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GENDER DIMENSION OF UKRAINE'S POST-WAR RECOVERY PLANS

The article provides a comprehensive analysis of the gender dimension of Ukraine's post-war recovery agenda and assesses whether gender equality commitments are translated into governance mechanisms and funding priorities. The study traces the evolution of gender-sensitive language and institutional initiatives across the Ukraine Recovery Conference process and related recovery plans, and examines how these commitments interact with EU and donor frameworks. Methodologically, it combines qualitative document analysis (conference declarations, policy papers, legal and program documents) with a descriptive review of development-finance data reported to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC), including the gender equality policy marker used to classify official development assistance. The findings indicate a gradual strengthening of gender mainstreaming in recovery narratives (participation, protection from gender-based violence, women's economic empowerment, and inclusion of vulnerable groups), alongside the emergence of dedicated coordination formats and partnerships. At the same time, a persistent implementation gap is identified: gender objectives are often formulated at the level of principles, while earmarked resources, measurable targets, and harmonised indicators remain limited. OECD DAC reporting suggests that even during periods of intensified donor support, a substantial share of aid is not coded with gender equality as a principal objective, which complicates accountability for outcomes. The article argues that an infrastructure-first recovery model risks reproducing pre-war inequalities unless paired with investments in the care economy, labour-market inclusion, and survivor-centred services. Practical recommendations focus on adopting gender-responsive budgeting with transparent allocations, strengthening monitoring through SMART indicators and open reporting, institutionalising the participation of women's organisations in recovery governance, and improving donor coordination so that gender commitments are reflected in financing and oversight.

Key words: gender-responsive recovery; gender policy; gender equality; post-war reconstruction of Ukraine; Ukraine's post-war recovery.

Introduction. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 triggered an unprecedented humanitarian crisis and large-scale destruction. According to the fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4) prepared by the World Bank, the Government of Ukraine, and the European Commission, total recovery and reconstruction needs by the end of 2024 exceeded USD 500 billion [15]. This unprecedented figure covers the restoration of housing, transport networks, the energy sector, social infrastructure, and the country's broader economic potential.

At the same time, the war has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls. UN Women and CARE International document that women and children constitute around 90% of the approximately 6.7 million refugees who left Ukraine, while women and girls account for 59–64% of internally displaced persons. These demographic shifts have been accompanied by a sharp rise in domestic violence, growing demand for gender-based violence (GBV) response services, and widening economic inequalities. Women constitute the majority of registered unemployed persons, and the gender pay gap has expanded significantly during wartime disruption [13].

Despite these gendered impacts, a central paradox is that the bulk of international assistance and reconstruction finance is allocated without meaningful integration of gender objectives. This

imbalance risks reproducing and deepening gender inequality during recovery. Comparative evidence from post-conflict reconstruction suggests that, without deliberate gender integration, recovery efforts tend to reinforce traditional gender roles, concentrate resources in male-dominated sectors, and overlook the specific needs and priorities of women and girls. Conversely, post-conflict transformation can also constitute a “window of opportunity” for accelerating gender equality, provided that policy design and financing are aligned with gender-responsive goals.

The purpose of this article is to provide a comprehensive assessment of the gender dimension in key policy documents guiding Ukraine’s post-war reconstruction and to identify gaps between declaratory commitments and implementation mechanisms. To achieve this goal, the study pursues three objectives: to analyse the integration of gender approaches within core recovery frameworks, including the Ukraine Recovery Conferences and the EU Ukraine Facility; to identify structural mechanisms driving the financing gap between declarations and actual support for gender objectives; and to develop recommendations to strengthen gender integration in Ukraine’s recovery governance.

Materials and Methods. The empirical base of the study includes official documents and outcome statements from the Ukraine Recovery Conferences (Lugano 2022, London 2023, Berlin 2024, Rome 2025), European Union legal acts (including Regulation (EU) 2024/792 establishing the Ukraine Facility and Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1447 approving the assessment of the Ukraine Plan), UN Women and CARE International reports (Rapid Gender Analysis series), OECD materials (DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker and related donor statistics), and documents of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [3; 7; 8; 11; 13]. The theoretical and methodological framework draws on gender mainstreaming concepts and on the Women, Peace and Security agenda as implemented in Ukraine through the National Action Plan for UNSC Resolution 1325 [9]. The study employs comparative analysis of EU financial instruments, content analysis of official policy documents, and descriptive analysis of OECD DAC gender-related aid statistics.

Results and Discussion. The series of Ukraine Recovery Conferences (URC) demonstrates a clear progression from symbolic commitments to gender equality in Lugano (2022) toward more explicit institutional mechanisms in Rome (2025), although persistent financing gaps remain. This shift was driven largely by civil society advocacy and by a breakthrough at URC Berlin (2024), where gender issues were integrated into the official programme and the Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery was launched.

The first Ukraine Recovery Conference in Lugano (4–5 July 2022) enshrined gender equality as one of the seven Lugano Principles, stating that recovery should be inclusive, ensure gender equality, and respect human rights, so that no part of society is left behind [12]. However, gender-focused discussions remained limited and were largely relegated to side events organised alongside the main conference.

The London conference (21–22 June 2023) reflected continuity rather than significant progress in gender commitments. A joint statement by ActionAid, CARE, IRC, the NGO “Girls”, Oxfam International, and Plan International emphasised that gender equality had received limited attention in recovery discussions despite being articulated as a core principle in Lugano [1]. The statement highlighted the scale of GBV-related needs in Ukraine and the shortfall in response funding, reinforcing the broader point that gender commitments were not accompanied by adequate resources [13].

OECD data further reveal the structural nature of the financing gap: although official development assistance (ODA) to Ukraine increased dramatically between 2021 and 2022, the overwhelming share of this funding did not include gender equality objectives, a pattern that remains highly persistent [7].

The Berlin conference (11–12 June 2024) transformed the gender governance architecture of Ukraine’s recovery process through three important developments [4]. First, for the first time

in the history of the Ukraine reform and recovery conference process, a dedicated gender panel was included in the official main programme rather than confined to side events. Second, leading civil society voices were visibly integrated into these discussions alongside government representatives and international partners. Third, Germany's Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development and Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister jointly announced the launch of the Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery.

The Alliance commits members to integrate gender perspectives into financing, apply the OECD DAC gender marker, increase the share of funding supporting gender equality with transparent monitoring, strengthen women's meaningful participation at all levels, and encourage business to adopt the UN Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) [4].

The Rome conference (10–11 July 2025) demonstrated further institutional maturation. A dedicated gender panel was opened at ministerial level, and the Alliance expanded substantially in membership, accompanied by the publication of its first annual report documenting member commitments and monitoring arrangements [14]. New financial pledges included targeted support for women's participation in political, social, and economic life as well as capacity-building for gender-sensitive reforms [14].

The EU Ukraine Facility, worth EUR 50 billion (2024–2027), constitutes the European Union's largest financial commitment to a non-member state, yet its gender provisions fall short of established EU best practices. Regulation (EU) 2024/792 entered into force on 29 February 2024 and contains an explicit gender provision in Article 4(4), requiring gender mainstreaming “where relevant” [11]. This qualifier provides implementing actors with considerable discretion, potentially weakening enforcement.

Unlike the climate provisions in the same regulation, which require that at least 20% of investments support climate objectives, the instrument does not include a comparable earmarking for gender equality. Similarly, although 20% of Pillar I grants are reserved for subnational authorities, no analogous reserve is provided for gender-specific programming [11].

The Facility's three-pillar structure allocates EUR 38.27 billion for direct budget support (Pillar I), EUR 6.97 billion for investment guarantees (Pillar II), and EUR 4.76 billion for technical assistance (Pillar III). Gender equality is treated as one among several horizontal principles to be mainstreamed “where relevant”, rather than as a distinct reform component supported by binding indicators and budget lines [11].

The Ukraine Plan, approved by Council Implementing Decision (EU) 2024/1447 and by a Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine order, contains 69 reforms and 10 investments, assessed through 146 indicators across 15 thematic areas [3; 8]. Gender equality is incorporated as a horizontal principle rather than a dedicated reform track. While the European Commission's assessment recognises that the Plan contributes to social objectives and gender equality, it does not establish a dedicated gender chapter, gender-specific milestones, or quantitative targets among the indicators that trigger disbursements [3].

The Plan's structure reflects what critics describe as a prioritisation of male-dominated sectors – energy, agriculture, transport, critical raw materials, and information technologies – positioned as having the strongest potential to stimulate economic growth. In contrast, “foundational sectors” such as education, health care, and social services, where women predominate, are framed primarily as supportive functions for rebuilding human capital rather than as core economic priorities [5].

Aida A. Hozić offers one of the sharpest academic critiques, arguing that the Ukraine Plan echoes patterns observed in previous post-conflict recovery strategies that structurally disadvantage women despite their significant contributions to wartime resilience [5]. She highlights, among other risks, that large-scale privatisation may disproportionately benefit male asset holders and reduce

women's labour-force participation; infrastructure reconstruction tends to favour male employment in construction; and remittances, often sent by women working abroad, are not discussed in the Plan. Potential gender implications for education, health, and social services are also largely absent from the document [5].

In addition, gendered labour-market structures reinforce the sectoral imbalance: globally, women account for only around 9% of the construction workforce [6], while in Ukraine women represent a minority in energy-sector employment [5].

A comparative perspective highlights a significant gap between the Ukraine Facility and EU standards in other external financing instruments. Regulation (EU) 2021/947 establishing the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument – Global Europe (NDICI) requires that 85% of new actions have gender equality as a principal or significant objective and that at least 5% have it as a principal objective, supported by mandatory gender analysis [10]. In contrast, the EU Ukraine Facility does not set any percentage targets for gender equality, does not require systematic use of the OECD DAC gender marker, and does not impose mandatory gender impact assessments. The inclusion of quantitative climate targets within the same regulatory framework demonstrates that binding mainstreaming targets are feasible; the exclusion of comparable gender targets signals lower political prioritisation despite rhetorical commitments [10; 11].

The central challenge in the gender dimension of Ukraine's recovery is the scale of the gap between declaratory commitments and actual financing. OECD DAC statistics show that in 2022 – the year when ODA to Ukraine surged – the overwhelming share of aid did not include any gender objectives, while only a very small portion was directed toward projects with gender equality as a principal objective [7]. As of 2024, less than 1% of recovery funding is directed to gender equality as a principal goal [14]. Ukraine's share of ODA with gender objectives remains far below the global average, indicating systemic under-financing of gender equality in recovery programming [7].

The analysis identifies four structural mechanisms that help explain the gap. First, the design of core financial instruments creates an architectural deficit: the EU Ukraine Facility relies on discretionary gender mainstreaming “where relevant” without binding targets, while NDICI embeds explicit quantitative requirements [10; 11]. The absence of mandatory OECD DAC markers and disbursement conditions linked to gender indicators enables implementing bodies to deprioritise gender objectives in practice.

Second, sectoral prioritisation reproduces gender inequality: the sectors framed as key engines of growth are largely male-dominated, whereas sectors employing more women are positioned as secondary or supportive [5]. Infrastructure and construction – major recipients of recovery investment – remain strongly gender-segregated in labour markets [6].

Third, women's organisations face barriers to accessing recovery finance. The Community Recovery Fund of Ukraine, for example, is primarily accessible to UN agencies, limiting the ability of local women-led organisations to obtain flexible, multi-year funding despite their critical implementation capacity [5]. A rapid UN Women assessment documented severe disruptions among women's organisations due to funding suspensions, including risks of closure and programme termination [14].

Fourth, coordination mechanisms rely heavily on voluntarism. Although the Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery expanded substantially, many commitments are framed in non-binding language (“encouraged”, “invited”), and without enforcement tools declarations do not translate into durable financial obligations [14]. Donor-side variation illustrates the point: OECD donor charts show that some donors achieve high levels of gender integration in aid portfolios, while others remain far lower due to large volumes of untagged security assistance [7].

A local-level perspective reinforces the implementation risk. The CEDOS analytical report on gender-sensitive recovery notes that local authorities often face severe capacity

constraints – understaffing, underfunding, and difficulties prioritising long-term sustainable solutions over rapid fixes – which can undermine meaningful gender integration in recovery governance [2]. CEDOS also warns of a “risk of imitation”, where formally gender-labelled measures are highlighted to satisfy funding requirements, without producing substantive change in practice [2].

Conclusions. The analysis yields several key conclusions regarding the gender dimension of Ukraine’s post-war recovery planning.

The period 2022–2025 shows a positive trajectory of institutional recognition. The Lugano conference articulated normative principles; London maintained the agenda under civil society critique; Berlin introduced institutional architecture through the Alliance; and Rome consolidated membership growth and initiated annual reporting cycles. The shift from marginal side events to inclusion in official programmes represents a significant structural change.

A persistent gap remains between declarations and financing. The structural mechanisms identified – the design deficit of financial instruments, sectoral prioritisation of male-dominated industries, barriers to access for women’s organisations, and the voluntaristic nature of coordination mechanisms – help explain why only a very small share of recovery funding is directed toward gender equality as a principal objective [7; 14]. The EU Ukraine Facility as the largest recovery instrument demonstrates clear structural limits for gender integration. The absence of binding targets, mandatory gender markers, and gender-specific indicators tied to disbursements contrasts with NDICI standards and even with quantified climate provisions in the same regulatory framework [10; 11]. The Ukraine Plan’s thematic emphasis similarly risks reinforcing gendered sectoral inequalities [5]. EU integration dynamics may become a critical driver of gender reforms. The accession process and reconstruction-related institutional reforms provide a window for embedding gender equality provisions more firmly through institutionalised gender machinery, gender-responsive budgeting, and coordinated donor approaches aligned around measurable gender objectives [9].

Based on these findings, the article proposes the following recommendations. For the Government of Ukraine: introduce mandatory gender assessment for all recovery projects above a defined cost threshold and integrate gender-specific milestones and indicators into the Ukraine Plan. For international donors: increase the share of funding with OECD DAC gender marker 1–2 toward at least the global average and ensure direct, flexible, multi-year funding for local women’s rights organisations [7]. For the European Union: strengthen the Ukraine Facility’s gender provisions by replacing discretionary wording with binding requirements and aligning implementation with established EU standards [10; 11]. For civil society: monitor implementation of Alliance commitments and document instances of formal but non-substantive gender integration [14].

The window of opportunity for gender-transformative recovery in Ukraine remains open, but it is narrowing. Sustainable transformation requires institutional embedding and local ownership, formal commitments and implementation resources, quantitative targets and substantive outcomes.

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Надія Гербут. Гендерний вимір планів повоєнної відбудови України

У статті здійснено комплексний аналіз гендерного виміру ключових документів і підходів, що формують повоєнне відновлення України, її оцінено, наскільки задекларовані цілі гендерної рівності конвертуються в механізми врядування й фінансування. Дослідження простежує еволюцію уваги до гендерної проблематики в межах процесу Конференції з питань відновлення України та пов'язаних програмних документів, а також виявляє, як гендерні зобов'язання узгоджуються з рамками ЄС і практиками міжнародних донорів. Методологія поєднує якісний аналіз декларацій, політичних і нормативних документів та описовий аналіз статистики міжнародної допомоги, що подається у звітності Комітету сприяння розвитку ОЕСР (OECD DAC), зокрема з використанням гендерного маркера для класифікації офіційної допомоги розвитку. Результати засвідчують поступове посилення гендерної чутливості в дискурсі відновлення (участь жінок у прийнятті рішень, протидія гендерно зумовленому насильству, економічне включення, підтримка вразливих груп) і появу спеціалізованих партнерств і координаційних форматів. Водночас виявлено стійкий розрив між деклараціями й реалізацією: гендерні цілі часто фіксуються на рівні принципів, тоді як цільові бюджети, вимірювані показники й узгоджені індикатори залишаються недостатніми. Дані OECD DAC указують, що значна частина допомоги не маркується як така, що має гендерну рівність головною метою, що ускладнює підзвітність за результатами. Обґрунтовано, що відбудова, зосереджена переважно на інфраструктурі, може відтворювати довоєнні нерівності без інвестицій в економіку догляду, зайнятість і соціальні послуги. Сформульовано рекомендації для уряду України, донорів і громадянського суспільства: запровадження гендерно орієнтованого бюджетування з прозорими асигнуваннями, посилення системи моніторингу (SMART-індикатори, відкриті дані), інституціоналізація участі жіночих організацій у врядуванні відновлення та підвищення узгодженості донорської звітності. Перспективи подальших досліджень пов'язані з оцінюванням ефективності запропонованих інструментів і їх впливу на соціальну стійкість і відновлення людського капіталу.

Ключові слова: гендерно чутливе відновлення, гендерна політика, гендерна рівність, повоєнна відбудова України, повоєнне відновлення України.

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