing the NAP, coordination, promoting the ideas of UNSCR 1325, and monitoring activities. Coalitions are managed by secretariats, which in most oblasts are represented by the leaders of the most prominent local women's organizations.

Gender Commissioner Kateryna Levchenko noted that monitoring showed that in 2024, 1,911 programmatic initiatives were implemented, with over 836 million hryvnia (more than \$18 million) mobilized. Coalitions 1325 accounted for nearly a quarter of all activities (23.4%).¹¹¹ Natalia Karbowska, director of the Ukrainian Women's Fund, mentioned that in 2024, Coalitions 1325 secured 85.4 million hryvnia (\$1.9 million) in funding.¹¹² In general, the coalitions secured over 61% of the total funding mobilized.¹¹³ However, high effectiveness and the ability to drive the process can also create a situation in which regional and local authorities will never become capable of leading the implementation of the WPS agenda, instead leaving this work to the coalitions.

Experts from the Women's Information Consultative Center stress the need to develop the institutional capacity of regional administrations to implement their RAPs, including through joint planning, implementation, monitoring, and reporting.¹¹⁴

The composition of Coalitions 1325 and the activities they promote often depend on the oblast's location and the active positions of various actors. For example, the Coalition in Zhytomyr oblast has effective cooperation with the regional police and the military institute located in Zhytomyr.¹¹⁵ Therefore, many educational and promotional events related to the WPS agenda are held in the region with a variety of actors. Effective coordination with the oblast administration¹¹⁶ makes it possible to effectively localize activities in smaller towns and communities.¹¹⁷

WPS Implementation on the Front Line and in Liberated Areas

The implementation of all WPS NAPs in Ukraine followed the dynamics and developments in Russia's aggression toward the country over the past 12 years. The full-scale invasion led to increased activities at the local level. Most of those measures were aimed at responding to and overcoming the consequences of the hostilities. The form and substance of these measures differed among the regions far from the front lines, those that had just been de-occupied, and those close to the zone of active hostilities.

For example, part of the Donetsk oblast has been occupied since 2014. Despite that, in the part of the region still under the control of the Ukrainian government, there was an active implementation of the WPS agenda through a mixture of RAPs and LAPs. For example, in Kramatorsk (one of the biggest cities of Donetsk oblast), the regional Coalition 1325 "made sure all kindergartens have shelters, and all teachers have security trainings."¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the Coalition worked to open a gynecological clinic there to serve survivors of CRSV.

111 CMU, Strategic Meeting of Regional Coalitions 1325 'Women, Peace, Security, 2025 (supra note 99).

112 Day, *Ukrainian Women's Fund Presented the Results of Its Four-Year Project*. Day (Kyiv), September 19, 2025. <https://day.kyiv.ua/news/190925-ukrainskyy-zhinochyy-fond-predstavyy-rezultaty-chotyryrichnoho-proyektu-z-vykonannya>

113 CMU, Strategic Meeting of Regional Coalitions 1325 'Women, Peace, Security, 2025 (supra note 99).

114 UWF and UK Government 2025, (supra note 96).

115 Land Forces of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. 2026. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/UAFandForces/posts/pfbid02ae6A8oMwryM6RBJ1awEaWVxuRasVKzCihDhzSugKWf4xNyCqpbNjKRK12t8DhsNv>.

116 Zhytomyr Regional State Administration. 2025. "Campaign '1325 Strengthens the Country' Helps Us Build a More Just and Resilient Society." *Zhytomyr Regional State Administration*, October 3. <https://oda.zht.gov.ua/news/kampaniya-1325-zmitsnyuye-krayinu-dopomagaye-nam-buduvaty-bilsh-spravedlyve-i-stijke-suspilstvo-viktor-gradivskij/>.

117 Koalitsiya "Zhytomyrshchyna-1325." 2026. Facebook. https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=pfbid037Aih5BUV7XZ1BXQUiPciifguDWPudk83SHyRb4aT64MAaiDHxCe9rM2oXijRbdG5I&id=61581599851046.

118 EUAM 2024 (supra note 98).

Neighboring Luhansk oblast had also been partially occupied since 2014, but in 2022 it was fully occupied by Russia. Nevertheless, in 2023, Luhansk's RAP was updated, and various actors are trying to help the region's residents, even ones now located in other regions or even countries. For example, families of prisoners of war and families of persons forcibly deported to the Russian Federation, as well as survivors of CRSV, appeared in the target groups of the RAP.¹¹⁹ The implementers of the Luhansk RAP have identified the following priorities: establishing a reserve of specialists, forming mobile teams ready to work in the de-occupied territories, and developing a network of specialized services.¹²⁰ These priorities are followed not only by the relocated oblast administration but also by the relocated local administrations trying to maintain contact with their residents.¹²¹

In Kharkiv oblast, near the front line, the regional Coalition 1325 coordinates, monitors, and disseminates best practices of the WPS agenda implementation while actively publicizing its activities. For example, at one coalition meeting, the results of security audits in individual communities were discussed.¹²² The active promotion of Kharkiv's Coalition 1325 can help other communities adopt similar practices even if they lack funding. The official report of the regional administration on the implementation of their RAP in 2024 shows that the role of the Coalition 1325 and civil society organizations was critical to the implementation of most measures (such as conducting training on WPS, conducting gender audits at various institutions, humanitarian response, etc.).¹²³

Kherson oblast was largely occupied at the beginning of 2022, but Ukrainian forces retook half of the region by the end of 2022. Now the front line runs along the Dnipro River, and one entire bank of the oblast remains occupied. In Kherson oblast, the role of the Coalition 1325 remains crucial for the implementation of most measures.¹²⁴ In addition, the ability of women's civil society organizations, united in the coalition, to respond quickly to challenges is also useful in emergencies. For example, in August 2025, Russian troops attacked a road bridge in Kherson city, almost cutting off the Korabely district from the rest of the community. This neighborhood had already been partially flooded as a result of the destruction of the Kakhovka hydroelectric power plant in 2023. The coalition's coordination platform significantly facilitated both the evacuation of civilians from dangerous areas and the provision of assistance (humanitarian aid, resettlement, transportation).^{125,126}

Chernihiv oblast was partially occupied in February 2022 during the Russians' attempt to capture Kyiv, but it had been liberated by April 2022. At the same time, Chernihiv, which among all regions shares the longest border with Russia and Belarus, is constantly targeted by artillery shelling. However, the region adopted a new RAP in June 2023 and views its implementation as an opportunity to influence access to housing, medical and social services,

119 Luhansk Regional State Administration. 2023. "Updated Action Plan for the Implementation of UNSC Resolution 1325 'Women, Peace and Security' in Luhansk Region Includes Five Strategic Goals, 13 Operational Goals, 18 Tasks, and 73 Activities." *Luhansk Regional State Administration*, June 26. https://lova.gov.ua/oda/press/news/katerina_bezginska_onovleniy_plan_diy_z_vikonannya_rezolyuciyi_radi_bezpeki_oon_1325#.

120 Ibid.

121 Rubizhne City Military Administration. 2025. "Women, Peace, Security' Campaign Highlights the Role of Women and Men in Community Recovery, Safety, and Development." *Rubizhne City Military Administration*, September 21. <https://rmva.gov.ua/news/1758431328/>.

122 Coalition Kharkiv Region 1325. 2026. Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/kharkiv1325/posts/pfbid034LqifYDtrwMg4kdsdue6As2RCyP6YwpTHMwspE1TcXkR7yGiQUPub3FMXBDvDir/>.

123 Kharkiv Regional State Administration. 2025. *Report on the Implementation in 2024 of the Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the National Action Plan on UNSC Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" for the Period up to 2025*. Kharkiv Regional State Administration. https://kharkivoda.gov.ua/content/documents/1303/130299/Attaches/informatsiya_pro_vikonannya_regionalnogo_planu_zhinki_mi_bezpeka_za_2024_rik_1.pdf.

124 Kherson Regional State Administration. n.d. "Information on Women's Rights." *Kherson Regional State Administration*. <https://khoda.gov.ua/diialnist/sotsialna-sfera/informatsiya-pro-prava-zhinok>.

125 Kherson City Council. 2025. "Strategic Roundtable 'Kherson Region 1325: Results of Communication and Sustainability Strategy' Took Place in Kherson." *Kherson City Council*, October 31. <https://miskrada-ks.gov.ua/news/u-hersoni-vidbuvsya-strategichnyj-kruglyj-stil-hersonshhyna-1325-rezultaty-komunikaciyi-ta-strategiya-stalosti/>.

126 Kherson City Council. 2025. "In Kherson Region, the 'Women, Peace and Security' Communication Campaign Continued: Partnership with the 1325 Khersonshchyna Coalition." *Kherson City Council*, November 18. <https://miskrada-ks.gov.ua/news/u-herson-ye-partnerom-kemerciesoalicyji-1325-hersonshhyna/>.

infrastructure restoration, and availability of shelter for residents.¹²⁷ Officials note that most of the funds for these services come from donors, and the Coalition 1325 plays an active role in securing the funding.¹²⁸

Thus, examples from frontline regions demonstrate that the effective local implementation of the WPS agenda is an integral part of an effective response to the consequences of conflict in affected communities. Furthermore, it is often the gender perspective applied by Coalition 1325 groups that helps ameliorate negative consequences.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM UKRAINE'S WARTIME IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPS AGENDA

1 CRISIS CAN CATALYZE WPS INSTITUTIONALIZATION IF POLITICAL WILL EXISTS

Lessons Learned

Ukraine's implementation of the WPS agenda during sustained Russian armed aggression offers a rare example of institutionalization, regionalization, and localization under conditions of ongoing war. Unlike postconflict adopters of UNSCR 1325, Ukraine operationalized WPS while simultaneously restructuring its security, justice, and governance systems under existential threat. This produced accelerated institutional change, uneven but meaningful localization, and structured state-civil society integration. It also revealed structural vulnerabilities relevant to other conflict-affected states. The Ukrainian example suggests several analytically significant lessons for governments, multilateral institutions, donors, and WPS implementing partners.

Ukraine's initial engagement with WPS stemmed from emergency mobilization in 2014, driven by civil society, reform-oriented political actors, and supportive international partners after Russia's invasion of Ukraine and illegal occupation and attempted annexation of parts of Ukrainian territory, including Crimea. Institutionalization accelerated only when these actors translated crisis urgency into structural reforms, including the gradual progression of NAPs. The key finding is that the presence of committed actors, not the existence of the war itself, enabled this rapid translation of crisis into policy change under duress.

Lessons Learned: International actors and states facing conflict should not treat conflict settings as unsuitable for WPS institutionalization. Instead, they should identify and support the change-driving actors, for instance through the coordinated government-civil society coalitions, to embed WPS within broader security and governance transformations.

2 CIVIL SOCIETY, ESPECIALLY WOMEN-LED LOCAL CSOS, CAN BE STRUCTURAL IMPLEMENTERS

A defining feature of Ukraine's progress on WPS has been the central role of women-led civil society as both implementers and agenda-setters. Ukrainian women's organizations have evolved from emergency responders to institutional partners influencing NAP design, CRSV-response mechanisms, and recovery planning. Their long-term engagement across phases created continuity between crisis response and governance reform. Women's grassroots organizations are often the main drivers of the implementation of the WPS agenda at the local level. However, funding patterns remain misaligned with operational responsibility: Local women-led organizations continue to receive a disproportionately small share of humanitarian and

127 Shemets, Andriy. *Resolution 1325 – A Fundamental Instrument for Regions Affected by War*. Pechera.info, October 15, 2025. <https://pechera.info/news/879-andrii-semec-rezoliucija-1325-fundamentalnij-instrument-dlia-postrazdalix-regioniv-v-umovax-vijni.html>.

128 Department of Family, Youth and Sports of the Chernihiv Regional State Administration. 2025. "Chernihiv Region Implements UN Security Council Resolution 1325 'Women, Peace, Security': Results of the 2025 Monitoring." *Department of Family, Youth and Sports of the Chernihiv Regional State Administration*. <https://dsms.cg.gov.ua/index.php?id=538183&tp=0>.

3 CRSV RESPONSE MUST BE INSTITUTIONALIZED ACROSS SECTORS

security financing. This gap creates a structural contradiction between rhetoric and practice.

Lessons Learned: Donors should transition from project-based grants to sustained institutional support for local women's organizations, increasing direct funding and formalizing civil society participation in monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Likewise, resilience in WPS implementation depends on institutionalized state-civil society partnership. Thus, states should develop the capacity of local and regional authorities to independently lead implementation of the WPS agenda. All parties should establish and sustain coordination platforms for the exchange of experience and the development of the regional Coalitions 1325.

4 OPERATIONAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN DEFENSE AND SECURITY CAN CATALYZE STRUCTURAL REFORM

Ukraine's response to CRSV evolved from documentation by civil society to partial institutionalization, and ultimately to multisectoral embedding during the full-scale invasion. The U.N.-Ukraine Framework of Cooperation on CRSV facilitated interagency coordination and the deployment of national experts across justice, health, and social systems. The key structural shift was the transition from a justice-only approach to an integrated, survivor-centered architecture. This model demonstrates that CRSV governance is most effective when prosecution, protection, and holistic support are institutionally linked.

Lessons Learned: States should establish cross-sector CRSV response mechanisms and link accountability efforts with comprehensive survivor support services. International partners should prioritize creating an institutionalized interagency system rather than funding standalone projects.

The dramatic rise in women's voluntary enlistment in the Armed Forces of Ukraine during the full-scale invasion accelerated reforms that had begun in peacetime. These include legal and factual equality in service, introduction of anti-harassment policies, adaptation of equipment and infrastructure for women, and creation of gender adviser positions in the military. Operational necessity altered institutional incentives and reduced resistance to change. Meanwhile, women veterans have become visible in veteran affairs, post-conflict integration, and demining efforts. This suggests that women's participation in security sectors reshapes institutional policy under mobilization conditions.

Lessons Learned: Security sector reform programs should treat gender integration as operational readiness reform, not just symbolic compliance. Post-conflict recovery and peacebuilding should deliberately include women veterans and leaders as agents of change and ensure women's specific needs and priorities inform planning and policies.

5 INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND WOMEN'S ADVOCACY AMPLIFY DOMESTIC WPS IMPLEMENTATION AND SHAPE GLOBAL NORMS

In Ukraine, international partnerships (including with the U.N., EU, NATO, etc.) have been central to sustaining and reorienting Ukraine's WPS agenda under wartime pressure. Technical and financial support helped Ukraine scale up gender-responsive systems, even during conflict. At the same time, Ukrainian women leaders have used international forums to influence global agendas. For example, their advocacy on assistance and reparations for CRSV survivors and gender inclusivity in the peace process has positioned Ukraine as a WPS norm-setter rather than just a recipient of aid.

Lessons Learned: External actors should foster partnerships that both empower national actors and allow local experiences to inform international standards. States can leverage global platforms (including CSW events, U.N. General Assembly meetings, Security Council debates, NATO summits, and other international conferences) to highlight domestic WPS innovations and ensure women's voices help define the policies during and after the conflict, as well as ensuring just and sustainable peace.

6 THE RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN CAN SHIFT IN THE CONTEXT OF CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HAVE CHANGED SIGNIFICANTLY

By 2022, the National Action Plan no longer adequately addressed the challenges and the current situation, which had changed significantly with the start of Russia's full-scale invasion. At the end of 2022, the Ukrainian government adjusted the NAP, in particular, expanding the range of key target groups. As a result, many people in vulnerable situations who were not previously visible in the document (e.g., military families, former POWs, etc.) became the focus of activities.

Lessons Learned: The effectiveness of implementing the WPS agenda depends on the relevance of the adopted NAP. If circumstances change significantly, the document must be revised and reapproved at all levels: national (as a strategy), regional, and local (as operational activities). This will ensure that its implementation remains highly effective.

7 WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION MUST BE EMBEDDED IN RECOVERY AND PEACEBUILDING FROM THE OUTSET

Ukraine's experience shows that women's organizations and leaders are not only responders to wartime needs but also architects of recovery and peacebuilding. Their engagement links accountability, human security, community resilience, and gender equality, demonstrating that recovery cannot be reduced to physical reconstruction alone. Women veterans-turned-activists, having broken gender barriers in the armed forces, are now contributing to veteran reintegration and demining efforts. At the same time, Ukrainian women's 10-Point Compact for Ukraine's Just and Sustainable Peace is being cited in the highest international policy forums as a framework that safeguards human security, gender equality, accountability, and inclusive recovery. These initiatives illustrate that women are producing substantive policy agendas for what a just peace should contain.

Lesson learned: International partners and national authorities should formally embed women's organizations, women veterans, survivor advocates, and local women leaders into recovery and peacebuilding processes. Their participation should be institutionalized in donor coordination, reconstruction planning, transitional justice mechanisms, veteran reintegration, and other related areas. Recovery frameworks that exclude women's expertise risk reproducing insecurity and weakening the foundations of sustainable peace.

STRUCTURAL VULNERABILITIES AND BLIND SPOTS

1 DONOR DEPENDENCY AND SUSTAINABILITY RISKS

Ukraine's experience reveals constraints that are analytically important for future WPS implementation models in various contexts.

A significant portion of Ukraine's WPS infrastructure relies on international funding. Consequently, cuts in donor funding caused severe disruptions in the work of many assistance services for CRSV and GBV survivors. These cuts halted most GBV prevention programs and forced organizations to lay off staff. As a result, Ukraine's WPS work has been vulnerable to external funding shifts. Thus, as conflict intensity fluctuates or geopolitical priorities shift, sustainability threats increase.

Lessons Learned: Long-term WPS consolidation requires gradual integration into national budget frameworks and planning to reduce donor dependency. Donors should support transition strategies (e.g. multiyear funding streams) to build domestic financial ownership of the WPS agenda. In fact, Ukraine's second NAP shifted to 88% local budget financing (compared to 11% in the first NAP), 12% external sources (compared to previous 88%), leaving 0.5% for state funding.¹²⁹

129 Kähkönen, Merja. 2025. "Transformative Peace for Women in Ukraine? Implementing the WPS Agenda in a War." *International Affairs* 2036–2019 : (6) 101. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iaf186>

2 REPRESENTATION GAPS IN FORMAL PEACE PROCESSES

While Ukrainian women's organizations and leaders have driven policy and global advocacy, representation in formal high-level negotiation structures remains inconsistent. Institutionalization at sectoral levels does not automatically translate into inclusion in high-level diplomatic processes.

Lessons Learned: International mediators and guarantor states must embed gender participation criteria into peace process design. The implementing state must also create structural mechanisms (e.g.: quotas) to ensure formal seats for women at the negotiation table. Ensuring that women negotiators are present from the start can help bridge the gap between domestic WPS commitments and peace negotiations.

3 RISK OF NARROW SECURITY FRAMING

The wartime focus on CRSV and military service, while necessary, risks overshadowing other WPS dimensions. For example, these include structural gender inequalities in economic recovery and governance participation, as well as basic women's security needs, such as domestic violence prevention. In general, wartime aid priorities emphasize combat-related issues, potentially undercutting other programs.

Lessons Learned: Post-conflict recovery planning must explicitly rebalance the WPS agenda. This means bolstering resources for domestic violence prevention, women's economic recovery, and inclusion programs that go beyond immediate security concerns. A comprehensive WPS approach will ensure that gains in one area (e.g. women in the military) do not come at the expense of others (e.g. jobs and rights for women civilians).

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WPS AGENDA AS A SOCIAL AGENDA RATHER THAN PART OF SECURITY POLICY

Ukraine's WPS obligations were initially housed in the Ministry of Social Policy, which faced significant challenges in implementation from the beginning. These challenges reflected the limited political weight and resources available to the initial WPS coordination framework, difficulties in ensuring interagency coordination, and uneven capacity for implementation at the regional and local levels. This led to fragmented implementation, and created a situation where local service providers and CSOs had to address these issues at the local level.

Lessons Learned: WPS implementation should cut across all relevant ministries with high-level coordination. In Ukraine, moving WPS oversight to the deputy prime minister's office and the gender commissioner gave it more authority. More broadly, assigning WPS solely to a social policy institution risks narrowing it to service provision and making it easier for funders and policymakers to treat it as secondary to "hard security" priorities. The lesson is that survivor support, GBV prevention, women's participation, and gender-responsive recovery are themselves security issues. Elevating WPS coordination to an inter-ministerial level ensures the agenda is integrated into defense, security, and foreign policy, rather than treated as a peripheral social concern.

These strategic lessons illustrate that even under extreme conditions, WPS commitments can be translated into concrete institutions and norms, provided there is leadership and coordination. They also underscore the importance of planning for long-term sustainability, inclusive processes, and a balanced agenda as conflict-affected states build toward recovery and peace.



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