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to end violence against
women and children

Gendering Your Response to Ukraine Refugee Crisis

2022

Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership: Women, Asylum, Immigration and Refugee (WAIR) Working Group

The Glasgow Violence Against Women Partnership (GVAWP or the Partnership) is a multi-agency partnership which has worked together since 2000 to promote a coordinated, strategic response to prevent and eradicate all forms of male violence against women and girls.

The GVAWP recognises that the needs of women asylum seekers, immigrants and refugees required the input of representatives from specialist agencies, consequently the **Women Asylum Immigration and Refugee (WAIR) Working Group** was established to take this work forward. It is the combined efforts of the WAIR Group that has led to the production of this statement on the current refugee crisis in Ukraine and the disproportionate impact the conflict is having on women fleeing seeking safety.

This statement supports a call to action from all key partners to gender their response to Ukraine Refugee Crisis, fully recognising the risks that women are exposed to and design and develop their service responses, data collection, monitoring and evaluation that will capture the true extent of need.

Why We Need A Gendered Approach In Our Response To The Crisis In Ukraine

What we know?

On 24 February 2022, Russian armed forces launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine. As a result, substantial areas of Ukrainian territory now constitute areas of armed conflict from which thousands of persons are fleeing. This is Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II.

As of today, UNHCR estimate that over **6 million refugees have fled Ukraine**;¹ **mostly women, children and the elderly**. This figure is an under-estimate and will continue to increase as the mass displacement of people continues. An estimated 6.5 million people have been internally displaced within Ukraine ².

The operation of martial law means that most men aged between aged between 18 and 60 cannot leave Ukraine. The reported numbers have not officially been disaggregated by gender or age, but it is estimated that 90% are believed to be women and children with 40-45% adult women and 50% children (including girls) ³. They may be alone, with children or assisting elderly or other vulnerable adults.

This is already a humanitarian crisis but a network of organisations at the frontline are now working to prevent this from also becoming a human trafficking crisis.

Europol has issued an early warning notification warning of human trafficking networks already in operation ⁴ and the OSCE has issued recommendations to enhance anti-trafficking prevention because of this mass displacement ⁵.

The UN Secretary General, António Guterres, has said *"For predators and human traffickers, the war in Ukraine is not a tragedy. It's an opportunity - **and women and children are the targets**"*.

Violence Against Women

In 2019 the OSCE led on a survey on the prevalence of Violence Against Women and children in Ukraine which found that most women were concerned about the issue of VAW with 64% saying it was a common occurrence. Two thirds of women (67%) stated that they have experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence at the hands of a partner or non-partner since the age of 15.

Women who took part in the survey felt that Ukraine is a society where women are restricted in their choices and behaviour and are expected to put their family first. More than half (51%) of women believe that their friends would agree that “it is important for a man to show his wife/partner who the boss is”. Nearly one in five (19%) believe that sexual intercourse without consent is justified in a marriage or between partners who live together. Around one in four (24%) women hold victim-blaming views, e.g., believing that violence against women is often provoked by the victim.

Worryingly the research showed that women did not tend to access services in the event of being subjected to violence. Only half of women (50%) felt somewhat informed about what to do in case of violence, and nearly half (47%) said they are not well informed or would know what to do at all if they experienced any form of male violence. The vast majority of victims of violence at the hands of a non-partner, current partner or previous partner say they did not inform the police about the most serious incident of physical and/or sexual violence they experienced.

The UK Response

The European Union has triggered the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time which is an emergency mechanism to allow an immediate and collective humanitarian response to those fleeing Ukraine. Visas are not necessary to cross into a country in the European Union and the temporary protection measures allow rights to residence, work, housing, medical assistance and access to education for children.

The UK has not followed this humanitarian approach and has instead instigated various visa schemes and concessions which are complex to understand and navigate and have been subject to numerous changes. As of 11th May 2022 ⁶:-

- 37,500 visas have been issued under the Ukraine Family Scheme which is for family members for those with residency in the UK (excluding Ukrainian nationals on work, family or student visas).
- 67,800 visas have been issued under the Homes for Ukraine scheme. This scheme requires a sponsor willing to house a Ukrainian for 6 months. Homes for Ukraine visa holders can only bring immediate family with them, not the wide range of relatives allowed under the Family Scheme.

It is also important not to forget the Ukrainian diaspora who are already in Scotland on various short term visa schemes. Some arrived on visit visas earlier in the conflict. Most carry no right to work or access public funds. The two visa schemes set out above are very much designed for people who have fled Ukraine in the last few months or will do in future. They don't cater for Ukrainian citizens who were in the UK [before the war](#) on the likes of a Student, Skilled Worker or Seasonal Worker visa.

Most workers on a seasonal worker scheme to date have come from Ukraine. ⁷ There is no disaggregation of this data in terms of numbers in Scotland, but many will be women. This group of refugees also require access visas allowing free access to the labour market, public funds and family reunion.

The UK Government has just implemented a Ukrainian Extension Visa Scheme allowing Ukrainian nationals already in the UK to extend their visas with improved rights to work, study and access benefits from May 2022. There are however gaps as individuals on this visa will not be permitted to sponsor family members to join them under the Ukraine Family Scheme.

From the UK Government data, 7,700 of the 64,800 sponsorship visas have been issued to sponsors based in Scotland with 5,000 having been sponsored by the Scottish Government ⁸.

Why are we concerned?

Europol has said that women and children fleeing Ukraine are most at risk for sexual and labour exploitation. Whilst, at the moment, the areas of most concern are at border areas and transport hubs, countries receiving refugees need to remain alert for indications or attempts to recruit potential victims of human trafficking. **Europol warn about individual opportunistic abusers posing as volunteers as well as criminal networks who specialise in human trafficking** ⁹. Numerous reports of this happening have been reported in the press ¹⁰.

There are increasing concerns about the potential for perpetrators of abuse and human traffickers to exploit the current UK response to the war in Ukraine.

We know that 72% of all detected victims of human trafficking in the European Union are women and girls. Sexual exploitation is the most prevalent and profitable form of human trafficking in the European Union and 92% of victims are women and girls. Nearly a quarter of all victims of trafficking are children. Most of the child victims are trafficked for sexual exploitation ¹¹.

The UNHCR has issued a statement citing concerns over the risks to women in the UK's Homes for Ukraine Scheme due to increasing reports of women feeling at risk from male sponsors ¹².

Why we need a gendered informed response?

By underpinning service responses in Glasgow and across Scotland with a gendered analysis we recognise the unique experiences of women when fleeing conflict and seeking safety.

Prior to the conflict Ukrainian women experienced disadvantage, living with high levels of domestic abuse, rape, sexual violence and harassment, sexual exploitation including prostitution and trafficking. Unequal access to resources such as employment, financial autonomy, exclusion from decision making, increase that disadvantage. The impact of trauma is not only related to fleeing a war zone, women will carry significant levels of trauma also because of their experience of gender based abuse prior to the conflict. Ukrainian ethnic minority women will have been subjected to discrimination in Ukraine and may continue to experience that hostility in host countries ¹³.

It is likely that women will have a mistrust of official services such as law enforcement because of their experience in Ukraine and it is important we work hard to break down these barriers by having a coordinated robust response.

The speed and chaotic nature of fleeing further compounds risk to women in transit, on arrival at borders and seeking safety in host countries. In addition to the risk of being trafficked women are vulnerable to physical violence; rape and sexual violence from invading forces, from traffickers, from other perpetrators.

Fleeing the conflict does not automatically guarantee safety. Arrival in host countries also presents risks, women will be vulnerable to predatory behaviours, culture and language barriers, poverty and destitution.

What we need to ensure?

It has been recognised that the opportunities for women to seek protection from harm will often be in host/destination countries. There is thus a clear responsibility to ensure that our prevention and protection responses are robust. To mitigate the considerable risks already faced by the women and girls fleeing Ukraine, our responses must include a gendered analysis from the start.

We ask:-

Prevention

Co-ordination

1. Include VAW&G Partnerships and services in planning and responses at a strategic and operational level
2. Ensure that responses include planning for medium and long term needs and include gender specific poverty prevention approaches.
3. Ensure that responses include the specific community integration needs of women and children, are cognisant of previous experiences of male VAW and female specific war crime and importantly engage the Ukrainian community.

Awareness Raising

4. Ensuring that there is sufficient awareness of indicators of gender based violence including human trafficking and the particularly gendered nature of human trafficking and that frontline staff in key services such as health; social work; police; pharmacies; schools; housing; are sufficiently trained and knowledgeable on issues on the impact of violence against women issues for Ukrainian refugees and fully understand city wide referral pathways
5. Ensure that hosts and supporters are trauma aware and promote trauma informed responses

Monitoring

6. Oversight of where Ukrainian refugees are residing and ensuring disaggregation of data in terms of gender and age.
7. Ensure robust safeguarding, vetting and matching procedures are in place for sponsors of Ukrainian refugees to mitigate current risks and that these are monitored and reviewed

Protection

8. Accessible culturally sensitive, trauma informed women only services with access to interpreting
9. Clear referral pathways for women and children to access support related to identified need: including access too: financial support preventing destitution; exploitation; free helpline numbers; public facing official information for women; rights based information; reproductive health; women and children's health
10. Ensure medium and long term needs are met through rapid access to childcare and children's education as required and the development of women specific educational, language and employment opportunity.

Scottish Welcome Hub Information

Details are contained below on the four Welcome Hubs in Scotland. Ukrainians can be referred or signposted to these hubs regardless of the visa they have arrived on. The Welcome Hubs will support those arriving via the Scottish Government Super Sponsorship schemes, the UK Government Sponsorship scheme, they may be able to assist Ukrainians arriving without any visa.

Council	Duty Social Care	Duty Social Care Out of Hours	Duty Social Care Email	Welcome Hub Generic Email
Dumfries & Galloway	03033 333 001	01387 273660	AccessTeam@dumgal.gov.uk socialworkoutofhours@dumgal.gov.uk	ResettlementProject@dumgal.gov.uk
Glasgow City	0141 287 0555	0300 343 1505	socialcaredirect@glasgow.gov.uk	
	0300 300 1199	0300 343 1505	adultservicesreferral.sw@renfrewshire.gov.uk	
City of Edinburgh	0131 200 2324	0131 200 2324	socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk	Ukraine@edinburgh.gov.uk

For Scottish Government Information on Ukraine Crisis <https://www.gov.scot/ukraine/>

For broader queries, process questions and offers, for example training, please go to the Scottish Government Welcome Team via this inbox: EHRWelcomeandIntegration@gov.scot

Our thanks go to members of the WAIR Group in particular, Just Right Scotland, TARA Service and NRS VAW Service for their support in producing this position statement.

For information on this statement, the GVAWP or WAIR Group please email Kirsti.hay@glasgow.gov.uk



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Endnotes

- 1 UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Ukraine Refugee Situation accessed 30 March 2022. <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine>
- 2 IOM study undertaken between 9 and 16 March 2022, <https://www.iom.int/news/almost-65-million-people-internally-displaced-ukraine-iom>
- 3 United Nations Population Fund has noted that more than 60 per cent of heads of households surveyed, are accompanied by children, and more than 53 per cent of internally displaced people are women <https://www.unfpa.org/ukraine-war>. UN Women have estimated the figure at 54% <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/in-focus/2022/03/in-focus-war-in-ukraine-is-a-crisis-for-women-and-girls>
- 4 https://www.europol.europa.eu/cms/sites/default/files/documents/Early_Warning_Notification_War_in_Ukraine_%E2%80%93_refugees_arriving_to_the_EU_from_Ukraine_at_risk_of_exploitation_as_part_of_THB.pdf
- 5 OSCE, <https://www.osce.org/cthb/513784>
- 6 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-application-data-29-march-2022>
- 7 UK Government 24 Feb 2022 Managed Migration Datasets, Entry clearance visas granted outside the UK. Available at www.gov.uk
- 8 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukraine-family-scheme-application-data/ukraine-family-scheme-and-ukraine-sponsorship-scheme-homes-for-ukraine-visa-data>
- 9 Ibid
- 10 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-61311046>, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/ukraine-refugees-go-from-one-hell-to-another-as-abusers-exploit-women-and-children-bjnw7gltq> and <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60891801>
- 11 https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files_en?file=2021-04/14042021_eu_strategy_on_combatting_trafficking_in_human_beings_2021-2025_com-2021-171-1_en.pdf
- 12 <https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2022/4/6256b5144/unhcr-statement-on-the-uks-homes-for-ukraine-scheme.html>
- 13 <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/ukraine/>
The US State Department in its report on human rights on Ukraine for 2020 noted the lack of investigation and accountable for violence against women noted as of serious concern. Domestic violence against women remained a serious problem. In the first six months of the year, police received 101,000 domestic violence complaints, which is a 40 percent increase compared with the same period in 2019. Spousal abuse was common. In terms of human trafficking, Ukraine was already sitting at Tier 2 according to the trafficking in persons report by USSD. This means it did not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking.