



Sociological research report

Problems and challenges of vulnerable groups of women in Dnipro region in the context of martial law in Ukraine

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Dnipro 2022

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Full-scale war became a real challenge for all Ukrainian women. This is especially true for their vulnerable groups which face the consequences of war the most often. Since 24 February, women have been opposing and fighting the Russian aggression, standing on the frontlines side-by-side with men, joining the Armed Forces of Ukraine, serving in Territorial Defense, and working against the aggressor on all fronts out there. That is why for our study we selected the categories of women which became more vulnerable as a result of full-scale invasion. The challenges and needs faced by these categories of women in the context of war are rather specific; that is why it is necessary to study their individual experiences. This allows to look for efficient ways of problem-solving and introduce reforms justified by special needs of vulnerable groups. This is our way towards changes and healthy Ukrainian society in the future.

Obviously, the results of such studies draw the attention of international donors and volunteers. International organizations and charity funds can choose the vector for their aid, which is an invaluable contribution to the solution of current problems.

Despite present realia like power line disruptions, air raids and missile attacks the researchers managed to collect the necessary information, analyze it and present valuable results. Such studies are necessary, especially in such complicated times when the collection of new data becomes a challenge.

To consciously evaluate problems emerging now in Ukrainian society, we propose you a report prepared based on the results of our sociological study.

SUMMARY

Relevance. Russian-Ukrainian war (since 2014 and continuing) surely touches all groups of Ukrainian society. War is a traumatic event for the biography of every Ukrainian. The experience and awareness of war forms among representatives of different social groups certain typical adaptation strategies, attitude to the event and discourse practices of transferring the obtained experience to the following generations. Vulnerable groups – namely children, elderly people, women and people with disabilities – are interesting from informative point of view in studying the experience of cultural war trauma. That is why a sociologist should document unique biographic experiences of such traumatic situations and provide targeted help to vulnerable population strata.

Research object: women aged 18 and older who live in the city of Dnipro or in Dnipro region and pertain to vulnerable population strata due to direct involvement in the traumatic situation associated with the hostilities.

Research subject. Biographic narratives of awareness and experiencing of traumatic events associated with Russian-Ukrainian war of 2022.

Research objective is to document the narrative discourse of “stories” about awareness and experience of Russian-Ukrainian war among women belonging to vulnerable population groups in the city of Dnipro and in Dnipro region.

Research methodology and techniques are based on using conceptual foundations of ethnomethodological and phenomenological sociological theory. This methodology framework envisages the use of quality methods for sociological research. For this study, the chosen methodologies were *narrative biographic interview* allowing to document via oral and written narrations the personal experience of traumatic life events among representatives of certain social groups and *focus group research*. During results analysis, comparative strategy of “minimal” and “maximal” contrast was used, i.e., singling out similar content constructs in narrative texts as well as typical elements in biographical episodes different in content; this provides gnoseological potential for documentation of unique biography trajectories.

Theoretical sample. Selection of informants for participation in the study was done using snowball method. 22 in-depth interviews were conducted: eight with female military personnel; five with female volunteers; five with wives of military personnel; four with female IDPs from Dnipro region. The focus group gathered nine female IDPs registered in the city of Dnipro. When selecting study participants, the following factors were taken into account: presence/absence of children, presence of younger children/adolescents/grownup children/grandchildren, presence of family members requiring additional care. The regions IDPs moved from to Dnipro region as their temporary place of stay are Kharkiv region, Chernihiv region, Donetsk region, Luhansk region, temporarily occupied communities in Zaporizhzhya region and communities of Dnipro region now in the zone of active hostilities.

Interview tools. The interview guide consisted of four blocks of questions common for all groups of informants, with some variety in questions on professional activities (for the military and volunteers).

- Block 1. Introduction to the discussion of general context of events happening in the country. Start of armed aggression.
- Block 2. Nature of professional activities. Motivation (*for the military and volunteers*). Main issues of adaptation to the war (*common question for all informants*).
- Block 3. Individual and personal factors of experiencing war events.
- Block 4. Conclusion. Evaluation of prospects and personal strategies.

Research period: September - October 2022.

The study was conducted with regard to security situation in the country and with all personal data of study participants kept confidential.

SECTION I.

IDP WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF WAR: BASIC NEEDS, PROBLEMS AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS ADAPTATION

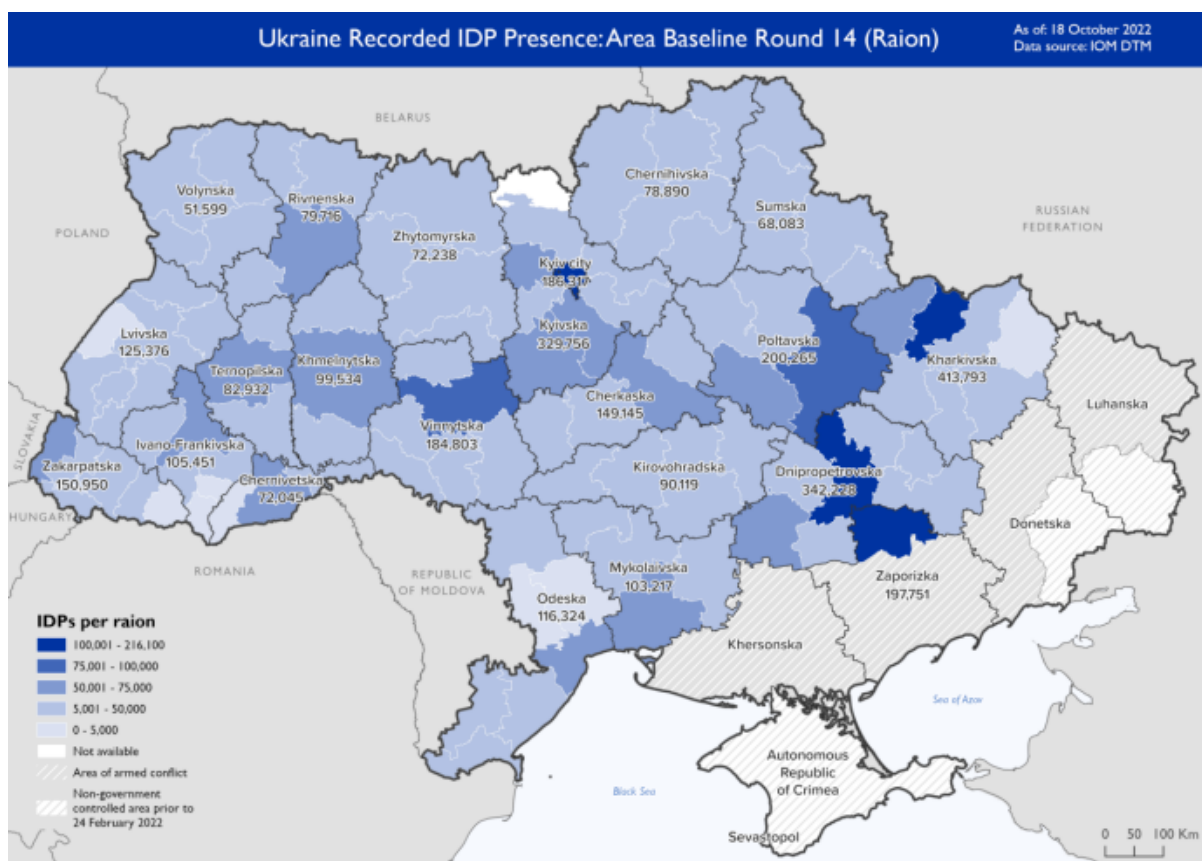
Russian military aggression towards Ukraine has been lasting for over eight years. Starting from 24 February 2022, a wide-scale military invasion of Russian troops in Ukraine is happening. The war which had started over eight months ago provoked the rise in the processes of forced internal migration. During the previous eight years we had peaks in the numbers of internally displaced persons but the geography of migration flows had been limited.

With the start of full-scale war migration flows covered the whole territory of Ukraine. There are regions which became peak ones by the amount of hosted IDPs. Therefore, both for Ukrainian society and international community the need for financial, humanitarian and psychological support for affected population categories has grown. In its turn, this actualizes the need for more detailed studies of internal migration processes, which are happening right now.

International Organization for Migration glossary has the following definition:

“IDPs are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized border.”

A basic territorial evaluation provides detailed data about the number and geographic location of officially registered internally displaced persons (IDPs). According to IOM, Kharkiv (413,793), **Dnipro (342,228)** and Kyiv (329,756) have the most IDPs. Out of the total number of IDPs, the majority are from Donetsk, Kharkiv and Luhansk regions. Out of 146 cities who informed about the amount of IDPs, Kyiv, Zaporizhzhya, **Dnipro**, Kharkiv and Kryvyi Rih have documented the highest displacement numbers.



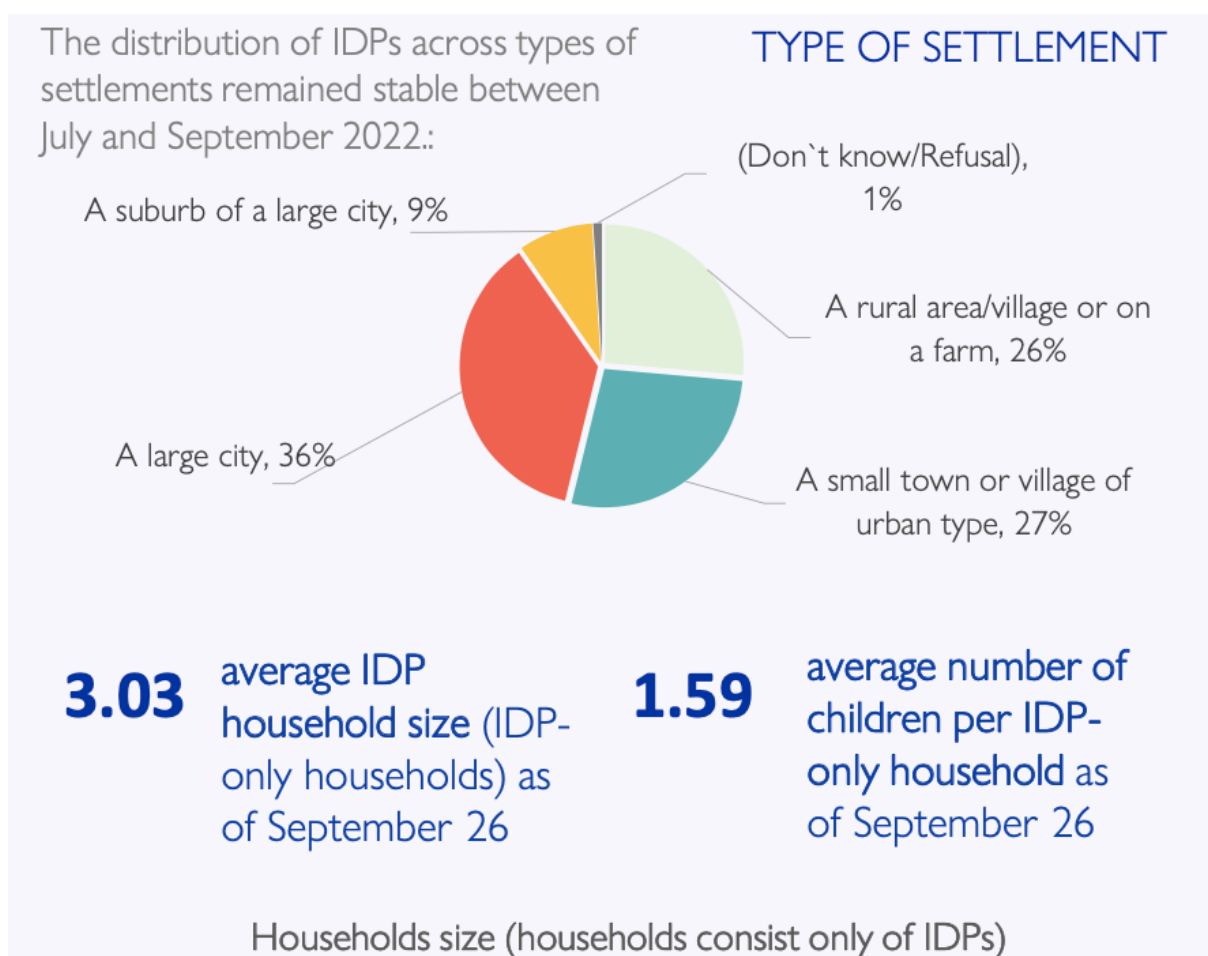
After 24 February 2022, full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis all over the country, which is characterized, inter alia, by the displacement of a significant portion of Ukrainian population.

Between 17 and 26 September, IOM held the ninth round of rapid representative assessment of the general population in Ukraine¹ to collect information about internal displacement flows and mobility and to assess local needs. This general population assessment serves as a reliable source to identify fields with high humanitarian needs and to determine target responses to provide help to the war-affected population. The geographic coverage of this assessment is the whole territory of Ukraine, all five of its macro-regions (west, east, north, center, south and the city of Kyiv), with the exception of the Crimean Peninsula.

¹ The data presented in this report have been received upon commission of IOM as a result of rapid telephone survey by MultiCultural Insights. The ninth round of data collection among the sample of 2,002 unique adult respondents (18 years of age and older) was held between 17 and 26 September 2022.

Compared to August, there are significant changes in the shares of men and women among IDPs. Within the general trend of approximate IDP number decrease **by 10.5 percent, the number of displaced women reduced** by one million while the number of displaced men grew by 350,000 persons.

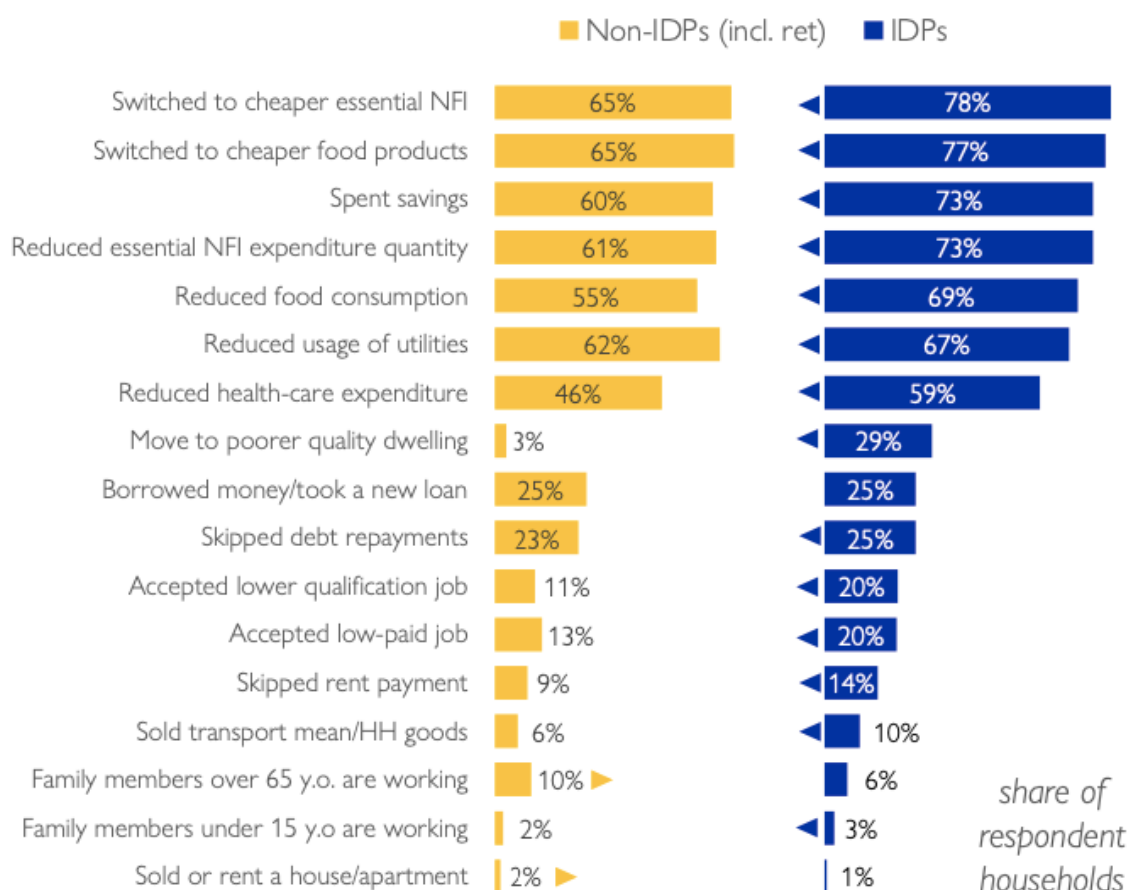
In total, **women still account for 61 per cent of IDPs** (compared to 70 percent in August). About 1.2 million IDPs are school-age children (5-17 y.o.). Elderly IDPs (over 60 years of age) now amount to almost 20 percent of the general amount of displaced population.



38 percent of IDP respondents informed that at least one member of their family now with them is a child between 5 and 17 years of age.

Among IDP respondents, 96 percent noted that their households use at least one negative coping strategy in response to decrease of earnings and increase of vulnerability. For comparison, 91 per cent of non-displaced households use at least one coping strategy. The share of confirmed use of

negative coping strategies among IDPs is higher compared to the general population.



Among the most pressing needs named by respondents are money (financial assistance) as well as medicines and medical services. With falling temperatures, solid fuel is also a pressing need for many people.

Over a third (36%) of all households with infants and small children in Ukraine noted that since the beginning of the war they have issues with providing enough food for their child. Among IDPs this number is higher: 40 per cent of IDP respondents with small children aged under 5 bring up the same problem. This problem is especially clear in eastern and southern macro-regions where 49% and 45% of households respectively note that they have problems with providing enough food for the infants. IDP households obviously have not much greater need in this aspect than non-IDP households in the same macro-regions.

In general, 60% of non-IDPs and 73% IDPs informed that during the last 30 days they spent their savings to provide for basic needs. Households whose

members belong to vulnerable groups informed more often that they had spent all of their savings. In particular, these are households of IDPs which have persons with disabilities (69%) and households with children under 18 (58%).

Female IDPs inform about pressing needs more often. For example, 49% of female IDPs informed about the lack of heating devices compared to 38% of male IDPs.

Among IDPs, women more often inform about the shortages of non-food supplies than men.



Almost a half (47%) of the population informed that during the last 39 days they or their family members had to cut their health spendings. In general, this was reported by households with vulnerable members, in particular people with disabilities, persons over 60 years of age, and people with chronic diseases.

Lack of Internet access or slow Internet connection and lack of devices (PCs, laptops, smartphones) for online studies were brought up most often as the reasons of no access to school education this academic year. In total, 41% pointed to the lack of Internet or equipment necessary for studies. This was more often reported by respondents in the eastern macro-region.

ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT		REGISTERED IDP PRESENCE							
Oblast	Raion	R7 27 June - 8 July	R8 12-24 July	R9 25 July - 05 Aug.	R10 08-19 Aug.	R11 22 Aug. - 2 Sept.	R12 5-18 Sept.	R13 19-30 Sept.	R14 3-16 October
Cherkaska	Cherkaskyi	60,001	60,484	61,276	62,065	62,296	63,542	64,429	64,853
	Umanskyi	37,481	37,740	38,031	38,414	38,568	38,638	38,717	40,670
	Zolotoniskyi	15,622	15,670	15,682	15,779	15,848	15,977	13,070	15,969
	Zvenyhorodskyi	29,310	29,365	29,458	29,418	29,584	29,389	29,391	27,653
Chernihivska	Chernihivskyi	33,012	33,365	33,595	33,970	34,104	34,483	35,118	35,437
	Koriukivskyi	8,675	8,650	8,711	8,717	8,729	8,709	8,654	8,643
	Nizhynskyi	19,212	18,983	18,767	18,602	18,498	18,229	18,046	18,033
	Novhorod-Siverskyi	5,524	5,579	5,613	5,668	5,679	5,777	5,938	6,025
Chernivetska	Prylutskyi	10,193	10,329	10,352	10,443	10,503	10,565	10,651	10,752
	Cnernivetskyi	60,806	59,975	58,516	59,679	59,528	59,499	59,118	58,772
	Dnistrovskyi	10,577	10,179	9,764	9,462	9,346	9,077	9,017	8,651
	Vyzhnytskyi	5,901	5,725	5,346	5,379	5,371	5,153	5,171	4,622
Dnipropetrovska	Dniprovskyi	124,074	128,464	132,665	138,342	140,027	145,938	151,425	154,234
	Kamianskyi	29,379	30,356	31,494	32,727	33,281	34,155	35,240	35,780
	Kryvorizkyi	46,538	49,107	51,860	54,540	55,883	58,273	60,351	61,259
	Nikopolskyi	10,759	11,169	11,365	14,853	16,081	20,767	25,063	27,338
	Novomoskovskyi	14,926	15,416	15,643	16,077	16,181	16,521	16,817	17,000
	Pavlohradskyi	16,926	17,763	18,295	19,005	19,319	19,984	20,637	22,919
	Synelnivskyi	19,122	19,801	20,371	21,318	21,587	22,276	23,219	23,698
Ivano-Frankivska	Ivano-Frankivskyi	50,581	53,738	7,972	55,698	57,917	55,556	58,617	57,803
	Kaluskyi	8,052	3,688	4,767	14,238	13,931	7,765	10,150	13,698
	Kolomyiskyi	20,560	21,118	23,629	20,382	8,040	20,832	19,038	19,757
	Kosivskyi	9,932	9,143	-	2,620	2,290	4,884	4,880	3,971
	Nadvirnianskyi	19,469	7,161	7,142	17,059	12,132	12,146	16,672	9,996
	Verkhovynskyi	2,229	95	1,726	52	1,552	1,814	1,756	226

As we can see, **according to IOM Dnipro region is among country leaders by the number of hosted IDPs**. And compared to other regions in the country, the number of new internally displaced persons in Dnipro region does not decrease but instead has an upward trend. Women traditionally dominate among internally displaced persons as they represent one of the most vulnerable population categories. In the framework of the study, the main groups of problems faced by female IDPs were identified and the experience of evacuation from previous place of residence was documented; this influences psychological and personal life strategy of each woman. Below, we provide the main results received during sociological study using the methods of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Female study participants are representatives of different social and demographic categories and present the experience of war and adaptation to new conditions with regard to a wide circle of needs among women in a contemporary Ukrainian society. During the selection of study participants, the

following factors were taken into account: presence/absence of children, younger children in care, adolescents in care, adult children, grandchildren, and family members requiring additional care. Regions the IDPs moved from to Dnipro region as their temporary place of stay: Kharkiv region, Chernihiv region, Donetsk region, Luhansk region, communities in Zaporizhzhya region now under temporary occupation, communities of Dnipro region now in the zone of active hostilities.

During the discussion of general context of events happening in the country, individual experiences of women living through the beginning of the war and their first responses to the events which made them leave their place of permanent residence were documented. In general, the absolute majority of study participants (both during focus groups and individual interviews) noted that no one among them expected the start of full-scale war despite informational noise about possible attack from Russia. Each participant regardless of her age and previous place of residence noted that the war came unexpectedly. Each study participant said that she became aware of the start of the war in the morning of 24 February with the sounds of the first explosions and first news pieces.

“We didn’t believe that, didn’t believe that, we were at work. They told us the war started. What? (FGD_SPK_5)”

“When I came to Kharkiv to my children and these events started, our son calls us and tells us to escape because GRADs are shelling, and when our daughter, they live on the ninth floor, went out to the balcony, I got scared of all that. (FGD_SPK_5)”

“It was unexpected. At first we saw all that on television, when they showed us the ongoing war and destruction. Especially Dnipro. We saw lots of things. We saw missiles. In other cities - it was a disaster... We hadn’t thought about that. There were talks there’d be war, we didn’t anticipate that war, we thought it’d pass by somehow. (C04)”

“We weren’t ready for all of that, we never thought something like that could happen in the 21st century. (C03)”

Still, for a certain time there had been confidence that the hostilities would end quickly, so the decision about evacuation from the previous place of residence hadn’t been taken at once. The dominating factors in favor of leaving

for the informants were threat to life and more intensive hostilities on the territory of community/town/city of permanent residence. The respondents left after two weeks to two months since the start of war, depending on the geography of hostilities. Another significant factor influencing the decision about evacuation was children or elderly relatives requiring constant care.

“The first shelling of our town was on March 13. We were under shelling. We sat in the basements. Starting from that moment we were afraid to go anywhere far. On March 16 we left with children. We left by an evacuation bus. (C01)”

“On March 18 a shell hit my workplace. There is a big store there. An explosion, right next to it people were getting cash in ATM machines and died as a result of explosion. And I see them lying... they are lying on the ground in front on the store, right on crushed glass... this was so shocking... after that I ran to my home in such a state of fear. And I understood I have to leave, I urgently have to leave. (C02)”

“There were hostilities. And we are located not that far away. Mezhova is close to Donetsk region. And this was very scary. I took my grandmother, my mother born in 1938 and we came here to Dnipro. (C04)”

“Until March 4 we were running to the basements. It was time to leave. We stood in lines for five hours in a row, it was frosty outside, food was running out. What to do? Dad refused to go. He said I won't go and that's it, we dragged him into a minibus, it was such a scandal. (FGD_SPK_8)”

“We left in March. Two children, one of them very small. They were saying, maybe it'll get solved. But no. We hadn't seen the sky for days. Children were very scared. Walls were shaking with shellings literally every day. They started bombing us so hard. (FGD_SPK_9)”

Most women didn't have a clearly planned route for movement; mostly the place of temporary stay was chosen if there were friends or relatives living in the same village/town/city or if it was close to their previous place of residence. For almost all study participants Dnipro region is the first place of residence beyond their permanent one.

“No, no, there was no plan at all. The thing is, we were simply going by an evacuation bus, first it took us to Pokrovsk and then we went by train from Pokrovsk to Dnipro. My father's cousin helped us with

accommodation in Dnipro region - we called her and asked her to find us something. And she contacted volunteers. (C01)”

“No, there was no plan, it was a spontaneous decision to leave. We moved in with people we knew. (C03)”

“We were going to our close relatives. (C04)”

We should single out an experience of one female IDP who had been under occupation for a rather long time and left her town when it had already been occupied. In this case the possibility to leave her permanent place of residence was complicated not only by the logistics of travel but also by obstacles when leaving the town due to control by enemy's troops and administration. The traumatic experience of life under occupation was exacerbated by her need to serve as a foster parent. Enemy troops prohibited to take the children out of town because the woman is not their relative and made attempts to take the children out to the Russian Federation. The woman was interrogated and arrested due to her refusal to cooperate; there were cases of collaboration in town and tip-offs about helping Ukrainian Armed Forces. Looting, thefts, torture and intimidation are widespread practices on the occupied territories. In these conditions women become one of the most vulnerable population categories.

“In our place it was complicated with the evacuation, of course; well, it was hard to make a decision. In Pologoy we had been occupied since March 3. We saw Hurricanes entering and aviation attacking for two days. We sat during that time in the basement and then came back to the house. We remained under occupation. And what happened? From March 3 and until August 1 we had lived under occupation. I am a foster parent, I have two children in my care - their mother is an alcoholic and had been deprived of parental rights. I had been to their commandant's office and basements; they demanded from me to give up the children. They offered me to cooperate with them. Well, I adamantly refused - I said you won't persuade me even if you drug me. My colleagues informed on me that I was helping Ukrainian Armed Forces. It is scary, scary when they are bombing but the scariest is to live under occupation when you don't understand when Ukrainians will come... And somebody tells on you. Next time there is a tip-off in writing and then you're gone if you don't cooperate... they tried to break me so that I sent children to the orphanage. We, Ukrainians, do not leave our children behind. (FGD_SPK_1)”

For many female study participants, the decision about evacuation was challenging. Very often it was put off until the last moment. The evacuation route was organized either independently or with the help of volunteers. Mostly women relied only on their funds. The moving experience varied from traumatic point of view, from radically dangerous travel to a rather organized trip. Study participants note that there wasn't enough information about the move "roadmaps" - where and how, main evacuation routes and go-to persons. But at the same time many of them stressed that they constantly met volunteers on the way in different locations; those volunteers provided organizational, psychological and humanitarian support.

"We hadn't reached Dnipro at once, the road was blocked so we had to go to Bakhmut. The car breaks down, they were shooting on the sides all along the way. I don't know how but we managed to reach Slovyansk in eight hours. We met very good volunteers. (FGD_SPK_9)"

"We hardly managed to leave, through the center and Kholodna Hora neighborhood, we saw destroyed buildings, it was scary of course, we couldn't believe our eyes, it was scary to see. We were traveling for seven hours. (FGD_SPK_9)"

"On March 22 we made a decision because it was already the fourth time. Before that, we had collected our things four times, drove in the city and came back home. We came back but I don't know why. (FGD_SPK_6)"

"We found volunteers and made an arrangement. And they told us a specific address, only warned us that three families would be living in a three-room apartment, i.e. one family per room... (C02)"

"The following day we found a center where volunteering organizations were giving out aid. For example, there was Olga Vladimirovna in the community center in Myrnohrad. Very good people. Everybody helped really well. First of all, they provided us with mattresses, bed linen, and hygiene supplies. (C01)"

At their new place of stay, most women went for different types of aid to volunteering organizations: that included food, clothing, furniture, household items, help with finding accommodation and documents to get an IDP certificate. Generally, most women participating in the study evaluate their

experience of adaptation to a new place of stay in positive terms. Taking into account that female IDPs have a challenging financial and humanitarian situation, those positive evaluations of adaptation can be explained by the feeling of psychological safety in their new place of stay compared to constant feeling of physical danger at their previous place of residence.

Most study participants noted that their whole families had moved, including husbands, children and elderly parents. Only several women noted that their men had stayed at their previous place of residence. At the same time, many respondents note that some relatives and friends have remained in their permanent place of residence, and they are in touch over the telephone. The reasons for which husbands of some women remained at their place of residence is the availability of work there in this period. In occupied territories, no family members of the women remained.

The efficiency of obtained aid and facilitation from state institutions, civil society organizations, volunteering centers, international humanitarian missions and medical staff had varying ratings from the participants. Volunteer organizations and humanitarian hubs helping IDPs were evaluated in the most positive way as the women had had the most experience of interacting with them. Interaction with state institutions had varying ratings: no radically negative feedback was documented but at the same time there were rather frequent complaints about the speed of issuing a range of necessary documents: IDP certificates which had to be re-registered in a new place and retirement certificates; there was also no legal consulting. The participants note that IDPs received payouts from the state in two months at most. The exceptions are payouts for foster children. The interaction with international humanitarian missions was about requests for specific types of financial assistance: from the Red Cross, the UN, and OSCE. The requests for help were approved; the terms of payouts vary with the participants. The experience of interacting with medical cluster is generally positive; the main problematic points are re-registering agreements with family doctors and referrals to consultations of specialized doctors. At the same time, study participants noted strategies and practices of assistance from medical staff in solving their basic health-related problems. During this period some women required serious medical intervention and noted the need for additional funds for treatment

which they couldn't provide themselves and therefore they had to ask volunteer organizations or humanitarian funds for help.

A separate block of discussion was about identifying the most acute problems faced by female IDPs after changing their place of residence. The main problems include the following: financial constraints, the need for respective housing, medical help, lack of equipment to organize comfortable online studies for children, employment, and the need for help in issuing documents.

"The biggest problem is medicine, lots of issues with the family doctor - I haven't managed to conclude an agreement with new one, I went to the polyclinic and they didn't solve my issue. (FGD_SPK_4)"

"Housing. It's already cold to sleep on the floor in the apartment, more so if you have children. Well, there is nothing because we just came with our bags, no blankets or pillows. Well, if they provided those people who leave with housing free of charge, because the prices are up to 7,000 for one small room. We have no possibility to study online. At home, during the occupation, two computers belonging to the children were taken. There is a smartphone. They send a photo with the assignment on Viber, we do it, take a photo and send it back. (FGD_SPK_1)"

"We have a great need for housing. Our apartment has already been put up for sale, there are prospective buyers coming. And we also need medical services. (FGD_SPK_6)"

"There are no acute problems, they give us food, the hub helps, not much but there's everything. Of course, diapers are the most important, they are very expensive. (FGD_SPK_9)"

"They help us with food, there is humanitarian aid. But there is need for financial help. (C01)"

"Yes, everything is very expensive. We needed a lot of money for that surgery. (C04)"

"Housing problems, food. We are retired. You know how small our pensions are, how can we survive? (C03)"

"A one-room apartment costs 7000 to 8000. And when we looked at it, there is no radiator. If you want, you can move in and install it yourselves. Well, it's hard with housing. (C02)"

In the block discussing gender-based IDP problems absolutely all study participants noted that they hadn't faced any manifestations of gender discrimination or oppression during the last six months or more. Besides, the women hadn't faced any violence or aggression towards them. On the one hand, these data testify to the lack of widespread gender discrimination in overt form; at the same time, for latent gender discrimination there is lack of awareness among women about the boundaries of admissible behavior towards them, which is explained by still limited information policy on other manifestations of gender violence except physical. Sometimes the practices of regular help are perceived as positive attitude and respect, which is absolutely not the same in the focus of gender tolerance policy. Based on the data received in this study we can only talk about the absence of facts of physical violence and open gender discrimination. Therefore, when asked if women feel safe in their present place of stay, all participants noted that presently they felt in relative safety; they are only concerned about the incidents of missile shellings in the city.

“Neither me nor my daughter faced discrimination. On the contrary, young guys, students helped us a lot, carried our bags, offered food and called taxis. They did help us a lot. (FGD_SPK_8)”

“Oh... You know, at this moment I feel safe. (C02)”

“Every time we hear these explosions, these missiles and air raids, so we are not safe. There is a lot of anxiety, we worry a lot. (C04)”

As for separate discussion of employment opportunities, study participants voiced different opinions - on the one hand, some women work remotely and do not require additional employment; on the other hand, there are different opinions whether there are open opportunities for employment. In their general evaluation, women expressed a wish to get help with employment (except elderly women who receive retirement benefits). Only several women participating in the study went to state employment centers in search for work. At the same time, participants of in-depth interviews noted that they would like to get employment consulting or legal support from different organizations in online format. This opinion was voiced predominantly by young and middle-aged female participants. Women of older age are ready

to communicate with various experts over the phone but prefer direct communication with representatives of organizations ready to provide such support.

“Employment... Yes, I resigned from work because there were no payouts. And now I am registered in employment center in Kamyanske. I have been registered for four months now. Well, for now there is no work for me. (C01)”

“Well, I am officially employed but our store we had in Avdeyevka is destroyed. No one of employees works, nobody pays taxes for us. They say that our employment record books are somewhere in Kyiv. They don’t give them out to us, and I don’t work but am officially employed. And I don’t have anything from that - no salary, no taxes paid, nothing. (C02)”

Absolutely all women participating in the study note that they haven’t faced any unkind attitude towards them as IDPs. On the contrary, they said they felt openness and support from the community where they temporarily live. During the discussion, no experience of discrimination by territorial status or other criteria was documented. At the same time, one participant noted that as she had experience of temporary stay in another region she saw that in Dnipro she feels more friendly and open attitude towards her and her family. Women who moved from the territory of Kharkiv region noted similarities between Dnipro and Kharkiv regions and lack of barriers for integration.

“Dnipro is very similar to Kharkiv, so everything is good. We arrived. We went to school, everyone received us very well, there were no problems. The principal and teachers are good, the neighbors are okay. Not a single time have we heard anything like ‘too many of those IDPs around’. It’s not like in Lviv. (FGD_SPK_2)”

“No, no! On the contrary, all people are kind and try to help. The village is small and everybody knows everybody. That’s why we are visible from afar. So as soon as we arrived everyone brought us something - curtains or bed linen. Everything is fine. (C01)”

The biggest fears and concerns of women were discussed separately. The dominating fear is about war and uncertainty about its duration; there is no confidence in the future, it’s impossible to build plans for further life and also there are concerns about the health of family members. Besides, women are

concerned about finances and accommodation. Therefore, we see that the fear of not satisfying basic vital needs for safety, health and primary means of existence comes in the foreground.

“There is this constant fear. This uncertainty about tomorrow. Nowhere is safe now. And it is even scarier because of that, it is scary to find ourselves without housing now. (C01)”

“Oh, I am afraid for the lives of my family, the most for the lives of children, grandchildren, all people in general. It is scary, very scary. Every time they show stuff on television, in Telegram channels, in the news. (C04)”

“Our biggest fear is the continuation of war. I want the war to finish as soon as possible. (C03)”

“Well, I am the most worried about the children, so that everything is fine with them. (FGD_SPK_9)”

“Oh, that fear of being trapped, when... I just hope everyone is healthy, you know. So that I can help my family and God forbid you fall ill and have no money for treatment. Out in the streets without anything. We don't want to live like bums. (C02)”

The study participants were offered to note their further migration intentions. Most women answered that they plan to come back to their previous place of residence under the condition that the hostilities are over and only if their place of residence is on Ukraine-controlled territory. Only some women from older age group are ready to come back to their place of residence before the war is over but also under the condition the hostilities become less intense. Only several women whose own housing had been fully destroyed and the city/town is not suitable for life with children voiced a confident opinion that they don't plan to come back to their previous place of residence and instead will be adapting in this city. The possibility of going abroad temporarily or permanently was only considered by several women but they voiced uncertainty that these plans would be implemented; they only noted that they are not discarding this option and the deciding factor would be possible prospects for their children.

“The house is destroyed, the city is destroyed, everything is taken out. Where do we come back? I think we have to settle down here. (FGD_SPK_9)”

“I am a true Ukrainian and won’t swap Ukraine for any place. (FGD_SPK_5)”

“I also think I won’t swap my country for anything else. (FGD_SPK_1)”

“Yes, there were thoughts like that and now I’d like to make international passports. So that they are available. Again, I am saying that nowhere is safe now and because of this it is scarier every day. I don’t know what’ll happen next. (C01)”

“The girls are saying, why are you sitting here? Pack up your things and go. How can I leave my dad? But I also have to think about my daughter. There are nuances. Maybe I’ll consider this option but only for the sake of my daughter. (FGD_SPK_8)”

“My village is still occupied. I can’t go there no matter how hard I may wish for it. But I really want to come back. (FGD_SPK_1)”

“Yes, I want to go home very much. Presently our city is controlled by Ukraine; I hope it will stay this way. If I come back, it’ll be only under this condition. (C01)”

“We plan to go, we just need to improve our health a bit. And we’ll surely come back home. (C04)”

“I hope and want very much. My heart aches every day when I think about it. It’s our place, we’ve lived a life there. (C02)”

Study participants were also offered to forecast possible scenarios of future events in the country and to tell about their biggest dream, what they aspire for the most. Most study participants were doubtful when answering the question about prospects of further events but at the same time agreed that from their point of view it is logical and expected to anticipate the end of the war and the stabilization of situation in the country with further positive development. The main dreams of women are also associated with the end of war and coming peace. Each study participant described future victory of Ukraine in the war with positive attitude and inspiration. The link between coming peace and the belief of women in happy future is rather clearly visible.

“I think everything will be fine, everything will be Ukraine. We’ll reconstruct our country. We love Ukraine, we love people, our defenders who protect us. I know and I think that everything will be fine. (C04)”

“Oh, I think that everything will even out. This situation cannot last forever. We’ll see peace, quiet and calm, there will be no conflicts and we’ll stay in our land. (C02)”

“I want to believe that everything will be over. Soon everything will finish, I really want to believe in that. (C03)”

“I believe that the war will finish, and I believe in our military a lot, and I really believe in our Ukraine, that it is going to be the most beautiful, the holiest and everyone will respect it. And there will be peace for everyone. (FGD_SPK_5)”

“Our dream is for the war to finish. And I really want that. (FGD_SPK_1)”

“Well... what would I want the most? Yes... peace and quiet, so that my family is with me, health. Everyone alive and healthy. (C02)”

“A dream? For peace to come! (C01)”

SECTION II

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH THE WIVES OF MILITARY PERSONNEL

The full-scale war in Ukraine has become an extraordinary challenge for all Ukrainian women, especially vulnerable cohort being wives of the military personnel who are now on a challenging path searching for inner strength to wait, support and believe in their husbands who bravely defend the sovereignty and independence of our country. That is why one of the tasks of sociological study was to conduct a series of in-depth interviews with the wives of the military personnel who live in Dnipro region to ***identify specific life situations faced by women when their men are in the zone of hostilities and also psychological features of communicative behavior actualized / formed when living through this situation***. Nine informants were surveyed in total. The basis for forming a sample array for a high-quality strategy of sociological study was the extent of theoretical saturation.

START OF ARMED AGGRESSION. GENERAL CONTEXT OF EVENTS

The first block of questions concerned the general evaluation of the situation conditioned by full-scale invasion. In general, the informants noted that they had not been psychologically ready and even denied the very possibility of war despite the presence of target messages aimed to mobilize Ukrainians in the media field. Typically, the informants describe events of February 24 in the following categories:

“we were in great shock” (B03), “I couldn’t believe in the possibility of conflict, that there’d be something more serious” (B02), “I was not ready for such a wide-scale event” (B05), “for me personally the war started unexpectedly because I hadn’t expected or thought it’d start so abruptly” (B01), “it wasn’t something people believed in. Well, actually I suspected something, that maybe something was brewing. But full-scale war? Not that. (B04)”

In general, such lack of psychological readiness to the situation of war is confirmed by the results of the survey conducted by Reiting sociological group on 16-17 February 2022. At that time only 19% of respondents evaluated the probability of Russia's full-scale military invasion in Ukraine as high, 33% as average, 20% as low, and 25% believed that there wasn't any threat. The number of those who hadn't seen any threat varied significantly by regions: from 14 per cent in the west to 42 per cent in the east of the country².

Despite the factor of personal (un)acceptance of full-scale invasion the wives of military personnel evaluated the readiness of the state as rather high:

"it seemed to me it was ready" (B01), "it seems it was ready. In general, they did a great job. They were really ready" (B04), "I believe that our state was ready. Because if our state hadn't been ready. I am sorry, I guess our territories would have been much more occupied" (B05), "on February 24 our troops were in positions. Our military equipment was brought where it was necessary. Maybe they were getting ready" (B02), "it seems to me that the authorities knew more than we did. But it seems to me that it was also a blow for them" (B01).

The abovementioned quotes are a latent index of trust in the authorities and testifies to high support of first persons in the state and the decisions made about the course of military action. At the same time, the growth of civil self-awareness index is rather telling. Starting from April 2022, Reiting sociological group during the eighth wave of national survey "Ukraine in the context of war" (6 April 2022) documented significant growth of pride about Ukraine among respondents - if in August 2021 34 per cent of respondents noted that they felt pride for their country (at that time the emotion of sadness about Ukraine was a dominating one), since April the feeling of pride dominates (80%)³.

The wives of military personnel also point to significant ability of Ukrainians to mobilize; they became much more cohesive when facing external threat:

² Dynamics of war threat evaluation (16-17 February 2022). URL: https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/dinamika_ocenki_voennoy_ugrozy_16-17_fevralya_2022_g.html

³ Eighth national survey: psychological markers of war (6 April 2022). URL: <https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/b29c8b7d5de3de02ef3a697573281953.html>

“got together in the face of misery. There hasn’t been as much cohesion before” (B04), “the society quickly mobilized and everyone clearly knew their mission and role. Yes, I am very, very proud of our people. This is a big thing” (B05); however, the society’s readiness for full-scale invasion in general is described in negative terms: “in principle, it seems to me, nobody was ready for that. It just so happened. A great misery came to our country” (B04), “well no, the society wasn’t ready at all, in general, not a single percent. Maybe some people predicted something like that. But unfortunately, I saw huge, really huge panic. Everybody was panicking, so it was very hard on the people” (B02), “most of the population had the same attitude I did, for example, everybody hoped it’s the 21st century, people are civilized. It seemed to me that this wouldn’t happen” (B01).



A separate subject of analysis during the study was migration moods among wives of the military personnel in the beginning of the war because the number of Ukrainian women who left their homes and went abroad is rather significant and forces discussions about challenging demographic situation on the national level and future restoration of the nation’s gene pool. It is worth noting that the issue of leaving the country remains complicated and mostly depends on further unfolding of events and conflict escalation though wives of the military personnel say that they are not ready (mostly psychologically) for emigration and view displacement inside the country to safer regions as an alternative:

“It is very scary. I didn’t want to leave until the very last moment, I still don’t” (B01), “going abroad - that’s a no. I haven’t even thought about it. I haven’t even thought about it. We left, we were like internally displaced people” (B04), “I want to say when this happened -

it was probably in April. I didn't leave the territory of Ukraine. I left the region for a month" (B05), "there were thoughts about it, yes. We hadn't considered going abroad as an option at all. Maybe, somewhere on the territory of Ukraine" (B03).

HUSBAND'S MILITARY SERVICE. CHANGES IN EVERYDAY LIFE. MAIN PROBLEMS (HOUSEHOLD, WORK, CHILDREN'S STUDIES, ETC.)

The analysis of research and empirical studies allowed us to define that the life situation of wives of military personnel can be conditionally divided into two stages: first, when the husband is in the zone of active hostilities, and second, after his return (as the context for secondary traumatization). With regard to the goal and objectives of the research, let us concentrate on the specifics of the first stage when the husband is in the zone of active hostilities.

Among interviewed women there were those whose husbands volunteered to go to the Armed Forces and those whose husbands were mobilized:

"it was a voluntary decision. He wasn't hiding, he even called his human resources department at work and asked whether his conscription notice had arrived" (B04), "when the war started, on the very first day he went out and searched where to go. Well, in the beginning he wanted to go into territorial defense. But they already had enough people, he came too late. Then he went to... the military enlistment office, and they took him, to the military enlistment office" (B01), "he was mobilized in the beginning of March. He is a sergeant, so he was among the first mobilized, and this wasn't even discussed because defending the country was the first priority" (B05), "he was registered in the territorial defense on 25 February. That is, he woke up and said: 'I have to do something'" (B02), "This was a forced decision. He was conscripted." (B03)

When asked which problems they faced during the first weeks of their husbands' service, the women provided extremely emotional answers:

"a huge fear for my child, myself and my husband appeared. It was very hard" (B03), "I lived through shock, tears and unacceptance. During all those years we are together we had never been apart for so long" (B02), "it was more of a psychological pressure - I was worried and anxious" (B05), "it was shock, a huge shock. Those news every

day. Impossible” (B01), “it was very hard both emotionally and physically” (B04).

The replies above allow us to conclude that when waiting for the husband to come back from the front the women experience a range of possible psychoemotional states: manifested emotional and physical tension, anxiety, irritability, confusion, fatigue, and insomnia. American Academy of Sleep Medicine published results of the study on psychological aspects of life in the families of military personnel. The study covered 1480 women married to the military. The women answered questions about sleep and issues with sleep, mood, psychological state, frequency of depressive disorders, satisfaction with life, and reasons for visiting doctors. As a result, it turned out that 54% of wives of military personnel have anxious sleep at night, have trouble falling asleep, wake up tired and depressed, often feel depression and apathy episodes, and experience strong fatigue several times a week⁴.

During the study it was also established that women feel exhaustion due to tension; they are concerned about the lack of skills to overcome unusual life problems; they have a hard time accepting challenges that emerge and finding constructive solutions:

“well, there are things I was used to rely on him for. Now he is not there and I need to do those things myself” (B02), “my husband comes home sometimes and it feels unusual now when he comes home. He comes and says, ‘Well, you are already solving everything yourself. So everything is fine’”(B01), “this is very hard. I don’t have time for myself at all, no time to do anything about the household as well. Sometimes a door would collapse on the cabinet. You understand, I can already screw it back on. Or I went to his workplace to get coal, all by myself. Well, this is very hard. That’s what I am saying, both emotionally and physically” (B04).

Despite the state of shock described by all informants when talking about the first weeks of forced separation from their husbands, when asked about interaction with volunteer organizations the women confirmed that they actively participate in volunteering activities and donate to Armed Forces of Ukraine:

⁴ Wives of military personnel have sleep problems - psychologists. URL: http://new-s.com.ua/zdorovja/druzyny_vijskovykh_majutj_problemy_zi_snom_06104.html

“when we understood he had to go we donated that thousand for Armed Forces. We donated that money, now I make candles for the trenches myself for my own money” (B03), “we help and the children do to. As you know, our warriors really appreciate the help and support of our children... Recently we also sent them a parcel. The children and us, parents, collected delicious stuff, knitted and sewed things by hand. You know, depending on who had which skills” (B05), “the guys were passing by here, and we took some tea to them. Globally yes, there were donations... donations and collecting some things. Like this” (B02), “I participated and helped with things. Things and food for refugees. Plus we transferred money to Armed Forces of Ukraine, to Come Back Alive foundation. I also passed some food to volunteers. Well, socks and everything what was needed. We passed them to volunteers and the volunteers sent them to the frontlines.” (B03)

This allows to conclude that each Ukrainian was actively involved in fighting the enemy, some in the frontlines and some in the rear.

A painful issue for wives of the military personnel is children, namely concerns about their emotional state. The researchers note that for children of military personnel strong, unexpected or prolonged chronic impacts are common; they create a permanent stress background and influence those children in a destructive way. The following specific factors of extreme stress among children of the military personnel are singled out:

- social (due to the context of military service);
- family and household (due to the context of family relationships, type of attachment and type of children’s upbringing);
- personal (depending on character features of parents);
- psychoemotional (due to chronic distress and unstable psychoemotional state of parents);
- psychodynamic (due to the absence of favorable forms to overcome the consequences of stress factors, life resilience)⁵.

How concerns about psychoemotional state of children point to the formation of tension and the need for psychological help:

⁵ Zhuravliova, N. Peculiarities of secondary traumatization among wives of war veterans: landmarks for psychological help. Collection of research works from Kostyuk Institute of Psychology in the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine. 2018. Pp. 124–151.

“he was let go for two days. Only that. The child hasn’t recognized him at all. This was the most painful, Lyosha approaches him and the child screams and runs away from him. This is how two days passed” (B04), “when two people are engaged in the child’s upbringing, this is much easier. Including school as well. There are some things that the father can better explain to the boy” (B02), “psychological work with children mostly... Maybe some collective activities that would help children to adapt” (B02), “for children, for example, maybe some trainings. For the daughter yes, because she is also very anxious without her dad. She was very close to him” (B01).

At that the women rate their own adaptive potential, i.e., the ability to balance family life, parenthood, work and possibly civil/volunteering activities in a rather optimistic way:

“she can, she can. Of course she [Ukrainian woman] can. It all depends... But you see how this happened? A military man conditions us into that because he fights for all of us every day” (B01), “absolutely so because now we don’t have a different choice at all” (B02), “I am a strong Ukrainian woman. I can do everything as experience has shown.” (B03)

At the same time, professional self-fulfillment remains a rather significant problem as women note that distance format of school functioning directly influences the possibility of full employment; this is especially true for women who have children of pre-school and elementary school age:

“now I am on maternity leave. Before that, I had been an entrepreneur, I had worked as a hairdresser. Now I don’t have anyone to leave the child with. So we live off the money my husband earns and off state payouts” (B04), “yes, labor activities have changed, how exactly: I’ll repeat that we work in a kindergarten and of course we all switched to distance learning; it had been very complicated at first but now we have learned the ropes” (B05), “10 years old is not an age where a child can stay alone. So if before we had working schedules and we didn’t leave the child home alone, now there is a lot of anxiety. But how? Just like every mother, it’s just you” (B02), “before the war we planned to move to the city, get the child into inclusive center so that experts could work with her, and as soon as she adapted in this center with experts I would have immediately found a job and also worked.” (B03)

In the situation of forced separation with the husband women point out the importance of help from the family:

“there is support. Everybody supports me. At first it drove me nuts because everybody kept saying, ‘Hold on.’ That drove me crazy. But I am a strong Ukrainian woman, I’ll survive everything. My friends and acquaintances help me” (B04), “people help, yes” (B01), “there is huge support and I feel it probably every minute, every hour. We support each other at work” (B05), “when they don’t just tell you, ‘Oh, hold on.’ There is help even among colleagues when they tell you they’ll come, help and find what you need. In this aspect I have to thank my family” (B02), “a lot of support” (B03).

Another side of increased attention to wives of the military personnel, as the researchers note, can be the so-called “compassion fatigue” and “burnout” (there is a certain link of these notions with secondary trauma) (informant B04 pointed to the development of a similar psychoemotional state). It is believed that a human can feel one or several of the abovementioned states simultaneously. Compassion fatigue is the state of emotional and physical fatigue emerging in people who care for those needing help, feel sorry for them but can’t do what they would like to, don’t have enough time for rest and self-care. Compassion fatigue is characterized by physical and emotional exhaustion and later decrease in the empathic ability. The notion of “burnout” is also often used as a synonym to “secondary trauma” but burnout, just like compassion fatigue, doesn’t always mean a previous traumatic experience. People can feel exhaustion when they face an increase of life stresses at home and at work, feel tired but keep performing their obligations without leaving enough time for rest or self-care⁶.

Informants have a rather ambiguous opinion about help from the state and awareness of rights, benefits and social guarantees noted in the Law of Ukraine “On social and legal protection of military personnel and their family members”:

“for now there hasn’t been anything” (B03), “I haven’t looked too much into it. When we were IDPs I did not apply for payouts on principle, they were supposed to give us 10,000. My husband and I discussed that I didn’t need that money, I have everything necessary”

⁶ Zhuravliova, N. Peculiarities of secondary traumatization among wives of war veterans: landmarks for psychological help. Collection of research works from Kostyuk Institute of Psychology in the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine. 2018. Pp. 124–151.

(B04), "as he's in service for a bit more than a month, we haven't yet put up that objective to receive support. Honestly, I am not knowledgeable about these issues at all. But I know that in our city you can get financial assistance in the amount of approximately 20,000 hryvnias. But we haven't yet started on that issue" (B02), "well, I haven't read myself but people told me about these laws." (B01)

Similar statements testify to the fact that women are mostly relying on help from their family and friends and know little about legal aspects regulating their status. That is why, when answering questions about needed help, they put legal and psychological consultations as priority:

"maybe legal help, I'll repeat that our only breadwinner is our dad. Maybe it's possible to bring him back from the frontlines somehow because I also have disability, just like the child" (B03), "maybe mostly psychological work with children" (B02), "probably, I believe, I... not I, my child needs. Probably some psychological support" (B05), "psychological, possibly. I can tell you that not each person understands the state we are now in. This is now very relevant. This is psychological help, I'd like to get it." (B01)

With regard to the aforesaid, we consider the development and implementation of mental health education program for the wives of military personnel very promising; this program would be aimed at balancing the emotional state of women and developing efficient communication skills along with defining stress triggers.

INDIVIDUAL AND PERSONAL ADAPTATION FACTORS

As the study has been dedicated to family relationships, which is a rather sensitive topic, a separate block of questions was aimed at documenting the awareness and verbalization by women of forced separation with their husbands. In this case, when answering questions about changes in intimate relationships, the informants reacted rather emotionally and talked about significant emotional exhaustion:

"how do I tell you... Emotions... Well, if you keep yourself together, everything is fine. But if you succumb to emotions, you don't want to live anymore... nobody understands what you want to hear. Do you

want to hear some compassion? Or something else, so it's better not to hear anything, not to talk or... I don't know" (B01), "all these emotions: separation, and being apart, and maybe jealousy. It happens, I understand everything. And after long conversations with my husband... I visited him and we talked, and we managed to leave this dead-end. And we keep supporting each other. And my personal life... You know, I probably haven't checked to see how it changed. Maybe it changed" (B05), "I can tell you, when you are with a person 24/7 with a very emotional connection all the time and all of a sudden that person is not there. This breaks you somehow and puts you in a framework as if you have difficulty breathing" (B02), "we miss each other very much, he misses his child, his child misses him. It's very hard, we miss him. I don't know how to explain it, it's hard." (B03)

It is also worth noting that forced separation actually transformed the relationship into an online format. For many married couples this is the first-ever experience in life and often they don't know how to cope with emotions, which is an additional factor of both emotional and physical exhaustion.

The study by Kharkiv psychologist Olena Sorokina conducted via handed-out questionnaires confirms that (50 wives of military personnel aged between 21 and 52 were surveyed in 2020). The received data allowed the researcher to determine the main challenges among wives of military personnel: 83% of respondents talked about emotional exhaustion; 63% admitted having household problems; 61% felt lack of support from their husbands and solitude; a third of women brought up economic hardships. Financial problems are associated not just with the fact that the woman has to independently provide for her family; often it is necessary to buy clothing and equipment for her husband who is in the zone of active hostilities. Organizational difficulties were added up, previously solved by the husband: technical repairs of home and gadgets, other unplanned and unexpected situations in the household. The women had to adapt to a new life situation. And if they had enough energy for joint family tasks, children and other family members, self-care remained the last priority. The respondents complained about physical and emotional exhaustion, loss of prospects for life; it was hard to take care of their health, eating, rest, and regular working hours⁷.

⁷ Sorokina, O. Personal resources of wives of military personnel in dire circumstances. URL: <http://pj.journal.kspu.edu/index.php/pj/article/view/1079>

Women associate another spectrum of predominantly negative emotions with the society around them; in particular, they described situations which caused irritation, aggression, and anger:

“there were moments when others thanks to their financial resources found themselves a good place. They allegedly served in the Armed Forces but were in a ‘comfortable’ place. So they could eat and sleep normally, see their families. They didn’t have to sleep on the ground in trenches” (B03), “there is this thing when friends and family try to make you feel better. They want to take you out for a walk or a coffee, and you just don’t have energy for that, you don’t want and don’t need that. There is irritation, but I have to pull myself together” (B02), “Irritation. Honestly, I also felt very hurt for all of us, for warriors, because of all this situation” (B05), “I want to hear one thing and they say something completely different. And those political views among people, we are all different. And everyone has different questions and everyone tells their opinion when answering those questions. It is very hard to digest all that” (B01), “there was (irritation) in the beginning. But actually I am a very energetic person and sociable among my friends and people close to me. Well, the war has filtered out my circle a lot.” (B03)*

Similar results were also reported by Kharkiv researcher Olena Sorokina who noted that almost every sixth respondent (15%) said she had felt social pressure: if support and positive attitude from the closest circle gave energy, pity from others irritated instead; the conversations that the husband could die or come back mutilated exhausted them, caused anxiety and aggression.

Therefore, we see that external resource, the society, is an important component of life among wives of military personnel. Social circle can perform both constructive and destructive function. So we can assume that the attitude to military conflict and the military which dominates in the society directly impacts the emotional state of the warriors’ wives, often in a negative way. Women have to search for an acceptable circle, limit communications with ill-wishing acquaintances, sometimes even relatives, and accumulate new experience in the social field⁸.

As for gender issue in Ukrainian society, the dynamics is positive. Among informants, there hasn’t been a single woman pointing to a minimal manifestation of gender discrimination, oppression or violence towards her:

⁸ Sorokina, O. Personal resources of wives of military personnel in dire circumstances. URL: <http://pj.journal.kspu.edu/index.php/pj/article/view/1079>

“there wasn’t anything like that. We have a free country” (B04), “there hasn’t been anything like that. I haven’t felt it. Everything is fine” (B01), “no, I cannot describe anything like it. There wasn’t anything like that” (B05), “no, fortunately there hasn’t been anything like that, no” (B02), “nothing like that during this whole time, even during my whole life, I haven’t noticed” (B03).

LOOK INTO FUTURE

The last block of questions pertained to the study of intentions among informants about their plans for the future and views on further development of the situation in the country. It is worth noting that in general wives of the military personnel associate the end of the war exclusively with the victory of Ukraine in short- or mid-term perspective, with preservation of territorial integrity according to the borders of 1991:

“presently the news are optimistic, well, I hope it will finish in winter. Or maybe on the contrary, it will drag on because of the winter. And in spring it can all resume. But I still hope that our guys will chase these demons away from our land, and we’ll be seeing New Year in with our whole family” (B04), “I really hope for victory. Nothing more” (B01), “I see only positive development, I only see our prosperity. I see victory and only our victory, only Ukraine. The victory of Ukraine, Ukrainian people, the prosperity of our nation because we are cultured, we are hard-working, we are great people” (B05), “I think there will be victory, not just the end of war but victory. Because everybody is working for the sake of it - our heroes are defending us there, and we are supporting them here” (B02), “I believe it’s going to be victory, when each occupied city, town and village comes back to us. They will be deoccupied, we’ll chase all that scum away and bring every piece of our land back. It will come back, come back isn’t even the right word because it hasn’t left us. It was just taken away.” (B03)

The unwavering belief in the victory of Ukraine and restoration of territorial integrity is confirmed by the results of monitoring study by Reiting sociological group. During the 17th wave of national survey it was determined that the absolute majority of Ukrainians (93%) are convinced that Ukraine will

be able to fight back Russia's attack. About 60% noted that more time is needed for the victory in the war: 20% believe that more than a year is needed, 40% talk about six months to a year. At the same time, almost a fourth believe that up to several months are needed for the victory⁹.

As for migration moods, wives of the military personnel generally speak about their intention to stay at home; they plan travels abroad exclusively in the context of future family vacation trips:

“now of course not. In the beginning I didn't want to, and now all this... this is not good at all” (B01), “I accept my situation and stay home” (B05), “Now no, absolutely not” (B02), “we haven't looked at this option, maybe some beach vacation in an exotic spot, then yes” (B03), “on the contrary, my husband and I dream where we'd go after the victory.” (B04)

The last interview question was about the biggest dream of wives of military personnel. We received a totally predictable result: the dream of each woman is for her husband to come back alive, for peace to resume and for us to celebrate THE VICTORY OF UKRAINE:

“probably like everyone, for the guys to come back and for peace to come. Now nobody has a different dream, I guess” (B03), “victory and return of all husbands to their wives and children” (B02), “I really want peace, I want us, our guys to come back and everything to be fine. We'll reconstruct our country. I want peace. I want peace” (B05), “victory for sure, yes” (B01), “for my husband to come back and for all this to end. So that the war is over and my husband is alive and healthy. And so that as few as possible of our guys get hurt. So that there's victory.” (B04)

Therefore, the results of analysis performed on interviews with wives of military personnel confirmed that a challenging life situation this category of women has now found themselves in became a test of their physical and psychological resilience and made them reconsider their attitudes to themselves and people around them. In the future, analysis of secondary traumatization among women after demobilization of their husbands will

⁹ Seventeenth national survey: identity. Patriotism. Values (17-18 August 2022). URL: https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/s_mnadcyate_zagalnonac_onalne_opituvannya_dentichn_st_pat_otizm_c_nnost_17-18_serpnya_2022.html

require deep sociological study; experience shows that they often face challenging psychoemotional states when coming back to peaceful life.

SECTION III

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH FEMALE MILITARY PERSONNEL

With regard to current martial law in Ukrainian society, the principles of gender equality and equal opportunities in the field of military service are adhered to and regulated by Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service”. Under part 12 of Article 1 (complemented by paragraph two under Law No. 2523-VIII of 6 September 2018), the legislation stipulates that “women perform military duty on par with men” except cases envisaged by maternity and child issues¹⁰. Therefore, the law envisages equal rights and opportunities for voluntary service (contract-based) and conscription, service in the main cohort and in reserve, military duty on stand-by and adherence to the rules of military registration. “The Armed Forces of Ukraine have over 40,000 women on military posts. Over 5,000 of them are on the frontlines in the context of full-scale war; they are in areas of active hostilities. This was reported by Serhii NAIEV, commander of joint armed forces on air of national TV marathon on 14 February. According to him, 8,000 female military personnel serve on officer posts.”¹¹

When performing secondary analysis of sociological research on female military personnel, one should bring up a civic project on Ukrainian female defenders at the war with Russia (since 2014), “The Invisible Battalion”. This project became a sequel to sociological study of women’s participation in war conducted by sociologists of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. The results of this project showcased gender problems and possible further prospects of their solution¹²
13.

One of the tasks of sociological study was to interview female military personnel serving in Ukrainian Armed Forces and permanently residing in

¹⁰ Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service”. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2232-12#Text>

¹¹ Krechetova, D. Armed Forces informed how many women defend Ukraine on the frontlines. URL: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/10/14/250848/>

¹² The Invisible Battalion. (official website) URL: <https://invisiblebattalion.org/>

¹³ Ганна Гриценко, Анна Квіт, Тамара Марценюк. «Невидимий Батальйон»: участь жінок у військових діях в АТО : соціологічне дослідження ; “Invisible Battalion”: Women’s Participation in ATO Military Operations : Sociological Research : [Ukr.] / edited by Tamara Martseniuk. - Kyiv, FOP Klimenko 2016. - 80 p. - ISBN 978-966-2717-20-4

Dnipro region. With regard to communication challenges (impossibility to make phone calls and organize face-to-face interviews) and confidentiality of information about the military, it was proposed to hold an online survey with open questions using Google Forms. The theoretical saturation of the sample array amounted to eight informants who are rifle shots, snipers, anti-air defense personnel, company medic, and psychologist.

START OF ARMED AGGRESSION. CHANGES IN EVERYDAY LIFE

The first block of questions was general, same as for the other groups of informants. When asked how the war started for female military personnel, their answers varied from:

“very unexpectedly” (questionnaire No. D06) and “unexpectedly” (D08) to “war is something I am used to, so I was performing my duty” (D01) and “I had a premonition something bad would happen” (D05).

The defenders who were already performing their tasks commented the start of war in the following way:

“lack of understanding what was happening around” (D04), “the war started from taking the unit under supervision and organizing their move to the area for the task” (D07).

The answers containing statements that the start of aggression was unexpected mostly belong to female military who hadn't served before the start of the war. That is why they felt the start of full-scale invasion as civilians. With regard to results of interviews with female volunteers, IDPs and wives of military personnel, such answers are typical for the civil population.

As Russian aggression had been a topic for lively discussions even before the invasion, the following question asked whether female military and their family members had been preparing possible strategies for action. Half of respondents answered the following:

“Yes”, “Yes, I was preparing children and parents” (D01, D02, D03, D07); others - no (D04, D06, D08) because “until the very last moment

my family didn't believe there'd be such global unfolding of hostilities" (D04), "My family hadn't believed until the very last" (D05).

One informant noted the following: *"Unfortunately, we hadn't been preparing and I regret that a lot"* (D06). The answers about readiness for possible attack are also totally logical. As the messages about possible invasion were present in information space and not voiced by official authority, one can document the influence of distrust in media among the population and even the military.

As for readiness for the war, in the opinion of defenders neither the state not the society were ready.

"I believe that for the most part society wasn't ready at all for a real war, even if somebody heard some warnings somewhere they didn't pay enough attention to those" (D06).



However, as for social activism practices the opinions of informants were somewhat different; the following options were present:

"maybe people weren't ready in the beginning but the first day of war radically changed everything - people found maximal energy to help Armed Forces (food, warm clothing, donations to buy ammo), as if we have all joined forces for the sake of one thing, our victory." (D04)

As for the readiness of the state for Russian invasion, the defenders also do not rate it is high - “70% with regard to their response to the situation” (D05), “60%” (D07), “a four on a ten-point scale” (D03).

The unwavering belief in own capacities and the Armed Forces is manifested in answers to the question about evacuation of the family abroad. Apart from one respondent, the families of female military personnel stayed in Ukraine and didn’t go abroad.

“Grandmother with aunt and children moved abroad, and I joined the Armed Forces.” (D05)

MILITARY SERVICE. MOTIVATION FOR JOINING THE ARMY

The following block of questions pertained to military services and motivation for joining the Armed Forces. Most respondents started their service in 2013-2014 and had military experience in ATO and JFO in Mariupol.

“Eight years. Yes, I had fighting experience. The war of 2014.” (D01)

“I have been in service since 2014, I decided to go when the war started in my city.” (D02)

“I am in the Armed Forces since 2013. I had experience in ATO, and then in JFO in Mariupol.” (D06)

Among defenders in the sample array there are those who started service recently and their experience is two to five years and those who joined the Armed Forces with the start of full-scale assault.

“During the first days I collected my things and joined Territorial Defense. I had no military experience but wanted to join the army before.” (D05)

The wish to help the military with PTSD was voiced by one informant who is a teacher by training.

“How can you better understand such people - you should be in the same environment) that’s why I’m here)” (D04)

The families of respondents supported their decision about the military service.

“They supported me, they are proud and very worried. Now they are worried much more due to the location of my service.” (D05)

Only in two cases close friends tried to discourage them from going into service. As for the challenges with registration for service/contract signing, most informants noted they hadn’t had any difficulties at all. The only unusual thing is *“stricter discipline but I got used to it quickly.” (D04)* Two respondents talked about problems:

“The military conscription office didn’t want to send a request to military units accepting women.” (D02)

“Yes, there were difficulties. Gender inequality. The awareness that you’re a soldier, it’s a different world.” (D01)

One of the aspects of successful adaptation is a feeling of being in the right place and no regrets about the decision to serve. Among female military personnel, there are more answers saying that they regret/used to regret about their decision to serve than those who don’t regret anything.

“I haven’t regretted a single time!” (D01)

“I haven’t regretted, I mostly liked it, the service aspects, training in training centers... but it was a bit uncomfortable in the first hours of war... I was scared by feeling of confusion what to do, how to survive... but later I adapted)” (D04), “No, not a single time” (D08).

Military service in the army and at war have their peculiarities. That is why the process of adaptation to war reality may have situations when a feeling of condemnation for the decision to defend and serve emerges. A lot of factors influence the adaptation to the war. When asked if they regretted going into service, female military personnel answered they had such experience.

“Yes and very often, my brothers-in-arms supported me.” (D02)

“There were moments, everything changed with the start of full-scale war when I understood that even my help was needed and I can help people.” (D07)

In these answers we see how important it is to have the support of brothers-in-arms and to be aware of one’s mission in this war. Strict discipline in service produces the feeling of having no freedom of choice. In other words, “it can’t be any other way”. For example, one informant answering the question about situations when she regretted going into service said the following:

“Sometimes it is hard to accept that you are not your own master. You fully depend on orders and commands even if you have a different opinion.” (D06)

An important question from this block concerned problems with psychological adaptation to the military service. Naturally, war and its reality are a challenge for psychological and mental state of a person. The success of adaptation to new reality depends on different factors, one of which is harnessing the fear of death, which is natural for a human. Half of informants noted that they hadn’t felt problems with adaptation.

“I am used to spending time in not really comfortable conditions so the adaptation went very quickly. I don’t have fear when we go out on a task. There is no place for fear in these conditions because sometimes you have to work like a machine.” (D05)

“I adapt to circumstances very fast. I can say that the feeling of fear cannot be harnessed completely and it is normal to be afraid. But you need to have hope.” (D06)

Some answers contained even methods of harnessing the feeling of fear, with two polar opinions documented:

“Breathing exercises. Grounding. Positive thinking. Finding your role and place in the army!” (D01)

“To harness your fear you have to try not to close up but instead meet new people, communicate, help each other, find common language with men... my commander really helped me with that when I had just arrived in a new team)” (D04)

that *“the feeling of fear cannot be harnessed completely and it is normal to be afraid” (D06)*

“Fear can always be overcome. You need to put goals in front of you and bravely move towards them.” (D08)

Starting from 2018, thanks to the efforts of Invisible Battalion movement, the Law of Ukraine “On making amendments to some laws of Ukraine to ensure equal rights and opportunities of women and men during military services in Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations” stipulates that “Women perform military duty on par with men”¹⁴. Since 22 January 2019, Order No. 627 “On approval of lists of military specializations and staff posts for privates, sergeants and commanders and tariff lists for posts of the abovementioned military servicemen” notes that all posts for privates, sergeants and commanders now available in the Armed Forces of Ukraine have also become available for female military personnel. Female military personnel were proposed to answer the question about the possibility of obtaining a commander post in the Armed Forces.

In particular, study participants noted the following:

“Yes, this is possible! But it takes much more time and is more difficult” (D01)

“There is a possibility. But men still get an advantage here.” (D06)

“If a woman is intelligent and ambitious in her career plans, why not)))” (D04)

As we can see from the provided answers, there is a legal opportunity to obtain a commander’s post but the respondents say that there are some difficulties. It is interesting to note that in the answers to the question “What is the male military personnel’s attitude to career advancement of women in service?” we documented prejudiced and negative *attitude*. These are some answers about men’s attitude to career advancement of women:

¹⁴ Law of Ukraine “On making amendments to some laws of Ukraine to ensure equal rights and opportunities of women and men during military services in Armed Forces of Ukraine and other military formations” URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2523-19>

*"... normally men have a negative attitude about women's career."
(D02)*

"... men treat this with disrespect." (D03)

"Unfortunately, men have a negative attitude to a woman's career growth but I believe that purely from a psychological point of view they don't want women to be on the same level of career development with them)" (D04)

"Skeptically" (D01)

This showcases a "glass ceiling" limiting career advancement of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. On the legislative level, the rights and opportunities of women and men are equal but invisible barriers do not allow the former to realize themselves in full.

GENDER-SENSITIVE ISSUES OF MILITARY SERVICE

A relevant problem of women's military service is still prejudiced attitude of the society to a female warrior and gender stereotypes in the army. For a long time, military service had been considered as purely "men's" work where women can only work as medics or provide services in the rear or the staff headquarters. When a part of Ukraine was annexed (in 2014), significant changes started in the Ukrainian army, namely the bigger amount of women who participate not only in volunteer movements but voluntarily mobilized to fighting units of the Armed Forces. Naturally, transformational shifts in the army cause certain changes in the proportion between male and female military personnel. Inevitably, gender stereotypes in a purely "men's" work emerge or intensify. *"War is no place for women!"* is a widespread gender stereotype about distribution of masculine and feminine roles in the society. In particular, when analyzing answers we found mentions of gender stereotypes from several informants.

"A woman is a keeper of the household, a mother, not a warrior))) Have I faced that? Well, sometimes you are working in uniform, and strangers tell me, why are you doing that, why did you go to the army)) you're a woman)" (D04)

In media and sociocultural space of our society, the constructs of “woman as housekeeper” had been dominant for a rather long time (until 2014). Starting from Russian invasion in Ukraine in 2014 and women’s active participation in the war, mass culture started to actively propose a new gender image, “female warrior” or “female defender”. However, the prejudiced attitude to this role is manifested in discriminatory and sexist practices.

“In the society most often they don’t treat a servicewoman seriously enough... Because first of all a woman is a mother, a keeper of the house, not a warrior) Many guys I serve with are against women’s service) In my opinion, the woman faces a problem that to certain extent she cannot perform some hard work the same way men can... Women are more emotional)))” (D04)

“They don’t allow women to do many things and believe that women’s place is in the rear” (D03)

“For some men, army is no place for women” (D07)

Informants noted that in their units male military do not treat them in a prejudiced way:

“Most male military personnel treats me okay”, “Everything is perceived adequately”, “The people I serve with have normal attitude to female military personnel.” (D06, D05 and D07, respectively)

In the opinion of one woman, prejudiced and not always adequate attitude is something they get not from male military personnel but from that personnel’s family members because *“in their opinion we come here to find a man” (D02)*. The reason for such attitude is a rather significant amount of registered marriages among the military and divorces due to a woman’s military service. The informants themselves confirm this fact. As for marriages among the military who met during the war, almost all respondents had a unanimous positive answer. As for divorce cases, half of respondents also gave a positive answer. Among the reasons for divorce there are *“jealousy”, “no possibility to live together”, “male surroundings”, “husband’s distrust.” (D02, D01, D08 and D04, respectively)* The war reality made changes in the family lives of many Ukrainians. This includes forced migration, separation of families

(part of the family remains on the occupied territory and the other part moves), and military service of a man or a woman. However, in the opinion of respondents military service hasn't significantly influenced their relationships with husband or other family members. Only one informant noted that it did because *"I almost never see them."* (D02)

DISCRIMINATION/HUMILIATION/OPPRESSION DUE TO GENDER IDENTITY

Discrimination by various social traits is a burning problem of all contemporary societies without exception. In the countries at war, human rights violations and discrimination become all the more relevant. Naturally, in proportion military service remains more masculine and that is why gender-based discrimination is commonplace. One of our study objectives was the documentation of possible gender-based discrimination cases among female military personnel. Among the respondents, three informants talked about humiliation and oppression (five didn't):

"Yes! In my case it was oppression about my living with the rest of the unit", "Yes, there were cases and more than once but I don't want to describe them." (D02)

They were reluctant to talk about it and refused to describe the situations. Other respondents noted that they hadn't experienced such problems.

As for sexual harassment in the army, this topic remains taboo in the society but is rather well-covered in the media [6,7,8]. In 2020, KIIS conducted a national survey "Opinions and views of the Ukrainian population"; several questions were about the attitude to sexual harassment in the Armed Forces of Ukraine¹⁵. The results of the survey show that about 20% believe this topic to be important but hushed up. 56% of respondents said that this topic should be made public, and 7% believed that it harms the Armed Forces' image.

The answers to this question among female military personnel are opposite to those about discrimination and humiliation. Sexual harassment from the male military was confirmed by more respondents than there were

¹⁵ Invisible Battalion 3.0. Sexual harassment in the military field in Ukraine. URL: http://ekmair.ukma.edu.ua/bitstream/handle/123456789/20138/Nevydymyi_batalion_3.0.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

those who hadn't faced it. But at the same time, there were also other situations. However, on a positive note in all cases respondents informed that they solved this problem by taking it to the commandment.

"No, I haven't faced it) we have a good team and commandment which doesn't allow any such manifestations)" (D04)

"I haven't faced it personally. But there are such cases." (D01)

"There was one case with harassment, but this person was immediately transferred elsewhere afterwards." (D05)

"Yes, I faced it but quickly solved the issue." (D02)

Harassment also includes verbal forms like jokes, comments or gestures of sexual nature about a certain person. Such form of sexual harassment was mentioned by one respondent:

"I have heard indecent sayings with sexual context from the male military." (D07)

Naturally, the problem with sexual harassment from the male military merits more attention from the Armed Forces commandment to ban these practices and decrease the amount of such incidents.

The following questions were about problems with female hygiene supplies and general "household" organization in the context of war. Among the problems, the women noted *"lack of women's uniform" (D01)*, *"no separate shower stalls or bathrooms" (D07)*. However, most respondents answered that these problems are being solved, and the male military are trying to create "comfortable conditions" for women as far as it is possible. Several informants also pointed out the lack of difference between the male and female military personnel.

"if we lack some comforts, we create them for ourselves", "as for household... at first I lived and slept next to the guys, now when there is a possibility and there is enough free space, they allocate a separate spot for me))). On the contrary, the guys do everything possible to improve living conditions - they make a shower stall and a bathroom)" (D04)

“There are no problems. There are separate rooms for rest and bathrooms for women.” (D06)

“Everything can be solved” (D08)

“We are a single organism and everything is the same for everyone.” (D05)

“Yes, there are no conditions for women, everyone lives in the same conditions.” (D03)

This discrepancy in the results can be explained by differences between the military units and the varying possibility to solve living issues locally. However, this aspect should also be taken into account by the commandment to ensure adequate household conditions for women.

As for gynecological services in the conditions of war, informants noted that *“when needed women go to civilian hospitals, they have better access to these [women’s] medicines and services.” (D01)* Three informants still pointed to *“low level of gynecological services in the conditions of hostilities”* but sufficient amount of medicines *“Due amount. Enough” (D08)*. *“It looks like the amount of ‘women’s’ medicines is okay for now” (D06)*.

The question about fatigue from military service also deserves attention. Psychological and physical fatigue demoralizes the military, exhausts and lowers the general motivation to serve. All survey participants pointed to the feeling of physical fatigue. Naturally, women are less physically trained than men so the feeling of physical fatigue is more noticeable for them. Several informants also talked about psychological fatigue.

“Physical fatigue, constant lack of sleep.” (D01)

“Naturally, I feel tired physically, but I try to make myself more resilient emotionally thinking that other military and I have no time to complain because we have to diligently perform our duty.” (D06)

“There is insignificant fatigue, not due to activities but because of not enough rest.” (D07)

“Sometimes I get tired.” (D08)

“I feel it a lot.” (D02)

“As for the fatigue, it is more psychological because I don’t see my family and close friends around.” (D04)

“Fatigue happens because sometimes it is hard psychologically.” (D05)

The awareness that stress resilience among the military is different points to the need to organize adequate rotation and leaves for them. This is a rather important component for regaining strength.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The last block of questions in the study was about prospects for the future. These questions pertained both to the development of events in the country and to personal plans for the future. For example, when we asked the female military about the prospects of future events in the country and what they would like to change, the answers were rather multifaceted, it is hard to group them by typical reactions, but the common motive is victory and restoration of the country. There is also stress on the future of children, and in most answers there were statements describing life as something very valuable:

“Politics should first of all work for restoration and further prosperity)” (D04)

“I hope we’ll get all our territories back. This will allow many to come back home.” (D06)

“Everybody is waiting for victory. Ukraine will win and everything will be fine.” (D07)

“Only victory.” (D08)

Among answers, there were wishes to develop the vector of re-adapting the military to civilian life. One informant pointed out the importance of social guarantees for the military.

“Personally, I would develop the vector of re-adapting the military to civilian life. Only victory!” (D01)

“If the brigade commanders and the commander-in-chief had listened to the opinions of soldiers/sergeants there wouldn’t have been losses and the war would long have been over. If the politicians hadn’t increased their salaries and hadn’t bought so many apartments and houses but instead given that money to the military who had survived ATO/JFO, it would have been much simpler; I would change many things in politics.” (D03)

As for personal prospects for the future, most respondents answered they plan to continue their military service and even get promoted.

“Yes, I plan to, after some rest! To head new vectors in the military and pass my own combat experience on.” (D01)

“Yes, I would like to be promoted.” (D03)

“I plan to continue because I don’t want to and can’t do anything else while there is still martial law.” (D06)

Only some are not sure they’ll continue to serve and were unable to provide a precise answer.

The situation of war, armed aggression, constant stress from losing their brothers- and sisters-in arms, physical and psychological fatigue impacts their values and understanding of the meaning of life. For example, when asked about awareness of values in the situation of war the informants noted the following:

“first of all war gave me an understanding that many problems you used to worry about before are just a drop in the ocean... Also the understanding that very little is really needed for happiness, and that is when your family is alive and well)” (D04)

“Children are our meaning of life and our future... And they don’t deserve war and fear. And we all have to prevent it, everyone the way they can.” (D06)

“The value of life itself!” (D01)

“You just have one life, and you have to fight it using all possible and impossible means.” (D04)

“In any moment we can lose this life, so we need to keep it safe and take care of our own safety. We need to value what we have.” (D07)

“Lives are invaluable.” (D08)

War is a hard trial in all aspects and all fields. And the importance of being aware that life is invaluable in any manifestation is as pertinent as never before.

Female military, just like all Ukrainians, dream about victory and life in the world without war, without fear, about life in free Ukraine:

“the war will be over, I’ll come home and hug everyone dear to my heart))) And we’ll all sit down and talk, in a warm home ambience)))” (D04)

These are the values and dreams important for the meaning of life that were noted in the end of the survey by female military personnel.

Since the beginning of full-scale invasion and Russian-Ukrainian war, a significant number of women volunteered to go to the Armed Forces. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky noted that “now 22 per cent of Ukrainian army are women, this is one of the biggest proportions in European countries”¹⁶. Naturally, such situation causes certain gender-sensitive problems and draws more attention to their solution. As the results of online survey among female military personnel have shown, the solution of problems women face in service is regulated in legislation but there is a pressing need to be aware of those provisions to prevent such situations or know the ways to resolve them.

¹⁶ Zahorodnii, M. How Ukrainian women defend Ukraine: Zelensky’s page published a video. URL: <https://life.pravda.com.ua/society/2022/09/9/250384/>

SECTION IV

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS OF IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH FEMALE VOLUNTEERS

Many countries of the world discuss volunteer movement in Ukraine with admiration, calling this phenomenon unique. Volunteering as sociocultural phenomenon is deeply intertwined with the development of civilization. One probably cannot find a society in the history of humanity which would not have ideas of voluntary and altruistic help. There have always been people for whom self-fulfillment and self-improvement were only possible through working for the good of others.

The number of volunteers all over the world is 970 million. According to the study of Johns Hopkins University, in working hours this is the equivalent of over 125 million staff workers. Approximately every fourth volunteer invests his/her time and skills via organizations, and all the others do it directly by helping their neighbors or communities. According to UN Volunteers, from the economic point of view the cost of volunteering work is 1.348 trillion US dollars, or 2.4% of the global economy¹⁷.

Unfortunately, volunteer movement in Ukrainian society has reached its peak now, with the start of full-scale war. This became a certain marker of rapidly growing civil society. And we see that after the start of full-scale war in Ukraine, the culture of charity has quickly become popular. Immediately assistance hubs, funds and platforms were established that collect money to help our army and everyone harmed by the war.

From 24 February until 30 June 2022, 4365 civil society organizations were registered in Ukraine. This is the information CEDEM received from Ukrainian Ministry of Justice. Among registered organizations, there are 3364 charities and 1001 NGOs. Some of them are new, others used to work informally but now received an official status. These numbers greatly exceed those of the previous year. For example, in all of 2021 792 new charities emerged in the country. And in a bit more than four months of 2022, over four times more.

¹⁷ : URL: <https://www.unv.org/swvr/volunteers-count-their-work-deserves-be-counted>

CEDEM experts explain it by the mobilization of civil society to help Armed Forces of Ukraine and the civilians. Besides, organizations aspire for official status to have more opportunities, for example the right to open bank accounts, to fundraise, to cooperate with volunteers via agreements on volunteer activity and issuing volunteer certificates, etc.

The activities of volunteers in cooperation with officially registered non-profit organization is the right format of cooperation and organization of volunteering. At the same time, official registration of the organization is just one step. Presently volunteers helping the military, medics, IDPs and other Ukrainians to overcome difficulties are not protected from the risks of war. If they are injured while helping others they won't get any compensation from the state, CEDEM experts note. However, current law "On volunteering activities" envisages help for injured volunteers or families of deceased volunteers who worked on the territory of Donetsk and Luhansk regions. But today's realities are different¹⁸.

On 15 August 2022 Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the Law of Ukraine "On making amendments to the Law of Ukraine 'On volunteering activities' to support volunteering activities" (draft No. 7363). On September 1 the President signed this Law. The parliament's decision contributes to the development of volunteer movement in Ukraine, in particular via expanding the vectors of volunteer activities in the context of war, expanding some regulations of the Law of Ukraine "On volunteering activities" with regard to wide-scale military aggression of Russia against Ukraine.

Within this sociological study, special attention was given to women's volunteering, their main motivation of joining the movement and main issues they face in the contemporary context of war.

The participants of this study represent different vectors of volunteering and civic activities in Dnipro region: from individual volunteering, management of humanitarian hubs and organization of shelters to founders of charity funds and international initiatives to support Ukrainian people.

Every female volunteer has an active civic stand and stands up to her opinions and convictions; at the same time, being regular people female volunteers also possess the traumatic experience of war. Absolutely all study participants noted that for them this war started unexpectedly, even though

¹⁸ <https://cedem.org.ua/news/4365-gromadskyh-ta-blagodijnyh/>

each one noted they had carefully followed the news and messages about possible assault during the last months before war but at the same time hadn't believed until the last moment the war could start for real.

"... it started suddenly... I woke up at four thirty and understood it wasn't subway noise, it was something different, I looked into the window and saw fire from the side of the airport, and this unclear situation starts. I take my phone, I remember that I launched Facebook and there is a post by Natalia Moseichuk there, "The war started." I simply don't understand. It can't be. I start scrolling publication feed and watching, they write about every shot, war, war started, Kyiv region, Kyiv... Yes, it was really emotional when you go out and there are lots of people, they were there after surgeries, they didn't understand at all what was happening, and they ask, or somebody was a source reading out news that it had started, he simply starts retelling in Telegram channels what is happening in Ukraine now, you stand and read, and most don't believe but you see people, nurses, patients start falling to their knees... (A05)"

"On 23 February I was telling all my acquaintances that this simply can't be because it can't ever happen... well, it was the night from 23 to 24 February, I said it can't be, it just can't be - well, then I woke up from explosions because my building is located in a way that we hear everything happening close to our airport, and we woke up...(A04)"

"Just like for everyone on February 24, when we woke up in the morning and didn't understand what to do, we drove out to get some gas for the car, then collected things, got our children ready and tried to leave. And then we sat down and understood we wouldn't be going anywhere. We started unpacking our things. And collecting those the guys would need... But I didn't believe until the very last moment when my husband was saying, 'that's it, they signed the legitimacy of LNR and DNR, there'll be war.' And I would answer, 'what are you talking about, what kind of war? Where are you and where's war?' (A03)"

"... maybe it's embarrassing to confess but for me it was still unexpected even though they were saying there'd be an assault and before that we still managed to go to the west of Ukraine, to the Carpathians for some skiing. And we drove and saw diplomatic cars leaving Kyiv towards the west. These were probably embassies leaving, or I don't know. But I chased these thoughts away and persuaded myself that everything is okay and nothing would happen. And well, when in the morning of the 24th it started, I woke up in several seconds after the whistle of a missile, I don't know whether they were missiles, maybe bombs. (A02)"

“Well, just like for every Ukrainian the war for me started on February 24. At that moment I was on the train and going to Kyiv for a conference... when I left the train I understood that all of Ukraine has been shelled. What to do? And on the first day we were all simply shocked, watching the news and rather scared. (A01)”

Study participants were saying that they almost hadn't prepared beforehand because the final awareness of inevitability of hostilities hadn't been there. They testify that they had “emergency backpacks” but mostly this was a manifestation of dominating message in the media that people should be ready for emergencies, not a focused tactic of preparation for possible war. At the same time women were saying that on the one hand in public space there was information from Western intelligence about inevitable assault; at the same time, the state policy to hold panic at bay and publicly reject probable immediate start of the war provoked such infantile practices and therefore most of the country's population didn't seriously prepare for the start of the war. At the same time informants noted that in our country the hostilities had actually been lasting for eight years and, on the one hand, some habit had been formed; on the other hand, they hadn't been spread to the whole territory of the country and didn't cause total fear and panic among those who had lived beyond the areas of hostilities.

“... some people I know were really preparing for these events because they witnessed those events in 2014 and had experience of communication. I wasn't preparing but I remember very well that I was conducting an event. On February 21 in our community center I conducted an event dedicated to the memory of Maidan Heroes. And we were discussing then that many people were packing their emergency backpacks. I wasn't preparing anything and even when I was going to Kyiv on February 23, I was talking to my husband and saying they were informing in the news it could still be dangerous. Yes, there were warnings. He said that everything was calm in Kyiv. (A01)”

“We listened to different analysts but it all seemed more of a theory, somewhat exaggerated threat, because there was an illusion there was a bit more common sense on that end, more logic, humanity, I don't know what else. (A02)”

“I am saying, ‘that's bollocks, nothing like that will happen. Come on. It's the 21st century. How is this even possible?’ Well, like that! So even on the 24th... (A03)”

“My husband was preparing a bit. He went to the grocery store, bought some preserves, I don’t know which ones, so he replenished food stocks. I laughed at him, honestly. I am very optimistic about life in general, and I don’t understand how this is possible at all in the 21st century. I still believe that this is nonsense, terrible nonsense. (A04)”

“Yes, we all read that and didn’t really believe in that. It seemed that it was dramatization or political games, something was happening. Somebody is trying to bargain about something with somebody else. But probably a week before my husband and I made notes in our smartphones you can share with each other. I did that and we started packing this emergency backpack but we weren’t packing our belongings. We just put in the money we had and all documents. About a week before. But on the 24th [of February] in the morning we realized that we should have prepared better. (A05)”

When asked how they would rate the readiness of the state and civil society for the start of wide-scale war, all informants noted that in their opinion there was more readiness and quicker response in the civil society than among state institutions. On some levels of local government they even noted the lack of response in helping to organize volunteering in the community. But in most cases female volunteers note that they don’t face obstacles from government institutions, only facilitation and support in their activities or no need for direct interaction as volunteering work by its nature does not envisage close cooperation with those institutions but is targeted more at partner interaction with civil society or international organizations.

“Because I believe that civil society gave foundation... or how do I say that? Do I evaluate it according to a ten-point scale? Well, in my opinion the state’s readiness is a five. I wouldn’t engage in wide-scale construction if I understood there’d be a war. If I really understood there’d be a war, there wouldn’t be any mass construction ever... I wouldn’t spend so much time on roads which are now going to be in a very bad state. (A03)”

“Well, for that moment I can talk about the readiness of the capital. The capital was not ready. Because people were just going to work. It was a regular morning of a working Thursday. It was good to see that when people saw the military trucks, they let them pass and helped them in lines to gas stations and grocery stores, provided them with water. They even offered to buy them water, I remember. And people treated us very well too. Actually people were not ready but quickly

found their ground and there was a rather high level of tolerance. (A01)”

“Maybe our state was somehow preparing but secretly from our people. Maybe I can’t understand something? Because if it had been announced in the media, many people would have packed their things and left even before, and maybe there wouldn’t have been anyone left to work and defend our country at all. But maybe I am not right on this issue. And whether they did or didn’t do something... There is a lot of betrayal, that’s what I see - a lot of betrayal, everywhere, in the government and locally. And now, now there’s also a lot of betrayal, and this is our main problem. (A05)”

“Well, probably it is hard to be ready for it some day. But I understand that probably in these days civil society showed itself from a different angle. In my opinion, the society divided in two parts: one part packed their things and went somewhere far away, closer to the border, abroad, et cetera. And the second part simply started to sort all things they have in a garage, in a basement, somewhere at neighbor’s place. They started donating money and driving around buying things. An incredible number of people. They bought everything they saw and understood that the military might need that, the territorial defense might need that, somebody else might need that. So I think that civil society cannot be analyzed from a point if it was prepared morally, that’s one aspect, but physically, how they showed themselves in action, I think they didn’t need any preparation at all because this one day changed everything and in one day about ninety per cent of civil society started doing something. (A04)”

“... our country wasn’t ready, our community as well, because when I came back home probably the following ten days we were getting together in my club with my supporters, colleagues, some officials from the community. (A01)”

One of the possible responses to stress and the beginning of war is the wish to leave a potentially dangerous territory. During the study female volunteers were asked whether they thought about leaving their city of residence or evacuating abroad and what their decision was based on. Almost each participant of the study noted that at a certain point in the first months of the war she thought about leaving the city or the country. But all study participants didn’t leave their place of permanent residence. Only one volunteer left the country for some time for treatment but didn’t stop her civic and volunteering activities. The main factor influencing the thoughts about possible evacuation were fear for children and uncertainty about the future as

well as serious safety threats. The final argument for staying at the place of permanent residence was the wish to be together as a family because men cannot leave the country; the thought about temporary separation of the family finally brought them to the decision to give up the idea of leaving.

“It is hard to answer here because I didn’t want to leave, I was adamant. I said that because my husband said that if necessary he’d take us out and I said, I won’t go anywhere. If they reached Synelnykovo or Pavlograd, then we would have had to leave. Well, I really didn’t want to leave, and thank God the situation unfolded in a way I didn’t have to because it would have been very hard. (A02)”

“Of course, of course. There were three periods: the first one was February 24, the second one was when they took Energodar because there’s a nuclear power plant there, it’s gonna explode, we’re packing. And the third one is when explosions at the nuclear power plant started, when they switched off the reactor there. So it’s only connected with that. Not even with missiles. Specifically with what you won’t see or feel. You can’t, yes. You won’t feel it. You don’t know how it harms you. This is the fear of unclarity, because you don’t know how to act. (A03)”

“Every morning started from a question: ‘Why aren’t you leaving?’ ‘What are you gonna do?’ Our relatives suggested that my husband and I leave. We rejected that idea later when we understood that men cannot go abroad. Later, when I started volunteering and said I won’t go anywhere, I surely don’t need that - they started offering us to at least bring the child to the border so that they take her with them and I would stay here. And these ideas were discussed in our family. It was hard to make a decision that I stay in Ukraine. Then I couldn’t leave because there was a lot of work tied to my activities, it was my responsibility. And then later I had this stress situation. I think it was in April when the situation in society started getting more tense. Again, those moods about leaving, that our region would be captured and there would be problems. Then it was again that I was at the crossroads, pondering. But still we decided to stay. But this decision was hard for us. (A01)”

“Never, I haven’t even let my child go. Maybe it was bad, but there was a moment in March. We talked a lot and decided we’d be keeping together as a family because I was unable to take my parents out of the city. They wouldn’t want to go, and going just by myself with my child, it was like... I felt very scared about my family, it hurt. I didn’t fear for myself, I never fear for myself. (A05)”

The main block of discussion in this part of the study was to identify factors that influenced their decision to join the volunteering movement. The activities of female volunteers started almost from the first day of war. Some study participants already had experience of civil and social activities so it was an organic process for them but it still had many new challenges as the war context produces new specifics of targeting and organizing civil and volunteering activities. For several female volunteers it became the first experience of organizing volunteer activities but it was a natural decision that motivated them to develop these activities during the whole time of war.

“On the 24th everything was foggy. On the 25th there was some unclear ‘warmup’, and on the 26th me and some girls from our village got in contact and decided that we have to do something because... the war started, we can’t just stand back, so we wrote announcements in our village chats that we are collecting aid from the public. And in the beginning we sent what we got to the center of Slobozhanska community and to the hospitals. And then a lot was going to the frontlines as much as possible. (A02)”

“The decision was made on the following day after the start of the war, on the 25th of February... they started saying that people in places where active hostilities start are beginning to leave. We made the decision in panic, let’s say. It wasn’t even collegial - this was more panic because many people in community governance were afraid of taking responsibility. And this was more of my initiative which had little support, let’s say. (A01)”

“... I believed that I have to be useful. I have always been very patriotic about my country. I have always said that I’d see the times when my country prospers. Well, this is very hard but I hope it is going to be soon. In the beginning we’ll defeat those semi-people, semi-nation, and then we’ll prosper and reconstruct. We baked muffins and cookies, made crackers, we’re still doing all of that, so since very first days we tried to do something all together. (A05)”

“Well, my whole life is dedicated to civil or political activities, and this was for me, this was a regular day, regular activities, and in December I made my first steps to establish my own charity fund. And what helped the most is that my husband works in this field. When he started organizing all of it around himself on the first day of war, a sort of community, chats, who does what... This surprised me somewhat because I really didn’t expect that, and when on the second day he approached me and said, okay, you’re at home today but you have to do this and that, and call these and those people. He started giving out

tasks to everyone, who has to do what. Well, I discovered a different side of him then, and probably this motivated me the most, that I wasn't alone. (A04)"

Absolutely all female activists had no problems with family relationships due to their new occupation. When asked what family members think about their activities, all women answered they felt full support; besides, their husbands just like them are engaged in the process and have an active stand in civic and volunteering activities of different kinds. However, study participants also note that sometimes they feel both physical and psychological fatigue. In some moments during these eight months there were disputes in the family but this didn't influence their decision to continue their volunteering activities. The main aspect according to them is the need for better time management to be able to combine their volunteering activities and personal life.

"They didn't discourage me, everyone got involved on different levels. The husband helped the guys more; he simply went to Epicenter store and bought everything needed there, some tactical gloves for example. He took some things to checkpoints. The girls and I took things others brought, more of such work. (A02)"

"Grandmas babysit children and we work, how could it be different? Nobody discouraged me. Everyone helps the way they can. My friends helped with money. My husband also does what he can because his job is about construction, things made of metal. So now they weld field stoves there. Well, they started from those hedgehogs standing in the field and at checkpoints. (A03)"

"At that time my husband was actively involved in establishing a checkpoint so he supported my idea because he was rather motivated by these defense actions. Our friends started making Molotov cocktails on a mass scale. My friend went to the volunteering hub in Dnipro. Other friends started cooking food here. The community got involved. I will honestly tell you that later when the system already got settled in its work and the checkpoint was organized he really didn't support me. He tried to totally exclude me from this process because it took a lot of energy. This emotional process took a lot of time and even our family... at some moments I worried that it will come apart. (A01)"

"My husband helped. He was also in this organization. He went around patrolling in the beginning, then they were in the defense hub, and then he signed up for Dnipro Guard. There were different situations, true, but all my family tried to do something. We baked muffins and

cookies, made crackers, we're still doing all of that, so since very first days we tried to do something all together. (A05)"

"And here it's very easy for me to answer how the family reacted. Because my main family is my husband, and he is the founder of this fund, and until today all our conversations, all our communication is about the fund: what is the project, what are we doing, how is it going? Now we say: okay, today we don't talk about the fund anymore, just about us. Today we have to make a pause. (A04)"

A separate part of discussion was aimed at identifying the field of volunteering activities. We see a wide range of problems female participants of the study are taking care of: from helping IDPs to active assistance for the units of Armed Forces. The team the volunteers work with was mostly forming in a spontaneous way; both people who worked in civic field before the start of the war and total strangers joined in these activities upon their own initiative with the start of the war. Almost all study participants noted that during this period, eight months of activities, the composition of the teams changed; this was associated with activists moving to other cities but mostly with the fact that with the passing of time team members couldn't devote as much time to volunteering any more because they had more tasks at their main place of work; sometimes there were also cases of fatigue from the process and that is why some activists gradually reduced their activities.

"... we started from helping the Armed Forces of Ukraine. Then, when a huge influx of IDPs happened, we started working on expanding partnerships and providing humanitarian aid. As of today we calculated that we have helped more than 12,000 Ukrainians. These activities are humanitarian aid; there is help both for Armed Forces and the IDPs. And there were people who were affected by war, lost their jobs or didn't have anything to eat. We helped them as well, and we also have a second block, social projects. We launched it together with a British volunteer organization. These are first premedical aid trainings for Dnipro residents and companies. There is a second social project, socialization of IDPs' children via physical and mental activities. And the third aspect, our international partnership. We have many volunteer friends abroad and we hold Ukrainian cultural charity events where we fundraise. For example, a couple of days ago there was an event in the US again, an evening of Ukrainian cuisine where they managed to fundraise 1,200 USD. (A04)"

“Well, first of all these are IDPs. That is, they are people who arrived here, to this neighborhood from different parts of our country where it was dangerous for them to stay. (A05)”

“I based everything on an understanding that I am a director of a center that people know the location of. I am a moderator of two, at that moment was a moderator of two communities on Facebook and Viber. In my facility there was space to accommodate people requiring temporary housing. I chose the type of activity which was the most logical at that point and that could be valuable at that moment for the people, for the state. (A01)”

“We cover everything. We try to take care of all issues arriving to us. And I say, when we had medicines we also provided that kind of help. Now we work with IDPs, we help the way we can - accommodation, clothing. (A03)”

“Yes, people brought things and we sorted them. The first group was for the frontlines, those immediately went there. The things left were stored for IDPs because at the time we didn’t have that many in our village, people hadn’t arrived yet. Food. And in the beginning we sent what we got to the center of Slobozhanska community and to the hospitals. And then a lot was going to the frontlines as much as possible. (A02)”

“... in seven months of the war many of our volunteers to dedicate not all of their time to volunteering because they understand they still need to earn money. (A04)”

“... these were people who weren’t engaged in any other volunteering. Among my employees there were only two employees... we were mostly helped by activists from the community. These were community MPs, these were husbands of community MPs, because we needed physical strength at that time. (A01)”

“You know, our neighborhood is pretty peculiar because it is small, and we had one school. And then a second one emerged. So everyone is connected in some way - either they went to that school together, or their children did, and so on. And these activities were formed even before the war. We participated in different projects. And the same people started dealing with humanitarian hub helping IDPs. Making masking nets is also very pertinent now. (A05)”

“... the team has formed itself, and I can say that in the beginning these were strangers. I knew someone because all of them were residents of Oleksandrivka village. Yes, that’s not in a bad sense but just that everyone contributed as much as they could in terms of

energy and time, and then everyone had their own reasons. So those who wanted to help simply came... (A02)”

Study participants were offered to single out the main problems in volunteering activities they faced in the first weeks of war and whether the situation has presently changed. The dominating problems were and are the lack of resources (financial and human) for providing aid and need for legal and financial consultations for proper registration of their activities. If at the first stage there were issues with organization, with time this was solved.

“There is one problem - not enough resources, not enough aid for people. We are self-established, nobody helped us. People from our neighborhood brought their things, clothing, footwear etc., even food and hygiene supplies. Regular people brought all that. The state? Well, the state... the state doesn't really help. Naturally, there is less and less aid coming in now - and we understand that people are in dire circumstances, they also lack resources so they bring in less. Well, the problem is the following: where to get money to procure things for people, and that's help in the form of food. (A05)”

“The problems are probably lack of legal and accounting skills. Security Service of Ukraine starts checking volunteers, and we immediately began the registration of an official fund. It is legally correct to do all that. But at that moment we understood that not each of us has a lawyer or an accountant identity waking up. Another problem. Probably emotional burnout. It was in our team, two people left because of that. (A04)”

“Well, lack of support from community officials and from the state, let's say. (A01)”

“In the first weeks... it was hard to distribute... you know, that role of a distributor. They brought some medicines, where do they go? To the frontlines, to the hospital, to civilians or military? And from people who arrived there were requests, and it was a problem to decide where this is needed faster and where it'd be more useful. These were psychologically challenging moments. (A02)”

Female volunteers were asked which population categories currently require help in the first place, in their opinion. In this case their opinions were different. It was noted that now they see help for the military as the most relevant because they are in a situation threatening their lives; also they mentioned elderly people, people living alone and people with disabilities.

Besides, they talked about the need to help such category as wives of military personnel because they are in an extremely difficult situation psychologically.

“Oh, I believe that the military require help the most because this is the category in immediate danger, right now. People who left already escaped the place of immediate life threat. (A02)”

“... probably as always those people who don’t have anyone. Because who doesn’t evacuate? Like, we talked to a girl who arrived from Nikopol. She was responsible for evacuation, picking up people. And she says, well, who’s left in Nikopol? Old people and those who can’t move. So people with disabilities. These are people who cannot organize their own household needs. So I believe that now it’s elderly people and people with disabilities, so those requiring some care. (A03)”

“I think that presently we pay little attention to relatives of military personnel. Because in my experience I already see that internally displaced persons have great support in our community. Let’s put it this way - a lot has changed in their lives as well. First of all these are wives of military personnel who had lost man’s help for some time. But firstly this state is difficult psychologically. Now many women face that. And we also have this rather big category of people who used to be a vulnerable category before - for example, low-income elderly people with disabilities or elderly people with small retirement benefits, cancer in second, third or fourth stage and such retirement benefits. They are also maximally unprotected now because all aid is provided for the IDPs. (A01)”

“Naturally, these are retirees. Naturally, elderly people who have it hard even without the war because some have chronic diseases and disabilities. And also because children are far away and they are here. (A05)”

The range of interaction of female volunteers with different institutions is wide. In the course of their volunteering activities, they interact with various state institutions, international foundations, humanitarian missions, directly with Ukrainian citizens - everything depends on the volume and type of necessary support.

“... a lot of help is provided by international organizations like Red Cross, Caritas, Right to Protection, the UN. Then a lot of help was provided by World Central Kitchen, they are an interesting

organization. They provided food kits to our IDPs for several months. (A01)”

“It is Red Cross. First of all, they provide free food for IDPs; secondly, they helped with food kits. But mostly this is food. But already less because I believe that their resources are also running out. Before, it was every day. Before even we had hot food for IDPs twice a day free of charge. Now we finished that; actually we give out food every other day and once we had food kits, also from the Red Cross. (A05)”

“... mostly with the citizens. I also maintain all pages of the fund in social networks so I know all these stories. By the way, we find a lot of humanitarian aid or money just among people. Yes, we had corporate donations too. But most of communication is with the citizens; other funds come second. But unfortunately, not all international funds are active now; by the end of summer many are reducing their activities for different reasons. So still we are in communication with Ukrainians now in the country, working in different companies and helping to get humanitarian aid. (A04)”

All study participants noted that community residents have positive attitude to their activities; they haven't encountered any resistance or condemnation, even more - they say that with the beginning of the war and the start of their active volunteering community residents supported most initiatives and helped in some way. When asked whether they had negative situations with aid recipients directly, volunteers mostly noted that aid recipients were grateful and had positive attitude in communication; at the same time, very rarely there were conflicts but they weren't described as systemic, rather as exceptions from the general trend. The volunteers characterized such isolated cases of not really comfortable communication as a sign of psychological fatigue and traumas of aid recipients, treating those with understanding.

“There hasn't been aggression as such. There was despair. Understanding the stress and the events after which these people arrived, I think that their complaints were totally normal. (A02)”

“No. We don't impose help. We haven't faced any aggression or negative emotional outbreaks. (A03)”

“Well, there are different situations, you know. It was also hard sometimes when you understand that you do everything on a volunteering basis, not getting any money for that, and everything

happens with you bearing all the risks... Mostly people are very grateful, they cried and blessed me and thanked for help. But sometimes people behave based on assumption that the state hasn't taken care of them and it is to blame for everything. (A01)"

"Well, they are almost always positive. As for aggression, maybe there are cases of aggression from Sokol residents who are elderly people and also need attention and help, and they are very aggressive about that. What about us? Why don't you help us, we also have problems? And as for IDPs, I know almost no such cases. (A05)"

"Yes, unfortunately we've faced that. I think this is because they saw a lot, more than us and are more traumatized psychologically than us. So I am not too nervous about that. When we help a person, they would start writing feedback and reviews, describing how they got that aid. You get a message from a grandma, 'All the best, you're the best.' At first I looked at everything in a very skeptical way but then I understood it's just sincere emotions of people who got help and sometimes you can't read those messages without tears. (A04)"

Study participants were offered to evaluate whether their personal life changed since the beginning of the war and whether they feel fatigue from their activities, and also whether their volunteering impacted family relationships - with husband, children or other relatives.

"Well, our family is lucky that we turned out to be of the same mind, because I know that in many families at this critical moment it turned out that people have different opinions, but we are all on the same wavelength, everyone got involved, it seems to me that on the contrary the relationships... our family has become stronger. (A02)"

"There is significant fatigue from the phone, when you constantly walk around with it. And in general, I would like to have some stability. When you understand there is no stability, it is very hard. We are looking in the same direction with my husband and we certainly support each other completely. (A03)"

"I don't feel tired, I am ready to keep doing my work. Maybe two weeks without such active work had that impact. There is no fatigue, there's just a wish to see some progress in the situation in the country. (A01)"

"Probably I felt it in July; after that I understood I have to pace myself, I have to get distracted because all my volunteering work is narrowed down to doing everything via my smartphone. All partnerships, all

letters and requests for humanitarian aid, all communication with partners, companies, people, social networks - all this is on me. And at that moment I understood I had to change something. But I can't say that now I don't like what I do. Probably I understood that now I like the most what I am doing now and not what I used to do before. (A04)"

During the discussion it was also documented that all study participants during the last six months haven't faced any manifestations of gender discrimination, oppression, or violence towards them. When asked if they believe that a woman in a contemporary Ukrainian society can combine family life, parenthood, main work and civic or volunteering activities, female volunteers note that in their opinion it is possible but very hard and requires significant concentration of effort. At the same time, study participants noted that now they can't say they faced stereotypes about female volunteers; on the contrary, they note that in Ukrainian society in the current context the weight of stereotypes towards a woman with active civic stand is gradually diminishing.

"Well, it is hard to combine everything of the above. It is cool when some things work together, for example when the whole family volunteers at a cycle race, and everybody understands that you stay there until late because you consider it important. Just like the other family members, or when you can somehow combine work with volunteering. When at least some things are combined, because if these are totally different fields you can juggle but not for long. Because it's just tiring. You can burn out. (A02)"

"She can. This is a Ukrainian woman, she can do everything. (A01)"

"Naturally. But something can be an obstacle. Maybe the lack of time. You don't have enough hours in a day. (A05)"

"And I see that this is possible but not easy. And I see more and more women I know who combine all of that. And this is very cool. What can be an obstacle - all obstacles are only in our heads. So if you allocate your time correctly - like how many hours in the morning I dedicate to this or that. So if you have a clear plan for the day, this is very easy to do. So I am convinced that personal lack of understanding or inability to plan the day can become obstacles - and this is when chaos commences. (A04)"

Mainly women who participated in the study now feel in relative safety but also note that now it is very hard to talk about absolute safety with constant shelling of the city and region and continuing hostilities over the whole country in general. They try to put as much effort as possible into maintaining psychological calm to support their families and continue their civic activities. When asked how they see further development of events in the country and what they would change in state policy in current conditions, they answered the following:

“I think we’ll defeat them, it’s only a question of time. And I think that our cool experts will come back, those who left the country, and those who didn’t will get involved in work. (A02)”

“As for further development I really want us to be in the European Union. If we withstand this I think that neighboring countries will help us. I don’t know how much it will cost. But I think that everything will be renovated: the infrastructure will be restored. There will be several hard years but then we’ll have development. (A03)”

“I don’t see any other ways, only one - our victory, that’s it. (A01)”

“First of all, corruption and embezzlement. If normal people come to power and those who sit in power for years and keep taking for themselves finally leave. I think that only then we’ll have an opportunity for some bright future. (A05)”

“Probably it is hard for me to answer now in global terms but the first thing I would like to change is communication and cooperation of authorities with the public. I would change it and make a communication platform. So that the state serves as a communicator and establishes a platform for all volunteering organizations to be united. I would like for the state’s attitude to volunteers and the public to change, and also for volunteers and the public to change their attitudes to the state. (A04)”

Besides, study participants noted that after the end of the war, after our victory, most probably they plan to continue their volunteering and civic activities. Maybe with changes, adapting to new requests of society, but they still wish to keep their active work in the civic sector.

In the end of the discussion female volunteers were proposed to tell about their biggest dream. Absolutely all study participants talked about Ukraine’s

victory in the war, the coming of peace and finally getting an opportunity to dedicate more time to their families and children.

“Victory! This is the closest, the most important wish and dream, probably for all people. (A02)”

“Our dream is victory. (A01)”

“I dream that there are fewer wars all over the world afterwards. I really want, probably the biggest dream is one fine day for everyone to become aware - better earlier than later - that wars and murders are not needed to live. (A04)”

“Of course, we all have the same dream - our 100%, complete victory over the Russian Federation. And also to build a ravine with crocodiles on the border. A dome, like in Israel. Maybe somebody would help us to invent something specifically for Ukraine? Yes, and also some very, very high fence with barbed wire or under high voltage. So that we never have to recall that there exists this Russian Federation. And then, of course, I want my children to be happy and successful in life, and my parents to be healthy. And in general, for all people to be happy and healthy. But everyone all over the world lives in peace. So that nobody ever knows what war is. (A05)”

CONCLUSIONS

Summing up the results of the study, it is necessary to pay attention to the following problematic issues among vulnerable population groups.

Female IDPs gave the most positive ratings to the help from volunteer organizations and humanitarian hubs as they had the biggest experience of interaction with those. The interaction with state institutions had ambiguous feedback: no radically negative reviews were documented but at the same time there were many remarks about slow issuing of a range of necessary documents, e.g., IDP certificates that had to be re-issued due to the change in place of stay, or retirement certificates; there were also no legal consultations available. The interaction with international humanitarian missions happened through requests for specific types of financial assistance – from the Red Cross, the UN, or OSCE. The requests for assistance were approved, and the payout terms vary among the participants. The experience of interacting with medical cluster is generally positive; the main issues are concluding agreements with new family doctors and referrals for consultations with specialized doctors. The main problems include the amount of financial assistance, the need for proper housing and the possibility to rent it with guarantees they won't be thrown out, medical assistance, lack of equipment for comfortable online schooling of children, employment, and need for help with documents.

Wives of military personnel noted that their main problems include emotional and physical exhaustion, fatigue due to unstable emotional state, more home/household problems to solve, insufficient psychological support for children by women themselves and by respective social services. For the social group of wives of military personnel, the development and implementation of psychoeducation program looks promising; this program would aim at balancing the women's psycho-emotional state, developing efficient communication skills, determining stress triggers, and providing psychological consulting for children.

Study results show that in the group of female military unlike in other vulnerable groups the problems also concerned gender-sensitive topics. With the present man-to-woman ratio, military service remains a more "male" field. More women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine are still a new experience for

Ukrainian society. Among problematic issues deserving attention and further solution are the following: career advancement and “glass ceiling” after achieving commandment posts, prejudiced and negative attitude of male military to a woman on a higher post, prejudiced attitude in the society to a female warrior, gender stereotypes and harassment among the male military. Sexual harassment in the army remains a relevant and at the same time tabooed topic. Mostly this is explained by gaps in legal mechanisms for women’s rights protection and low gender culture among women themselves. (fear of judgement, fear of reporting to the commander, fear of accusations about their own reckless behavior, etc.) One strategy to solve this issue is to form a legal culture of women who serve in the military to protect them from discrimination and sexual harassment. As for the necessary women’s apparel, the respondents noted the lack of female military uniform and no female-only rooms for rest. The other household issues are mostly solved locally but still require general legal documentation to protect women from sexual violence.

A group of female volunteers pointed to the following problematic aspects of their activities which require solutions. The dominating ones since the first week and onwards are lack of resources (financial and human) for providing assistance and the need for legal and financial consultations about correct registration of volunteering activities. In the beginning of armed aggression, there were problems with organization of help but with time they were solved. As it is volunteer organizations that have direct contact with vulnerable population cohorts, the opinion of female volunteers about the need to help certain social groups is reasonable. In the opinion of these volunteers, the military are the priority as their life is under constant threat. Elderly people and those who live alone, people with disabilities and those who live on territories close to the frontlines remain vulnerable population strata. The respondents also signaled about the need to help such population category as wives of military personnel as they live through an extremely difficult psychological situation.