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GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN UKRAINE: ISSUES OF ASSESSMENT AND POLICY RESPONSE

Gender-based violence is a global phenomenon, affecting all countries through various forms, including domestic violence, sex trafficking, sexual abuse, etc. However, in many societies it is justified with societal norms, cultural and religious barriers. In many aspects, gender violence makes a common challenge for national governments and international community, resulting from a weak coordination of relevant governmental bodies and poor sectoral capacity of authorities. A lack of reliable statistics makes a particular problem, as incidence of such cases is covered with silence, while survivors are stigmatized in a society.

The proposed paper is devoted to analysis of gender-based violence in Ukraine based on data of Demographic and Health Survey, Survey on Incidence Violence Against Women and Girls and administrative statistics on the number of registered cases. The paper provides exploration of the basic trends, alarming indicators, prevalence of different forms of gender-based violence in the country.

The key findings of the paper can be used for development of proposals to the national policies, programmes and other interventions to prevent and combat gender-based violence.

Key words: *gender-based violence, violence against women, domestic violence, gender-sensitive policy.*

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ГЕНДЕРНЕ НАСИЛЬСТВО В УКРАЇНІ: ПРОБЛЕМИ ОЦІНКИ ТА ПОЛІТИЧНОЇ ВІДПОВІДІ

Гендерне насильство (ГН) – це глобальний феномен, що проявляється у всіх країнах світу в різноманітних формах, включаючи насильство в родині, торгівлю людьми, злочини на сексуальному підґрунті тощо. Однак у багатьох суспільствах це явище не отримує належного засудження внаслідок дії соціальних норм, культурних та релігійних бар'єрів. ГН виступає спільним викликом для національних урядів та міжнародного співтовариства, обумовленим слабкою координацією між відповідальними урядовими органами та низьким рівнем секторальної здатності інститутів. Брак надійної статистики становить окрему проблему, оскільки факти ГН часто замовчуються, а жертви зазнають стигматизації в суспільстві.

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Стаття присвячена дослідженню проблематики ГН в Україні за даними МДОУ, Обстеження з питань поширення насильства проти жінок та адміністративних даних щодо чисельності зареєстрованих випадків ГН. Обґрунтовано основні джерела інформації про поширення та форми ГН в країні, досліджено їх переваги та обмеження.

Викладені висновки та рекомендації можуть бути використані для формування пропозицій щодо національної політики, програм та інших політичних втручань з метою попередження та подолання гендерного насильства.

Ключові слова: гендерне насильство, насильство проти жінок, насильство в родині, гендерно збалансована політика.

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ГЕНДЕРНОЕ НАСИЛИЕ В УКРАИНЕ: ПРОБЛЕМЫ ОЦЕНКИ И ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО ОТВЕТА

Гендерное насилие (ГН) – глобальный феномен, проявляющийся во всех регионах мира в разнообразных формах, включая насилие в семье, торговлю людьми, преступления на сексуальной почве и др. Однако во многих обществах это явление не получает надлежащего осуждения вследствие действия социальных норм, культурных и религиозных барьеров. ГН – общий вызов для национальных правительств и международного сообщества, обусловленный слабой координацией между ответственными правительственными органами и низким уровнем секторальных возможностей институтов. Недостаток надежной статистики – особая проблема, поскольку случаи ГН часто замалчиваются, а жертвы сталкиваются со стигматизацией в обществе.

Статья посвящена исследованию проблематики гендерного насилия в Украине на основании данных МДОУ, Обследования по вопросам распространения насилия в отношении женщин и административных данных о числе зарегистрированных случаев ГН. Обоснованы основные источники информации о распространении и формах ГН в стране, исследованы их преимущества и ограничения.

Изложенные выводы и рекомендации могут быть использованы для формирования предложенной относительно национальной политики, программ и других политических вмешательств с целью предупреждения и преодоления ГН.

Ключевые слова: гендерное насилие, насилие в отношении женщин, насилие в семье, гендерно сбалансированная политика.

Introduction. Gender-based violence (GBV) has been acknowledged worldwide as one of the most prevalent human rights violations, in both developed and developing regions. As empirical evidence proves, it affects women disproportionately due to a direct connection with the unequal distribution of powers and resources between women and men, resulting from a devaluated women's position in a society and their subsequent subordination in a family life. Women and girls are not only at high risk of GBV, but also suffer from fewer options and less resources at their disposal to avoid or escape abusive situations and to seek justice. They also are particularly vulnerable to negative consequences of violence, including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and reproductive health harms, experience of sexually transmitted infections and HIV. The psychological stress and post-traumatic effects could also cause the long-term negative consequences affecting all dimensions of women's life.

Ukraine has become the first post-soviet state, adopting the Law «On Prevention of Domestic Violence» (2001) with specification of legal and institutional bases of preventing and combating violence in a family, including GBV. The system of legislation, aimed at support of gender equality and prevention of gender-based discrimination has been developed later on, including the Law «On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women

and Men», the Law «On Combating Trafficking in Human Beings», respective provisions have been amended to other legislative acts, including the Criminal Code. Also, special institutional environment has been developed to assist the survivors of violence through the social safety nets and shelters. However, the problem is still rather common for the country, being manifested in many ways: domestic violence, rape, physical assault, stalking, sexual harassment etc. The results of 2014 VAW survey revealed that 19.4 % of women aged 19–49 suffered from physical violence in Ukraine, while another 7.9 % of women – from sexual violence; moreover, the overwhelming majority of survivors (68 %) do not apply for any kind of assistance (UNFPA, 2014b). These data prove an urgent relevance of empirical studies of the scales and forms of GBV in Ukraine, as well as a need in further improvement of policies towards prevention and combating the practice.

Study of recent publications. The increasing number of researches highlights the consequences of GBV not only in terms of human rights violation and crime studies, but also in terms of demographic and health effects, family and intergenerational relations, social development and democratization (Council of Europe, 2006; Crepaldi et. al, 2010; Kelly et al., 2011; Heise et al., 1994, 1998; Kishor and Johnson, 2006; United Nations General Assembly, 1993; etc.). Although little statistical research has been conducted on the problem, available data provide a rough estimate of GBV prevalence worldwide. It is estimated that 20 to 25 % of women in Europe have suffered physical violence (Council of Europe, 2006). However, the number of women who have suffered from other forms of GBV is much higher due to a large underreporting rate. Particularly, domestic violence is frequently invisible since it happens «behind closed doors», while societal, cultural and religious norms (and sometimes even the legal systems) do not treat this form of violence as a crime, but rather as a «private» family matter.

Unfortunately, the systematic lack of research publications on GBV is observed in Ukraine, while some relevant studies have been mostly realized due to initiative and support of international donors, in the frameworks of more comprehensive social and demographic surveys. The first attempt to assess prevalence of the phenomenon was introduced in the framework of the Ukraine – 2007 Demographic and Health Survey, including a special Module on Domestic Violence (DV Module) (UCSR et al, 2008). The features of public attitudes towards domestic violence have been examined in the framework of 2012 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey implemented in Ukraine with support of the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to provide important data on the status of children and women in the country (State Statistics Service, 2013). Some issues related to GBV towards older population can be obtained from the results of social thematic sample survey «Older Women and Men: Quality of Life and Social Well-being», supported by the UNFPA in Ukraine in 2013 (UCSR, 2014). Problems of sexual harassment at a workplace have been touched in the program of sociological survey «Women’s Labour Force Participation in Ukraine» conducted in 2012 (UCSR, 2012), as well as general attitude to issues of gender-based discrimination among the population of Ukraine. As a response to the permanent lack of GBV statistics, a new VAW Survey was initiated by the UNFPA in 2014 based on the DV Module (UNFPA, 2014b).

That’s why the paper’s **objective** is to analyze the present challenges of GBV prevalence in Ukraine based on available data sources, to outline the data gaps and policy failings, to provide basic evaluation of efficiency of the public system of protection of GBV survivors and to develop general recommendations on strengthening the national institutional capacity on responding the present GBV challenges in the country.

The key findings of a study. GBV is a complex issue, involving a set of concepts and categories. In most societies with their institutional environments and various legislation

systems, the terms «gender-based violence» and «violence against women» are usually used interchangeably as most GBV is inflicted by men on women and girls. The development programs, in particular those of UNFPA, use the following definition, which can be applied in international context: «GBV is violence involving men and women, in which the female is usually the survivor; and which is derived from unequal power relationships between men and women. Violence is directed specifically against a woman because she is a woman, or affects women disproportionately. It includes, but is not limited to, physical, sexual and psychological harm (including intimidation, suffering, coercion, and/or deprivation of liberty within the family, or within the general community)» (UNFPA, 1998). The key concepts related to GBV are summarized in a more recent definition of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines on GBV Interventions in Emergencies (2005): «GBV is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females» (IASC, 2005).

Although it is difficult to distinguish between different types of GBV since they are not mutually exclusive, the European Institute for Gender Equity proposes a classification (EIGE, 2014), including:

- domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, sexual violence during conflict and harmful customary or traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, forced marriages and honour crimes;
- trafficking in women, forced prostitution and violations of human rights in armed conflict (in particular murder, systematic rape, sexual slavery and forced pregnancy);
- forced sterilization, forced abortion, coercive use of contraceptives, female infanticide and prenatal sex selection.

As to Ukraine's institutional context, in spite of the recent shifts in development of gender-sensitive legislation, there is still a problem of terminology when dealing with various aspects of GBV. The basic category, defined by the Ukrainian legislation, is provided by a term of «domestic violence», defined as «any intentional actions of physical, sexual, psychological or economic nature committed by one family member in relation to other family member, if these actions violate constitutional rights and freedoms of a family member as a person and citizen and inflict moral harm on her/him, harm to her/his physical or psychical health» (Law of Ukraine «On Prevention of Domestic Violence», 2011). There is no gender-specific categorization of survivors of domestic violence, however, it is commonly accepted that such survivors are mostly presented by women and children. The Law of Ukraine «On Prevention of Domestic Violence» provides also definitions of various forms of violence, including: physical domestic violence, sexual domestic violence, psychological domestic violence and economic domestic violence.

Those forms of GBV, which are observed outside intimate or family relations, are usually covered by the Criminal Code of Ukraine, regulating general liability for cases of physical violence through injuries, beating and torture, other forms of physical abuse irrespective of gender. If consider sexual violence, taking forms of sexual exploitation, involvement in pornography and commercial sex, forced entry into sexual intercourse, rape and other kinds of forms; its manifestations are also penalized by the Criminal Code of Ukraine (Section IV «Crimes against sexual freedom and sexual inviolability of a person»).

The Law of Ukraine «On Combating Trafficking in Human Beings» (2011) introduces also the term of «trafficking in human beings», defined as «recruitment, transportation, harbouring, transfer or receipt of a human being for purpose of his/her exploitation, including sexual, by means of deception, fraud, blackmail, abuse of a person's position of vulnerability

or by use of force or threat of use of force, with abuse of power or economic or other dependence of the survivor on another person». Other forms of GBV, such as early marriages, wife inheritance or forced sterilization are not typical for the Ukrainian society.

The collection of data on GBV is challenging worldwide, in particular as it related to issues like domestic violence, trafficking, sexual harassment at the workplace, etc. There are two basic approaches to collecting GBV data: population-based surveys, which can be used to measure the prevalence of GBV, and administrative data collected by institutions dealing with survivors and/or perpetrators of GBV. Each of these data sources has advantages and limitations, which are summarized in Table 1.

A major obstacle for accountability is a lack of reliable and comparable data registered by official statistics – as because of survivors' unwillingness to apply for assistance due to social and cultural barriers, as because of failings in the legal and institutional environment related to bureaucracy and imperfect administrative mechanisms, indifference or lack of abilities of officials, even corruption prevalence.

At the same time, sociological surveys remain reliable sources to obtain relevant information from, because they secure anonymity of respondent answers due to results' aggregation in the course of statistical processing whereas the individual interview method ensures a deeper understanding of problematic issues, providing as complete answers as possible and

Table 1. Advantages and limitations of GBV data by types of data sources

Source of data on GBV	Advantages	Disadvantages and limitations
Administrative data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information on the number of registered applications related to GBV and services provided to survivors; • generally measure incidents (not people) • can measure some severe forms of GBV that cannot be caught by surveys (like murders, heavy injuries resulting in stay in hospitals) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not reflect magnitude of problem in the population • ‘top of the iceberg’ as a small share of survivors apply for assistance • perpetrator data often lacking • do not evaluate quality of services provided to survivors and efficiency of administrative procedures • double counting possible
Population-based surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the only way to measure prevalence of problem in population • provide deeper understanding, e.g. risk factors, consequences, coping strategies • enable measuring amount of non-reporting and reasons for seeking and NOT seeking help • allow monitoring effect of intervention measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • highly sensitive to methodological issues and skills of interviewers • costly and complex methodology • raise major issues of safety and ethics • missing the most severe cases • do not provide in-depth analysis of the problem and description of life stories
In-depth interviews and focus groups with survivors of GBV or experts in the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can provide in-depth analysis of the problem, including determinants, coping strategies • reveal the gaps in providing service to survivors and administrative procedures on prosecution of perpetrators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do not reflect magnitude of problem in the population • fragmental character • highly sensitive to methodological issues and skills of interviewers and moderators

sensitive contact between the interviewer and the respondent. However, it is important to prepare field staff to collect domestic violence data through special trainings on GBV and psychological support.

There is also an opportunity to make in-depth assessment of forms, causes and consequences of GBV through in-depth interviews, focus groups, description of case studies with involvement of survivors and experts from public authorities, international agencies, NGOs and civil society organizations.

The next types of data sources on GBV are available in Ukraine:

- data of special population-based surveys and special thematic modules incorporated in more comprehensive surveys¹;
- administrative statistics of the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine on survivors of domestic violence and trafficking in human beings applying for social assistance and registered in the shelters (number of recipients of the respective social services),
- administrative statistics of the Ministry of Internal of Ukraine on registered crimes and prosecutions related to domestic violence, as well as crime statistics disaggregated by gender (number of crime appeals);
- administrative statistics of the State Court Administration on a number of convictions and appeals to courts related to GBV;
- statistics on survivors of violence against women collected by assisting NGOs, data of hot lines and crisis centres, international organizations (UNFPA, IOM, UNDP).

Gender disaggregation of the administrative statistics on crime survivors is available in Ukraine; thus, indicators related to murders, rape and other forms of violence against women and girls can be obtained. In total, women make up to 40 percent of total crime survivors in Ukraine (Fig. 1), while their proportion is overwhelming among rape survivors (89 %), survivors of human trafficking (almost 73 %). However, the registered numbers do not reflect the actual situation in the society, as these data are collected not on all indicators, while different rates of reporting, recording, prosecution and conviction create controversial statistical disparities, in particular in terms of sexual abuse and related crimes.

Although sexual abuse provide rather insignificant proportion of the total registered crime rates in Ukraine (less than 1 % of total crimes), this figures are believed to be unreliable or misleading. In particular, controversial statistical disparities in statistics on crimes related to sexual abuse are revealed through correlation of data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the State Court Administration of Ukraine. For instance, the law enforcement agencies registered more than 11.5 thousand applications about cases of rape and rape attempts during 1990–2013, but only 8.4 thousand convictions have been made in the courts for crimes committed that fall under article 152 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine «Rape» (Table 2). In other cases, the police refused to initiate criminal proceedings or some cases have been referred to the court by police after an investigation was completed. These data prove how complicated it is to bring these cases to logical conclusion and to punish abusers through courts.

¹The first attempt to assess prevalence of the GBV was introduced in the framework of the UDHS in 2007, when a special module on domestic violence was designed to assess prevalence rates and types of violence (UCSR et al, 2008). The features of public attitudes towards domestic violence have been examined in the framework of 2012 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (State Statistics Service, 2013). Some issues related to GBV towards older population can be obtained from the results of special survey «Older Women and Men: Quality of Life and Social Well-being», supported by the UNFPA in Ukraine in 2013 (UCSR, 2014). Problems of sexual harassment at a workplace have been touched in the program of sociological survey «Women's Labour Force Participation in Ukraine» conducted in 2012 (UCSR, 2012), as well as general attitude to issued of gender-based discrimination among the population of Ukraine.

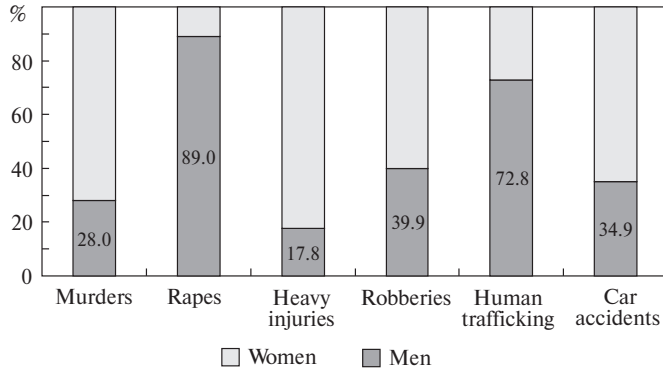


Fig. 1. Gender structure of crime survivors by crime groups in Ukraine, 2012

Source: Ministry of Internal of Ukraine.

Table 2. Total number of registered rapes and related convictions in Ukraine (1990–2013), in thousand

Indicator	1990	1995	2000	2005	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Number of crimes related to rapes and rape attempts (Ministry of Internal)	2.7	1.9	1.2	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.5
Number of convictions related to rapes (State Court Administration)	2.6	1.4	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.3	0.2

Source: State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2014.

Obviously, a large number of rapes stays also in shadow because women are afraid to ask for protection, are unable to counteract violence by themselves, or do not believe that the existent legal system is going to protect them. According to the American Medical Association (AMA, 1995), sexual violence, and rape in particular, is considered the most under-reported violent crime. The most common reasons given by survivors for not reporting rapes are the belief that it is a personal or private matter, and that they fear reprisal from the assailant. According to data of sociological surveys in Ukraine, one in six women age 15–49 (17 % of respondents) experienced physical violence since the age of 15, while one percent of these women report that they had been subjected to violent physical acts often (UCSR et al., 2008). Overall, 16 percent of women who had ever experienced physical or sexual violence never told anyone that they were survivors of violence, and 44% never sought help.

However, particularly spousal violence committed by a husband or partner remains the most common type of violence against women, and this area is particularly stigmatized in Ukraine. Based on 2007 Demographic and Health Survey data, 24 % of ever-married women report some type of emotional, physical, or sexual violence (Table 3). More than one in ten (13 %) ever married women age 15–49 report having experienced physical violence by their current or most recent husband/partner. Three percent report sexual violence, and

Table 3. Prevalence of spousal violence by various forms as reported by population-based surveys in Ukraine, 2007 and 2014, %

Forms of violence	Percentage of ever married women 15–49 who had experienced various forms of spousal violence			
	ever		at least once in last 12 months	
	DHS–2007	VAW–2014	DHS–2007	VAW–2014
Physical violence	12.7	14.5	9.6	9.9
Sexual violence	3.3	3.2	2.2	2.3
Emotional violence	22.4	18.3	20.2	14.3
Any form of physical and sexual violence (both types of violence)	2.7	2.7	1.9	1.6
Any form of emotional, or physical, or sexual violence (at least one type of violence)	24.4	21.6	16.7	15.4
Any form of emotional, physical, and sexual violence (all three types of violence)	2.4	2.6	1.3	1.2

Source: based of data of DHS (UCSR, 2008) and Incidence of VAW Survey (UNFPA, 2014).

22 % report emotional violence (UCSR, 2008). Among ever-married women who have ever suffered any type of spousal violence, women whose husbands do not drink are the least likely to report physical violence (2 %), while women whose husbands get drunk frequently are the most likely to report violence (56 %).

2014 Survey on Incidence of Violence against Girls and Women was based on the DHS questionnaire Domestic Violence Module to compare the results with data of 2007 DHS in Ukraine (UNFPA, 2014b). The results revealed that the rate of physical and sexual domestic violence did not change significantly: 16% of women aged 15–49 experienced physical domestic violence, and 5 % of them faced sexual domestic violence. However, the share of survivors of non-family violence (the perpetrators mostly are male acquaintances or strangers) increased significantly: 5 % of such women experienced physical violence (3 % in 2007), and 4 % experienced sexual violence (2 % in 2007). The overall share of women who experienced physical and/or sexual violence increased from 18 % in 2007 to 22 % in 2014, this increase occurred mostly due to the growing number of survivors of non-family violence.

According to the official statistics, the number of domestic violence cases registered in Ukraine is increasing by 10 % annually; there were 144,848 appeals about domestic violence registered in Ukraine in 2013 (increased by 32 % compared with 2012). However, these figures should not be definitely interpreted as a negative trend – such figures could prove efficiency of information and educational campaigns on GBV issues among population, resulting in more transparent policy response, survivors’ «readiness» to cooperate with law enforcing bodies.

Women, elderly, and minors are especially prone to become survivors of domestic abuse; however most complains comes from women (126,498 appeals in 2013). In 2014, a special survey was realized to improve national gender machinery and efficiency of mechanism of assistance to survivors of violence through interviews with survivors and experts². The results of the survey revealed some typical features for profiling survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence in Ukraine:

Profiling of survivors and perpetrators of domestic violence in Ukraine based on the interviews with women-clients of specialized centers for social support

Survivors of domestic violence

Availability of children: 70 % of clients stay in centres with children.

- **Average age** of a woman-client of a center is 35.5. However women of different age suffer from violence: the youngest was 15, the oldest – 83.
- Different level of **education**. Obtained data refutes widespread opinion that uneducated women usually suffer from violence: 31 % of clients have tertiary education, 55 % – secondary education, 14 % – unfinished secondary education.
- Most of the clients are **economically active** (79 %), however very few of them work (27 %) and even less of them receive income that allow to financially provide for themselves and their children.
- Almost one third of women are from **rural area**.
- Absence of their own **dwelling**. Only 40 % of women-clients had their own dwelling. And these women were co-owners of apartments and houses with people who in most cases were perpetrators.

Perpetrators of domestic violence

- Most of them are **men** (91 %)
- In most cases, they are people of **middle age** (46 % aged 31–40), people aged below 25 were not revealed by the research.
- Level of **education** of perpetrator is lower than education level of survivors, however one third of perpetrators (26 %) have tertiary education.
- Most of the **perpetrators are partners** of women (cohabitants – 38 %, husbands – 27 %). Others are usually relatives (father, mother, brother, son, sister), rarely – former-husbands, employers, neighbours etc.
- Typical problem is **addiction to alcohol** and / or drugs abuse.

Source: (UNFPA, 2014).

It is widely acknowledged that different societies could show different attitudes to GBV, depending on different cultural and social contexts. As to Ukraine, traditional gender stereotypes are very sustainable in the society, being spread on family relations. According to the Ukraine MICS 2012 results (State Statistics Service, 2013), providing assessment of justifying husbands/partners in beating their wives, men are more likely than women to agree with one of the reasons to justify beating a wife/partner (9.4 percent of men compared to 2.9 percent of women). The largest proportion of men (7.5 percent) agreed that a husband has a right to beat his wife if she neglects the children, while 2.6 percent of them – if she argues, and 2.3 percent – if she refuses to have sex with him. Thus, a lot of people in the country still believe it is the survivors who are guilty for what happened to them, while the most common reasons given by survivors for not reporting rapes are the belief that it is a personal or private matter or they fear of a social stigma. It makes a huge contrast with the results of Eurobarometer on Gender Equality – 2009, revealing that 62 % of Europeans think that gender-based violence should be a priority action in the area of gender inequality, while 92 % believe that there is an urgent need to tackle it (European Commission, 2010).

The recent attention to issues of gender-based violence in Ukraine has increased at times of the current conflict in the country's eastern regions. There are numerous evidences witnessing perpetrating rape and sexualized violence in the conflict-affected regions of Eastern Ukraine, provided by local NGOs, psychologists working in the region and civil society activists. Besides beating and ill-treatment, sexual harassment was also reported by female journalists, who have been abducted and detained by rebels in Donetsk and Luhansk

² The methodology of the survey was based on the internet-questioning of directors and social workers of shelters, collection of depersonalized data about women who stayed there as a result of being subject to violence, personal flexible interviews with women-survivors of violence who were clients of the centres during 2013–2014.

regions (OHCHR, 2014). Also, the United Nations said in its 2015 strategic response plan for Ukraine, that there are «undocumented reports of high levels of sexual violence in the conflict area, which require substantiation and medical, psychosocial, and legal redress».

Conclusions and policy recommendations. There are numerous studies realized in Ukraine, revealing that public policy and responsible authorities remain largely ineffective in their response to GBV. In spite of creating institutional environment, the national legislation still requires improving and bringing into correspondence with international norms and standards of human rights protection. Among the priority actions, the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) is a priority one, as well as bringing national legislation into compliance with international law and human rights standards. The key experts evaluated the Istanbul Convention as a progressive international instrument in the field of combating violence against women. Its aim is to create «zero tolerance» to different forms of violence suffered by women, to change the mentality of citizens, calling the whole society to change its attitude to the situation of violence against women. The Convention provides the basis for the introduction of new concepts in the criminal code to effectively prevent violence, protect survivors and prosecute perpetrators.

It is important to understand that effective policy of GBV preventing has to be based on three equally important components: 1) preventive activities related to broad information and education campaigns, realization of social work with target population groups, 2) improving the mechanism of prosecution in case of perpetrators and ensuring relevant liability for crimes, 3) adequate support of GBV survivors through providing necessary social, medical, psychological, legal assistance, ensuring opportunities for their complete return to the normal life.

In Ukraine, there is a rather well-developed network of institutions that may provide social services to women, who suffered from domestic violence, including providing with temporary shelters. These institutions are situated in most regions of the country³, being subordinated to the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine. However, the existent network of social institutions is not enough to ensure comprehensive social work with people who survived domestic violence. Traditional lack of funding of these institutions, low level of providing with well-trained experts, absence of effective programs of income support and job placement for survivors, outdated standards of service providing, poor coordination between various authorities operating in the field of GBV, – that's just a part of problems restricting efficiency of the system of protection and reintegration of GBV survivors. Along with the necessary legislative changes, expansion of training programs for officials dealing with GBV, including police officers, medical and social workers, representatives of the justice sector remains relevant.

At the same time, an important problem is seen in a low level of population awareness on the current mechanisms of GBV prevention and available services for GBV survivors. According to population-based surveys based on domestic violence module, only 38 % of physical or sexual violence survivors asked for help from any person or organization in 2007 and this share declined to 32 % in 2014. Importantly, many respondents are not aware how they can seek for any help in case of violence: more than one-third of them reported that they have no idea of any institutions dealing with protection of survivors. Also, they also have a very low confidence in opportunities of assistance from public authorities or officials of the law enforcement bodies.

³ As at the beginning of 2014, there were 22 centres of social and psychological support and 18 social centres for mother and child, operating in most regions of Ukraine.

The adequate response to GBV problem in Ukraine is complicated by absence of a unified information base, as in practice authorized institutions provide the audit of personal, very specific data. Peculiarities of statistical audit do not allow tracing of efficiency of administrative procedures for specific cases of GBV, result in disparities and non-correspondence in statistical data. That's why population-based surveys remain the major source of obtaining data on GBV prevalence in a society, so strengthening of the national system of statistics on GBV should raise not only methodological, but also important ethical challenges in data collection, associated with issues of safety and confidentiality. All studies on GBV should prioritize women's safety and ensure non-judgmental and supportive attitude to the potential survivors. It is important not to contribute to further stigmatizing of this sensitive topic, but rather advocate for positive changes in a society through raising population awareness on the consequences of GBV, developing preventive mechanisms and promoting transformations of public attitude towards criminalization of GBV cases and preventing victimization of survivors. The prospective directions of development and realization of GBV policy in Ukraine should include development of special corrective programs for violators, as international experience proves efficiency of their social rehabilitation as instrument of GBV prevention and overcoming in a society.

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