

Report of the Ukrainian Women's and
Non-Governmental Organisations
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WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
PEACE & FREEDOM



Part 1*

The Escalation of Protests in Ukraine from 2013 and Women's Participation in Euromaidan

By Nina Potarska

The recent years have seen a serious deterioration in the social, economic, civil and political rights of women and men in Ukraine. The standard of living plateaued and problems regarding social security, employment, business conditions other circumstances with gender impacts were preserved, without and government efforts to find solutions. The possible contributions of women to the economy, politics and to social development were disregarded. This approach resulted in the limited capacity for women to influence the processes of strengthening the economy and living conditions. Furthermore, their limited participation in the political landscape restricted any possible influence that women had on the government priorities and the continued development of Ukraine.

Protests in 2013 were unprecedentedly crowded. At least 249 protests with more than a thousand people were recorded, which is 2.5 times higher than figures for 2012 and 1.5 higher than for 2010 data, during the Tax Maidan. Crowded protests were not only a feature of Kiev; at least 16 protests with participation of more than 10,000 people were held in Odessa, Simferopol, Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Ternopil, Rivne, and Zaporizhia.

One of the most important types of socio-economic protests was labour protests, their number in 2013 was also a record – 389 protests were recorded, including 40 strikes; it represents 8% of all protests over the past year. This was due to the growing number of protests of labour groups on local issues. The most relevant questions remained: unpaid wages – 45%, working conditions – 30% and closure of factories – 19%. Besides, legal benefits, illegal dismissals, shadow wages, against closure of companies and hostile takeovers were demanded.

In our view, it is important not to forget about the analysis of origins of street confrontation during Maidan and further confrontation in south-eastern regions. Maidan partly canalised dissatisfaction of social and economic situation of those who strongly opposed Yanukovich, while supporters of anti-Maidan and federalisation were unhappy with the new government in Kiev. Throughout, Ukraine people's main problems were low standard of living, lack of social security and corruption in almost all spheres of life, ranging from healthcare and education to business and courts. In connection with situation in the East, requirements to reduce social programs, inflation and rise in tariffs, there are no prerequisites for improvement of the situation.

The main reasons for the protests in 2013 were illegal constructions, problems with public services, environment, unpaid wages, and rights of SMEs owners. During 2013 and before the events on Maidan, the topic of protests was mainly of social and economic kind and counted 56%, whereas after Maidan it was about ideologization of protest, and social component is only 10%, while ideological protests account for 62%. According to monitoring results, we can speak about the dominance in protests by the extreme right

of Ukrainian nationalists – 21% of all protests, over a frequency of participation of Russian nationalists – 2%. Until recently, Russian nationalists were quite marginal and local phenomenon and could have remained so, without external support in form of annexation of Crimea. At the same time, after the last parliamentary elections, Ukrainian nationalists entered the liberal opposition coalition and received institutional support from the parliamentary party for far-right groups.

It is also worth noting manifestation of women's activity during the events on Maidan, participation in various coordination initiatives – health care, legal aid, translation, searching for missing people, service in hospitals, as well as direct participation in collisions on barricades. According to studies carried out during protests on Maidan, participation of women was about 45%. Women proved to be active citizens who are willing to coordinate, cooperate and actively oppose infringement of the rights, including through sexism. It should be noted that during the active confrontation on Maidan, right-conservative rhetoric about the role of women in society increased and projected on activity perception of women place on Maidan. Thanks to active position of women and their critical statements regarding such sexist remarks, after a while we noticed positive changes in the rhetoric of male leaders regarding the recognition of role of women in the protest.

However, it is worth noting the fact that position of women in Ukraine is still far from the ideal situation of gender equality, and the social problems present only aggravate the inequality further. According to the data for 2013, women accounted for 55% of unemployment, even though they make up 54% of Ukraine's population. Also, the income gap between men and women stands at 30% and the economic activity of women is only 58%, and the working age of men 70%. With a gap of 12% and this large number of women could be involved in economic activity. It is with high hopes that with the high participation of women in the protests, there will be shifts in the influence women hold.

Part 2*

Internally Displaced Persons and Gender Aspects

By Maryna Rudenko

In this part the discussion with centre on the problems faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) who have fled their homes in the midst of conflict zones and military action, to ensure their health and safety. According to unofficial data, since the Russian occupation of Crimea and the outbreak of hostile militants in eastern part of Ukraine, thousands of people have left these territories. There are no official statistics published; the official number of registered IDPs is 38,000 but the real numbers are much higher.

Families of the military and internally displaced persons from armed conflict areas

Military families were forced to move from the temporarily occupied territory of Crimea and city of Sevastopol to be placed in Kuyalnik, a health spa in Odessa region. The monitoring carried out found that for displaced military personnel and their families and the question remains of how to providing service housing or providing financial compensation for its rent to IDPs.

Military families that temporarily left Crimea cannot get information about whether they are registered in apartment waiting lists because they are not registered in the appropriate garrison waiting lists.

Protecting the rights of wives of servicemen, including those whose husbands went to serve in the Russian Federation, is another issue. There are also concerns about putting children in pre-school institutions and employment of women.

A range of issues have been identified, all of which need to be solved at the regional and governmental level. The questions are as follows:

1. Solutions to the problems faced by men and women, for example the loss of employment, social security, education, etc.
2. The problem misinformation regarding leaving districts where military operations take place and the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. In situations such as these, an information campaign is necessary; where information can be spread through hotline telephone numbers, local authorities, public organisations, where they can seek solutions for their problems. On public hotlines, citizens can ask for detailed information and about regions that accept IDPs for placement and can get contacts of public organisations in those areas.
3. Housing. At the moment, most of IDPs are placed in resorts; some of them are private, at the governments expense or by public organisations. Also people living in the region who are willing to support IDPs are offering temporary housing. Around five thousand people were placed in Odessa region only.

4. Employment. Among IDPs, most are women with children who have lost their jobs (in 2013, 55% of the unemployed were women). At the moment, The Minister Lyudmila Denisova for Social Policy announced the creation of over 50,000 jobs. The majority of these will be located in the regions of Kiev (7,300 vacancies, 314 IDPs requesting employment), Dnipropetrovsk (7,500 vacancies – 117 requesting employment) Harkiv (2,700 vacancies – 77 requesting jobs) and city of Kiev (2,400 vacancies – 77 IDPs requesting jobs). There is also the issue of children placement in kindergartens and schools.
5. Increased amounts of information must be available about the possibility of possible movement in other regions of Ukraine for employment and housing.
6. Credit Breaks. It is necessary to establish credit breaks for IDPs who have taken loans for mortgages, cars and consumer loans before the “anti-terrorist” operation began.
7. Tax Breaks. It is necessary is to establish tax breaks for private entrepreneurs, who were forced to leave their homes and temporarily suspend activities; there are also questions regarding new registration of entrepreneurs as well as taxation.
8. Education. There is a need to continue education of IDPs, both adult and school ages children.
9. Health Services. Resettlement and medical care for the elderly, people with special needs and those with HIV.
10. Business Policies. Also a number of IDPs have relocated independently and have not registered with the relevant social bodies. These people are active economically; most of them entrepreneurs in small and medium enterprises. Unfortunately business insurance is not developed in Ukraine and they are at a high risk of losing their houses and business as collateral to loans.
11. Psychological rehabilitation;
12. Legal assistance;
13. Civic Initiatives – “East SOS”;
14. Requirements of the public organisations. Training available on trainings on peace building initiatives and supporting initiatives of public organisations.

What's needed

- Long-term solutions for the state and public organisations;
- Integration of the gender principle in rehabilitation of IDPs programmes;
- Monitoring of international organisations;
- A unit for IDPs.

A commission to investigate human rights violations was established in January 2014 at the initiative of non-governmental organisations, including the NGO “Information and Consultation Centre for Women”. Its purpose is to investigate violations of the right to hold peaceful gatherings since November 2013.

First results:

- The percentage of women among the victims is low – about 10%, regardless of the type of violation;
- All the information is divided on gender;
- Sexual offenses were not recorded;
- At the moment, the Commission has only started documentation of human rights violations in the East.

Part 3*

Role of Women in Providing Aid and Peace-Making Initiatives in Conflict Areas and Issues Facing Domestic Violence

By Olesya Bondar

One effective way to resolve the conflict currently taking place in the eastern part of Ukraine is to begin using women's skills and knowledge. We now see two opposite trends regarding the role of women. On the one hand, there are some women who, despite the radical nature and wrongfulness of actions of terrorists and separatists, still support the idea of federalisation. It is striking that women were more predominant than men among those people who expressed their support by voting in the "referendum" on May 11, and participating in demonstrations and interviews on television.

At the same time, women have had enough courage to oppose the separatists. An example of this is the women in Kramatorsk who approached the armed separatists and demanded that they leave the city. Both trends are explained by the fact that women in eastern and southern parts of Ukraine sincerely want change and want a better life for their families. The spokeswoman for the NGO "Alliance" (Kramatorsk) – a centre to support women, emphasises that women first want "to see order in this country, provided by whoever."

Women's main desire is to restore peace and improvements in quality of life. Given the limited access that the residents of the eastern and southern regions have to information about government activities, women who do not have access to information about what authorities and civil society in Ukraine are doing and what the risks of federalisation and escalation of separatism in the east of Ukraine, make assumptions.

There are examples of separatists openly trying to use women as "human shields". Without information on possible future scenarios in their regions in case of federalisation or even separation from Ukraine, some women believe they ready for such a role. In other words, local women are ready to support even federalisation, as it will somehow involves change. In the region of Donbas, the lack of jobs and extensive poverty leads women into the street to support those who fight in the conflict.

It is well known that women who participate in the conflict will receive monetary compensation. For example if a woman is single, she gets UAH 200 per day and if she has a child – UAH 500. Cases of poverty lead to mothers putting them and their children lives at risk. There is also the case of underestimating the current situation, its danger, the lack of safe behaviour skills and the truth instilled since childhood that a soldier would not hurt a child. However how apparent are these in conflict, according to the latest data 420 people died, including four children (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights).

It is also worth noting violation of women's rights; women have been forced to participate in protest rallies against their will, many by their employers. Generally, women work in public institutions (schools, hospitals

and local councils), and those in fear of losing their jobs and leaving their families without a means of existence, have had to go out in the streets to support the ideas of separatism.

Nevertheless the vast majority of women in southern and eastern regions still primarily seek peace, social justice and development, not focusing on ideas of federalisation. However they lack experience of active participation and therefore have little influence in decision-making processes, which in turn affect the development of communities as well as opportunities to contribute to the definition of development priorities, which would unite the whole country. These facts can and should be a further opportunity for providing social welfare and cohesion for all regions and Ukrainian society in general. The potential of women should be recognised to a greater extent, to ensure peace and development of the country from which people from all regions will benefit.

Women organisations can and should also play the leading role in this. The creation and expansion of women's networks can be used to search for values and priorities, which would become common for men and women in all regions of Ukraine, thus fostering mutual understanding between all regions of the country. Increased women's participation has become one of the factors of ending the crisis and civil strife. For this, it is necessary to raise awareness of women regarding:

1. Their ability to influence decision-making on social and economic issues at the local level;
2. Their methods of building understanding between community members and of reaching a consensus on problematic issues between different regions of Ukraine.

Another issue worth drawing your attention to is violence against women. At the moment, we do not address this problem to its fullest extent, but gender expert's estimate that in the near future, the number of cases of violence against women will increase. Prerequisites for it are growing such as psychological pressure and stress, increase of feeling of fear and uncertainty, post-traumatic syndrome, as well as economic and social problems in the country. Another major reason that will affect the culture of violence, is lack of government support, namely related to mobilisation; the government announced termination of funding of many state programmes, including the State Program to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men by 2016, which also contains component on prevention of violence.

In this situation, it is worth noting the role of women organisations, which have begun the task of providing practical assistance (psychological, legal, support in the courts, organisation of support groups for women who have experienced violence, as well as preventive work in their communities). At the same time, as already mentioned, this problem's extent is not understood, because the results of communication with women revealed that compared to the military conflict, women evaluate violence exerted against them not an important event that requires attention.

Also recently in Ukraine there is a trend of increasing acts of violence against the elderly, committed by their children. This violence is usually aimed at older women, as because of the high mortality rate men seldom live to an old age. In this situation, due to the cultural influences this problem might also exacerbate.

Part 4 *

Latest Developments in the Field of Gender Equality & Internal and External Barriers

Summary and recommendations

By [Mykhailo Koriukalov](#)

1. Devaluation of the national currency, decline of the economy, inflation, in particular, the increase of prices for housing services are creating risks of vulnerability and poverty for women, in particular single women. Risks should be taken into account timely and prevented. Opportunities associated with microcredit should be created, primarily for women – owners of small businesses.
2. Unfortunately in the months after the overthrow of the Yanukovich regime, there are no significant changes in the status women hold in political, economic, social and other spheres of life and their ability of self-realisation. In particular, there are still few women in government roles. During the elections on May 25, 2014, the number of presidential candidates, mayors of cities and local councils that were women remained at 10-20%. It seems that with the higher the level of authority, less women will be present. Currently, there is only one female minister, and another woman recently became the head of the National Bank. There is one female governor and one female head of a regional council. Moreover, gender issues were not included in the in election of the candidates. This shows that political forces, including the new ones, are not aware of the need to empower women and to strengthen their influence on politics in the country. And society still does not ask for gender transformation.
3. The state's gender policy is still not effective. Moreover, now the government should strengthen its gender policy in connection with the need to provide services to IDPs, the overwhelming of who are women with children. Gender approaches in policy related to displaced people will make it more qualitative and effective, preventing the marginalisation of IDPs and improving social cohesion in the country.
4. It should be admitted that the exclusion of gender perspectives was one of the integral factors as to why Ukraine could not provide dynamic development of society or to build an effective government and become a reliable defender of human rights. Along with continuously increasing corruption, freedom of speech suppression and disappointment in government, there has been increasing dissent among Ukrainians that ultimately caused the protests in 2013. At the same time, a successful gender policy, with the creation of opportunities for women to have more influence in the political, economic and social development of the country as well as equally enjoy the benefits of any development will be an important factor in accelerating the pace of transformation in the country and increasing the life satisfaction for both Ukrainian women and men.
5. Besides, it is important to recognise that currently the government's ability to address these issues is very limited because of the conduct of military operations in eastern part of Ukraine and the active support of

militants by the Russian Federation. This escalates the conflict and does not allow for negotiations to begin, not to mention the resolution of conflict and return to normal life. Ukrainian resources and government's attention are focused on this conflict. For instance, Ukraine cannot fulfil its obligations to its citizens residing in the eastern regions in regards to social benefits due to the military, which is completely paralysed the financial sector in these regions. Ukraine has no ability to ensure human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. Besides the attention of civil society, which in other circumstances would have influenced the government to improve its human rights policies, all focuses is on the situation in eastern regions and the fate of Ukrainian military.

6. Therefore it is clear that Ukraine (both government and civil society) and the international community should focus on two areas:

- a) To increase the pace of transformation in Ukraine, strengthening of democracy and human rights in all regions in order to become an attractive state for all its citizens, and
- b) To ensure non-interference of other states in internal affairs of Ukraine, in particular, to stop spreading of information from the Russian Federation and to ensure that militants and weapons do not get into Ukraine from the Russian Federation.

7. At the end it seems necessary to summarise our recommendations to the Government of Ukraine and the international community in connection with the strengthening and promotion of the rights and role of women:

Recommendations suggested for inclusion in the UNHRC Resolution on Cooperation and Assistance to Ukraine in the Field of Human Rights (A/HRC/26/L.15):

1. To acknowledge the vulnerability of women due to the annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol and military conflict in the Eastern regions of Ukraine and to recommend to the Government of Ukraine employ gender perspective when working with Internally Displaced Peoples (IDPs);
2. To recognise the opportunities and capabilities of women and women's organisations to contribute to bringing peace to Ukraine.

Recommendations to the Government of Ukraine:

1. To improve the efficiency of gender policies through:
 - a) The application of strategic planning techniques in regards to gender policies and an gender impact assessment of existing policies;
 - b) Strengthening national gender mechanisms, enhancing human and resource capacities and enlarging its mandate;
 - c) Increasing financial allocations to gender policies;
 - d) The prioritisation, implementation and monitoring of gender policies, by including NGO and expert communities;
2. Bring gender into the mainstream when planning and providing assistance to IDPs, in particular:
 - a) To collect gender-disaggregated statistics on IDPs;
 - b) To comprehensively address the needs of IDPs, the vast majority of whom are women and children, including information on how to flee conflict areas and where to access assistance, provision of housing, employment, education, childcare, health care, social benefits and payments, legal and psychological assistance, re-issuance of documents, etc.;
 - c) To develop and launch initiatives on business training and providing micro-credits to the IDPs who want individual entrepreneurship;
3. To capture the experience and lessons of women's input to Euromaidan developments, the contribution of peaceful resolutions and the provision of assistance to IDPs from the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, Sevastopol and Eastern regions of Ukraine. To use this experience in development and delivery of programmes promoting women's leadership in political, social and economic fields;
4. To take measures to expand the influence of women on political processes, particularly apply provisional

measures to increase the political and social representation of women in decision-making structures;

5. To improve the level of knowledge and awareness of people about gender equality and the benefits that the country and every citizen will enjoy from it;

6. To address new trends and developments due to the aggravated economic and social challenges that women and men face due to economic slowdown. To consider how governmental reforms aimed at economic development would influence women and men of different social groups.

Recommendations to the international community:

1. To provide support to the Government and NGOs of Ukraine with the objective of strengthening women's rights and promoting gender equality, including the expert and technical aid;
2. To carry out monitoring and bring the attention of the Ukrainian Government to their responsibility to observe and protect human rights of Ukraine, women's rights in particular;
3. The EU and Russia should engage in discussions to facilitate trade and economic policies, enabling Ukraine to have trading partnerships inclusive for all parties, which would lead to the de-escalation of tensions.
4. The European Union should consider changes to their stringent visa regime for Ukraine, in order to increase confidence and address the trafficking of people.