



Women and girls affected by the crisis in Ukraine: Implications for the Europe and Central Asia Region

Virtual Meeting, 11 March 2022, 12:00 - 13:00 CET / 14:00 - 15:00 Istanbul time

A discussion with the regional UN system facilitated by the Regional Issue-Based Coalition (Europe and Central Asia) on the large Movements of People, Displacement and Resilience (IBC LMPDR) and Issue-Based Coalition on Gender (IBC Gender)

Background

This year, International Women's Day is happening at a moment when the region is enveloped in an unfolding crisis that has already put 12 million people in need of humanitarian assistance¹. Since the start of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, 1.5 million people – the vast majority of women and children – have crossed international borders to secure their safety². As the number of women and children fleeing Ukraine is expected to increase significantly as the military offensive continues,

this will also continue to reverse important gains made on gender equality and women's rights³. The inclusion of women and girls themselves in the decision-making processes and humanitarian response is therefore essential to ensure that their rights are upheld in line with the UN Charter and UN principles and resolutions, including United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, 1820 and other related resolutions on Women, Peace and Security⁴.

⁴ United Nations in Ukraine, Key Messages, UNCG Crisis Communications Cell

As humanitarian needs multiply by the hour, the current situation poses an extra burden on already over-stretched health systems as it may result in a surge in cases of COVID-19 and polio, as well as outbreaks of other diseases. Hunger and food insecurity is increasing⁵; water and sanitation systems, health facilities and schools are not working, affecting Ukrainian boys' and girls' health and well-being, added to the mental and emotional damage that children may suffer. Whilst all people are affected by conflicts, women and girls are disproportionately impacted due to pre-existing gender inequalities. Sexual and gender-based violence increase in conflict situations, along with the risk of trafficking, disproportionate

loss of livelihoods, and adverse impacts on sexual and reproductive health and rights. Sixty percent of preventable maternal mortality deaths take place in settings of conflict and displacement. Women with disabilities, older women⁶, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups also face particular challenges⁷.

The increase in sexual and gender-based violence during conflict drives the imperative to ensure the needs and rights of victims are protected and fulfilled. In addition, access to contraceptives, pre-natal and post-natal care, and menstrual hygiene supplies may be difficult to access, affecting women and girl's health and dignity.

As UN agencies working in the ECA region mark International Women's Day this year, a discussion with the key relevant agencies and Country Teams will be held to

- Present the IBCs LMPDR and GE Joint Advocacy Brief on the impacts of COVID-19 on refugee and migrant women and girls and how it relates to the current crisis, including PSEA;
- Discuss the evolving needs and evidence related to Ukrainians fleeing from their homes and recommendations for ensuing a gender-sensitive refugee response tailored to the specific needs of women and children – immediate and short-term actions;
- Identify ways to the immediate needs of women and girls, including the most vulnerable groups by women's organizations on the ground and other stakeholders.

Agenda

- Welcome and opening - IBC-LMPDR (Amr Taha)
- Liliana Palihovici, Special Representative of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office on Gender, UN Women Regional Civil Society Advisory Group and President of the "Institutum Virtutes Civilis" Public Association, Republic of Moldova
- Hearing from UN Country Teams: implications of the Ukraine crisis for women and girls
- Brief reflections from UN agencies/entities:
 - IOM
 - UNICEF
 - WHO
 - WFP
 - UNFPA
 - UN Women
- Closing and summary of key takeaways - IBC-Gender Equality (Alia El-Yassir)

Invited Attendees: IBC-GE and IBC-LMPDR members; UNRCs in countries affected by the crisis; RCP members.

⁵ Ukraine is a vital source of grains. WFP buys more than half its wheat from Ukraine. Disruption to the harvest could drive up prices and add to global hunger.