

Report

Cooperation of Civil Society Organizations with the Defence and Security Sector in Implementation a Gender Equality Policy in Ukraine



May 2023

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This report was prepared by the Women's Information Consultative Center.

Edition: Olena Suslova

Our acknowledgment for participation, validation and opening remarks to the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy, Ms. Kateryna LEVCHENKO

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Foreword

The cooperation between the state and civil society organizations in ensuring human rights, gender equality, and other crucial spheres is a key factor in the effective implementation of public policy. This conclusion is based on numerous examples, facts, and joint processes and encourages the strengthening of such cooperation and interaction through modern tools and principles.

An important component of civil society is the Ukrainian women's movement, which celebrates its 140th anniversary in 2024. As I wrote in my book "Gender Gravitation: Challenges and Solutions", the modern women's movement is not just a collection of women's non-governmental organizations. It consists of organizations and individuals united by shared ideas, primarily those of gender equality and the defense of women's rights. As in any movement, there are different wings, groups, and goals. However, uniting around equal rights and opportunities for women and men is a crucial social dominator for all groups and organizations within the women's movement.

Ukraine's European integration movement, the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union, and Ukraine's achievement of EU candidate status have strengthened the influence of global values on social movements, including the women's movement.

The full-scale invasion of russia has not only led to the physical destruction of Ukrainian citizens, the devastation of territories, cities, villages, and settlements but has also intensified the hybrid war concerning gender issues, as well as information and psychological operations. Here, russian propagandists and their supporters have introduced new manipulations, broadening their scope beyond the concept of "gender equality" or the definition of "gender" to include the misrepresentation of peace, peacebuilding processes, reconciliation, and conflict resolution.

Such developments have posed new challenges for women's and feminist organizations—challenges that must be identified, effectively, and proactively addressed.

For example, some international feminist groups and associations explicitly call for withholding military aid from Ukraine, opposing the increase of women's participation in the security and defense sector, and discouraging women's involvement in these areas. They advocate for a "peaceful" resolution to the conflict, arguing that further

war efforts will contribute to the militarization of the country's ideology, reinforce patriarchal tendencies, and lead to increased discrimination and violence. However, these groups have not consulted with Ukrainian women's organizations and groups. Thus, this challenge is significant and requires an appropriate level of competence in response.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine is shifting this trend. Ukrainian feminists and human rights defenders, including Nobel laureate Oleksandra Matviichuk, are calling for weapons for Ukraine from every platform—parliaments, governments, and international organizations. Therefore, civil society organizations must respond by possessing knowledge and understanding of the situation, the ability to engage in dialogue, awareness of their opponents and adversaries, and the capacity to formulate their own arguments and narratives. Analogies can be drawn between war and domestic violence or rape, making all arguments against helping Ukraine irrelevant.

Thus, women's civil society organizations are at the forefront of the struggle for Ukraine, actively shaping and implementing public policy. The review "Interaction of Civil Society Organizations with the Security and Defense Sector on Gender Issues" is significant not only for analyzing existing forms and models of cooperation and providing recommendations for their enhancement but also for addressing broader ideological challenges. This review can be considered a first step toward expanding cooperation, particularly in implementing the accumulated experience.

**Kateryna Levchenko,
Government Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy,
Doctor of Law, professor**

Abbreviations

CIMIC	civil–military cooperation
CRSV	conflict-related sexual violence
CSO	civil society organization
IDP	internally displaced person
NAP 1325	National Action Plan for Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
NPU	National Police of Ukraine
SBGS	State Border Guard Service of Ukraine
SDS	Security and Defense Sector
SESU	State Emergency Service of Ukraine
UAF	Armed Forces of Ukraine
UN	United Nations

Introduction

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in their modern shape have been actively developing in Ukraine since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Ukrainian government promotes the development of activities and creative initiatives of citizens, creates equal conditions for the functioning of all CSOs, and regulates their activities in accordance with the Law of Ukraine on Citizens' Associations (1992).¹

According to the Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Index, 160,000 CSOs were registered in Ukraine as of 1 January 2021.²

The women's movement in Ukraine was born in the second half of the nineteenth century, in the historical context of the struggle against discriminatory social customs and laws and rethinking patriarchal concepts about the role of gender in society.³ Alongside Ukraine gaining independence, in the last decades of the twentieth century the creation and registration of women's civil society organizations intensified.

Women's CSOs work on various issues within all the important areas of Ukrainian society. The security and defence sector (SDS) is no exception. With the beginning of armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine in 2014 and its full-scale invasion of Ukraine's territory on 24 February 2022, the activities of women's civil society organizations and associations gained significant importance and became even more visible.

A gender impact assessment of the security and defence sector in Ukraine conducted by UN Women in 2017 found there were insufficient data on cooperation and consultations with civil society, while most respondents in security and defence institutions were not aware of any dialogue with civil society. One recommendation that dealt with these activities was formulated as "Establish mechanisms for systematic consultation with communities and civil society, particularly with women and women's organizations".⁴

Identifying the presence, gaps, and effectiveness of these mechanisms (such as coordination of cooperation and tracking the development of organizations) will improve the understanding and implementation of democratic civilian control in the current context (according to the Law on National Security of Ukraine).⁵ Article 4, "The Principles of Democratic Civilian Control", states that "within the powers granted

¹ Law of Ukraine on Public Associations, 1992, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2460-12#Text>.

² Civil Society Organizations Sustainability Index, 2021, https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QGzzMczF56w8Vv_sIjSsvw9wBHhRULyK/view.

³ M. Bogachevska-Khomyak, 2005, "Women's movement in Ukraine", p. 672, http://www.history.org.ua/?termin=Zhinochy_rukh_v_Ukraini.

⁴ UN Women, 2017, "Gender impact assessment of the security and defense sector of Ukraine".

⁵ The Law on National Security of Ukraine, 2018, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2469-19#Text>.

by the Constitution of Ukraine, the security and defence sector is subject to democratic civilian oversight (hereinafter civilian oversight). The system of civilian oversight consists of oversight measures exercised by the President of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, executive authorities, local self-government bodies, judicial control, and public supervision.”⁶

CSOs in general, and those working on gender equality issues in particular, make a significant contribution to the development of Ukrainian society and have sizeable potential that has not yet been fully utilized. This applies to the SDS, among others, and to the development of gender equality programmes inside the sector. Awareness raising, consultation, and training are just a few areas in the long list of forms of cooperation between the SDS and CSOs. Mapping the forms and models of this cooperation in the implementation of gender equality policy can offer more detailed information.

Mapping CSOs with a focus on ways they interact with the SDS on gender equality issues (who does what and where) in the current context is used for the following purposes.

- Identify existing forms and models of cooperation for their further dissemination.
- Identify gaps, issues, and obstacles to such cooperation.
- Recommend steps needed for better cooperation and coordination.
- Present existing mechanisms for cooperation and civilian oversight, with proposals for their improvement to promote gender equality and women’s rights in the security and defence sector.

The results of this research are unique and are the first of their kind in Ukraine. The research covers cooperation on gender equality policy between the SDS and CSOs, but cannot be considered an overview of the following:

- gender equality policy in Ukraine in general;
- gender equality policy in the SDS in general;
- CSOs’ activities on gender equality policy in general.

The analysis, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this report may be of interest to public authorities, the SDS, and CSOs in Ukraine and abroad. The recommendations can be used for day-to-day planning as well as for planning strategic steps, including in the Recovery Plan of Ukraine⁷.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ <https://www.urc-international.com/urc2022-recovery-plan>

Terminology

For the purposes of this overview, the terms used in relation to Ukrainian associations are taken from the Law of Ukraine on Public Associations.⁸

According to Article 1(3) of the Law of Ukraine on Public Associations, a non-governmental organization (NGO) is a public association, the founders and members (participants) of which are individuals.⁹

Local non-governmental organizations of other states (similar to Ukrainian NGOs) will be referred to as "local non-governmental organizations" (LNGOs) to distinguish them from Ukrainian associations.¹⁰

CSOs are referred to civil society organizations.

International non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are organizations created not on the basis of an intergovernmental agreement, but on the basis of founding documents registered in accordance with the national legislation of one of the states. They are non-profit voluntary associations operating at the international, transnational or global level, with many countries as members or participants.¹¹

The Ukrainian security and defence sector is a system of state authorities, the Armed Forces of Ukraine, other military formations created in accordance with the laws of Ukraine, law enforcement and intelligence agencies, state bodies with law enforcement functions, civil defence forces, the defence and industrial complex of Ukraine, whose activities are under democratic civilian control in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, and citizens and public associations that voluntarily participate in ensuring the national security of Ukraine.¹² The sector's functional purpose is to protect the national interests of Ukraine from threats.

Methodology

The mapping aims to identify successful models, obstacles to cooperation, and recommendations for strengthening the latter, rather than to identify a complete list of organizations that cooperate with the SDS on gender equality issues. In the description of cooperation models and in citations, the names of organizations and individuals are marked by letters followed by the definition of the sector (public authorities, SDS, CSOs). We use the terms "region" and "municipality" instead of geographical names, and the term "educational institution of the security and defence sector" instead of the actual names of higher education institutions.

⁸ Law on Public Associations, 2017 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/4572-17#Text>

¹⁰ [The Law of Ukraine "On Public Associations"](#), Article 2

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² [Constitution of Ukraine](#), 1996, Article 141.

The methodology includes the following.

- A desk review of legal acts, available surveys, studies and other materials on cooperation between security and defence sector and NGOs (secondary data);
- Twenty-five semi-structured interviews with key informants (22 women and three men) from public authorities (two persons), the security and defence sector (ten people), and CSOs (13, including 11 Ukrainian, one Georgian and one Lithuanian). Interviews were conducted at the end of 2022.

Secondary data include publications on cooperation between the security and defence sector and CSOs, with a focus on cooperation on equal rights and opportunities for women and men. Many publications by international organizations on these topics are available, including manuals, overviews, and guidelines, but they mostly cover general trends and hardly address cooperation in the field of gender equality policy. Ukrainian publications are limited to general short informational messages, often referring to foreign sources or statements made by certain individuals.

In general, the degree of cooperation of CSOs with the security and defence sector on gender equality issues has not been very high, so the number of key individuals representing the SDS, public authorities, and CSOs on this matter was limited. This is also due to the impact of the full-scale Russian invasion on the activities of CSOs in general. All these factors may have affected the successful models and other aspects of cooperation highlighted in this overview.

International experience of cooperation between civil society organizations and the security and defence sector in implementing gender equality policy

Since the end of the Cold War era, peacekeeping operations have had a tendency to reflect comprehensive attempts at conflict resolution rather than simply monitoring ceasefires. They had a wide range of tasks, outlined by political, humanitarian, civilian, and military objectives, and were carried out by civilian, military, governmental, and non-governmental organizations. This resulted in the search for a coordinated approach by international humanitarian NGOs and multinational military forces. The complex nature of modern conflict management requires a well-planned and coordinated combination of civilian and military measures to create conditions for long-term stability and peace in war-torn societies.

Post-war recovery and reconstruction offer a unique opportunity to harness women's experiences during the war and take advantage of the changes in gender roles caused by the conflict to promote more equitable models for women and men. However, most

post-conflict initiatives implemented in the world have not included a gender perspective. One of the reasons for this is the fact that civilians and military actors define gender priorities differently. To ensure equitable post-conflict outcomes, a gender perspective should be prioritized in civilian and military engagement in peacebuilding, but gender mainstreaming has not yet been effectively applied or become sustainable.

The reason for this is, in particular, the patriarchal nature of war, which leads to the militarization of society. Sustained cooperation of civil society and the SDS in the implementation of equal rights and opportunities for women and men can be an important safeguard against militarization.

The military, among others, increasingly emphasize the need for general cooperation.

...in the context of shrinking military budgets, it is reasonable for military commanders to look for more cost-effective methods of carrying out [peacekeeping] missions. One should consider cooperating with any legitimate organization that can assist in the execution of the mission.¹³

Further resource constraints and the growing need for access to them inevitably lead to the search for cooperation even in areas that were not traditionally considered important. Despite the certain simplification of this statement, the importance of cooperation lies not only in saving money but also in the joint synergy of efforts to implement post-conflict transformations.

Obstacles to civil–military cooperation

Many researchers consider the differences between the SDS and CSOs to be the main obstacle to cooperation between the two sectors. These differences are noticeable and obvious, and are very often considered an insurmountable obstacle not only to cooperation but also to minimal contacts.

There are also differences between different structures in the SDS, as well as between different CSOs even if they work on the same topic, such as gender equality. Any initial steps towards cooperation require clarification of the respective roles of each party.

CSOs differ in terms of size, mandate, capacity, and level of professionalism. They define their own missions and mandates and draft their own principles and charters. This gives them their freedom, and they strive to maintain it. According to Hugo Slim, “any consensus across the NGO sector about a mission and mandate will often be variable and cast in the broadest terms. It can seldom be assumed that every NGO will be singing the same song in a given situation. Such independence has important

¹³ Glenn B. Penner, "A Framework for NGO-Military Cooperation, 2014 <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/a-framework-for-ngo-military-collaboration>

consequences for the civil-military relationship and may make NGOs unpredictable and even tempestuous partners'.¹⁴

Every CSO is unique: no two share the same goals, missions, working procedures, or capabilities. It is important to recognize their differences and identify a wide range of models of cooperation in order to improve the process and achieve real, tangible results.

There are also common factors that do not always contribute to effective cooperation between CSOs and the SDS. This can happen even in countries that are the forerunners of democracy, as certain obstacles are very deeply rooted and cooperation amounts to very short-lived practices. It is important to identify obstacles and take timely action to eliminate them.

Political, humanitarian, security, socio-economic, legal, and other issues cannot be segregated into sealed compartments, as they are closely interrelated.

Each NGO has its own specific area of interest and expertise.¹⁵ While they bring a wide range of competence to the field; some are highly effective and others are simply not. Attempts by military authorities to control and coordinate their work are sometimes resented. The impressions formed by the military of the work of the less competent ones, also tends to colour the perception of the whole spectrum of NGOs as incompetent and their operations as disjointed or uncoordinated.¹⁵

In addition, many international NGOs tend to be competitive rather than collaborative. In Somalia, for example, many international NGOs began operations after the military intervention with no experience or knowledge of the country or what had happened before they came there. This resulted in poor coordination, partly due to unwillingness to consult with those who did have knowledge of the situation. Competition for high visibility, donor funds, and media coverage has made it difficult for these organizations to agree on a common strategy. The consequences of this competition not only make coordination with the military unlikely, but also have profound negative consequences for the overall effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.¹⁶

In general, such trends have been observed in various countries affected by armed conflicts, and Ukraine has not been spared.

¹⁴ Hugo Slim, 'The Stretcher and the Drum: Civil-Military Relations in Peace Support Operations', *New Realities - The NGO Perspective*, International Peacekeeping, Vol 3(2), 2001

¹⁵ Sean Pollick, 'Civil-Military Co-operation: A New Tool for Peacekeepers', *Canadian Military Journal*, 1(3), 2000

¹⁶ Francis Kofi Abiew, 'From civil society strife to civil society: NGO-military cooperation in peace operations', *International Peacekeeping* 7(1), 2003

Another obstacle to civil–military cooperation arises from mutual ignorance of the nature of the work and new roles that the security and defence sector and CSOs can perform both separately and jointly.

According to Francis Kofi Abiew, the obstacles to effective cooperation between CSOs and the military are as follows.

the proliferation and diversity of NGOs – the proliferation of NGOs leads to poor standards of provision and management and creates a tendency towards competition. This makes coordination with military forces difficult and unlikely;

lack of mutual familiarity – military forces lack understanding of the hierarchies, charters, distinctions and modes of operation of NGOs. NGOs have a corresponding ignorance of military organisation, hierarchies and capabilities;

differences in organisational cultures – NGOs are less hierarchical than the military and cherish freedom of action, making it difficult for the military to engage in cooperation with them;

NGO fears of compromising their security, impartiality and neutrality – NGOs worry that military protection of supplies and personnel can turn NGOs into targets. They also fear being co-opted into serving national governments' political strategies; and,

reluctance to share information – NGOs are often reluctant to share sensitive information with the military, while the military will not share information with NGOs due to operational secrecy.¹⁷

The international community is increasingly recognizing the benefits of greater cooperation and coordination between the military and civilians.

To overcome the barriers to effective cooperation, there is a need to address a number of issues within both NGOs and the military:

Greater coordination amongst civilian actors is needed. NGOs should look to establish an NGO coordination body and seek an agreement amongst themselves on cooperation with military forces.

The military should ensure familiarity with relevant NGOs that play leading roles in peace missions. It should organise conferences and conduct joint exercises, training and planning to improve awareness of NGOs concerns and capabilities.

In order to avoid duplication, it is important to define and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the various actors engaged in complex emergencies.

¹⁷ Francis Kofi Abiew, 'From civil society strife to civil society: NGO-military cooperation in peace operations', *International Peacekeeping* 7(1), 2003

Collaboration between NGOs and the military should be based on a clear understanding of and respect for each organisation's mandate and operating principles. Creating institutions to promote familiarity should be encouraged.

Information should be exchanged at all levels. Knowing what can be achieved, what will be undertaken, by whom and under what circumstances will be important in responding effectively to complex emergencies.¹⁸

To build trust it is recommended to:

- a. Meet face-to-face, rather than online.
- b. Same organizations always attend the same meetings.
- c. During these meetings, discuss shared CMIS topics.
- d. Meeting at home before you meet in crisis is advised.
- e. Sending the same people to CMIS meetings

Expert CDR Rene Halfmann CIMIC Centre of Excellence, Branchchief Lessons Learned and Analysis.¹⁹

Overall, to date the armed forces of Ukraine have made little effort to engage CSOs in joint activities. They lack an understanding of the different hierarchies, charters, differences, and operation methods, including the recognition that things that work with one CSO may not work with another. This lack of knowledge is institutionalized, and preserving institutional memory is important. If cooperation is short-lived, it will not have a positive impact on contacts with other CSOs in the future. For the military, cooperation with civilians is not yet as important as it is for civilians. However, even under these conditions, civil–military cooperation occupies a prominent place in the work of international organizations, in particular during peacekeeping operations.

Examples of cooperation in some international organizations

Cooperation has its own specifics in different structures, but the general trend involves a narrowly focused approach towards civil–military cooperation (often called coordination), which includes performance of joint activities for a certain period of time during a peacekeeping mission or military operation.

United Nations

The UN pays considerable attention to the role of UN civil–military cooperation (CIMIC) in UN peacekeeping missions at the operational and tactical levels. UN-

¹⁸ Francis Kofi Abiew, 'From civil society strife to civil society: NGO-military cooperation in peace operations', International Peacekeeping 7(1), 2003

¹⁹ Cloud center of excellence (CCoE), 'Engaging in Civil-Military Information Sharing (CMIS) - Conceptual observations and practitioners experience from different perspectives', 2021 https://www.cimic-coe.org/resources/online_seminars/20210608/seminar_on_civ_mil_information_sharing_2021_1.2.pdf

CIMIC performs the function of the military HQ to facilitate interaction between military and civilian components.

UN-CIMIC supports the mission as a whole, and especially the UN military components, whose primary role is to create a secure and stable environment in which humanitarian/development actors can operate. According to this concept, UN-CIMIC liaison mechanisms should be established with a very cautious and low-profile/low-visibility approach, as the false assumption of military affiliation can lead to increased risk for mission partners, humanitarian workers, and civilians.

There are several compelling precedents for including civil society organisations. They can help peacekeepers in building relationships with local populations, as shown with the outreach of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) on the electoral process and human rights in the early 1990s. They can help build democratic institutions by ensuring a more inclusive process, as in the mixed success of consultation processes by the United Nations–African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). In other areas, working alongside peacekeeping forces can help humanitarian intervention and development programmes, as for example in Liberia with UNMIL. Naturally, the level to which each is relevant and applied depends on its nature, the mission, and local perspectives.²⁰

European Union

The European Union promotes civil–military coordination in emergency situations.

According to Chris Seiple’s analysis, there are several aspects of NGO-military cooperation during humanitarian crises that stand out:

- NGO-military cooperation has largely been ad hoc.
- Institutional and cultural differences pervade.
- NGOs required logistical support for large operations and the military often provided logistical infrastructure for NGOs.
- NGOs provided the military with accurate information on troubled areas.
- NGOs are highly cognizant of how their actions affect donor support.
- NGOs are less security oriented than the military.
- The NGO-military relationship works best when both have something to offer the other.²¹

²⁰ Tamara Kool, 'The Role of Civil Society in Peacekeeping Missions', 2016 <https://unu.edu/publications/articles/role-of-civil-society-in-peacekeeping-missions.html>

²¹ Glenn B. Penner, 'A Framework for NGO-Military Cooperation, 2014 <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/a-framework-for-ngo-military-collaboration>

The European Union promotes coordination between civilian and military actors in emergencies. Humanitarian civil-military coordination (CMCoord) is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition between civilian and military capacities, minimize inconsistencies and, where appropriate, achieve common objectives.

Coordination strategies range from coexistence to cooperation.

- Coexistence – focus on deconflicting and minimizing inconsistencies that are common in a conflict situation with military actors involved in active hostilities.
- Cooperation – focus on harmonizing joint efforts; may apply in the case of natural disasters, if appropriate.

NATO

NATO recognizes that modern crises cannot be resolved by the military alone, so it is important to apply a comprehensive approach that involves various civilian social institutions representing different groups and their interests – ethnic, religious, ideological, technological, economic, etc.

In this context, there are three goals to NATO's contribution to a comprehensive approach:

1. Improve the coherent application of the Alliance's own crisis management instruments, including its military and political planning procedures.
2. Improve the Alliance's practical cooperation at all levels with partners, the UN and other relevant international organizations, governmental and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), contractors, commercial partners and local actors when planning and conducting operations.
3. Enhance the Alliance's ability to support stabilization and reconstruction efforts in all phases of a conflict in concert with other actors²².

CIMIC is a key facilitator in achieving these goals by providing liaison and assessment services, as well as planning, coordinating, and enabling local legitimate authorities to work on crisis management.

CIMIC has three main functions:

- civil–military communication;
- maintaining strength;
- support for non-military actors and the civilian environment.

The growth of hybrid threats requires new approaches, means, and partners. Hybrid strategies are needed to counter hybrid threats.

²² <https://www.handbook.cimic-coe.org/1.introduction/1.1nato-and-a-comprehensive-approach/>

Civil Military Cooperation as a Way to Counter Hybrid Activity

Resilience through civil preparedness

Supporting mission objectives by fostering the understanding of the civilian environment as part of a comprehensive approach

Prevent instability and insecurity from becoming a crisis

Prepare the society for potential crisis Promote awareness

Build resilient infrastructures

Align civilian support to the military, if necessary

Host Nation Support

Support to decision-making through technical confirmation of threats.²³

To strengthen CIMIC, NATO experts recommend using informal meetings to forge relationships and build trust on an interpersonal level, using flexibility to adjust expectations according to the type of meeting, and finding opportunities for further cooperation even when military forces are operating in crisis situations.²⁴

National legislation of Ukraine on cooperation between defence and security structures and civil society organizations

This brief overview of the legislation does not claim to be exhaustive, and only addresses the issues of interaction between CSOs and defence and security agencies.

According to Article 17 of the Constitution of Ukraine, “to protect the sovereignty and territorial indivisibility of Ukraine, and to ensure its economic and informational security are the most important functions of the State and a matter of concern for all the Ukrainian people”.²⁵ Similarly, the Law on the National Security of Ukraine (2018) lists citizens and public associations voluntarily participating in supporting the national security of Ukraine as one of the four components of the DSS (paragraph 16, part 1, Article 1; part 1, Article 12).²⁶

For a long time, the functions of the public in supporting the country’s defence mainly related to the exercise of democratic civilian oversight. However, in recent years, due

²³ NATO, 'Civil-Military Cooperation as a Way to Counter Hybrid Activity: a SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) Perspective', 2021

²⁴ Cloud center of excellence (CCoE), 'Engaging in Civil-Military Information Sharing (CMIS) - Conceptual observations and practitioners experience from different perspectives', 2021 https://www.cimic-coe.org/resources/online_seminars/20210608/seminar_on_civ_mil_information_sharing_2021_1.2.pdf

²⁵ Constitution of Ukraine, 1996 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254%D0%BA/96-%D0%B2%D1%80#Text>

²⁶ The Law on National Security of Ukraine, 2018 <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2469-19#Text>

to the growing challenges to defence and security as well as the strengthening of capacity (qualifications, experience, network of contacts, resources) of public associations, their role in cooperation with the SDS has expanded. Article 10 of the Law on the National Security of Ukraine states:

Public associations registered in accordance with the procedure established by law are guaranteed, in accordance with the Constitution and laws of Ukraine, as well as statutory provisions, the opportunity to:

- 1) receive information, in accordance with the established procedure, from government bodies, in particular from the heads of defense and security sector departments, about the activities of the departments of the defense and security sector, except for the information with restricted access (similar rights are established in the Laws of Ukraine “On Public Associations”, “On Citizens’ Appeals”, “On Access to Public Information” and “On Information”);
- 2) conduct research on national defense and security issues, publicly present its results; establish public foundations, centers, teams of experts, etc.;
- 3) conduct public assessment of draft laws, decisions, and programs, and submit its findings and proposals to the relevant government agencies for consideration;
- 4) participate in public discussions and open parliamentary hearings on the activities and development of the defense and security sector; legal and social protection of military personnel and staff of intelligence and law enforcement agencies, including those discharged or retired, combatants and members of their families.”²⁷

According to Article 33, paragraph 5, of the Law on the National Security of Ukraine, public associations participate in discussion of draft documents in the areas of national defence and security with government bodies responsible for the development and implementation of government policy in these areas.²⁸

Article 10, paragraph 1, also states that public associations are one of the forms of participation of Ukrainian citizens in civilian oversight.²⁹

The same functions are envisaged in other laws – for example, the Law of Ukraine on Defence Procurement stipulates that “government procurers, participants of the procurement process and key departments responsible for planning and implementation of defense procurement should facilitate public involvement in defense procurement oversight”.³⁰

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Law of Ukraine on Defence Procurement, 2022, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/808-20#Text>.

The legislation governing the interaction between the SDS and NGOs defines the areas of cooperation related to civilian oversight and the advisory role of NGOs in the development and monitoring of national defence and security policy in great detail. But the legislation pays less attention to the functions related to NGO assistance to the defence and security agencies, in particular through professional development, planning, and implementation of joint projects in specific areas of activity of the SDS agencies.

The national legislation does not offer a wide range of specific ways to implement such cooperation, but it does not limit the SDS organization in its implementation. Hence specific defence and security institutions have sufficient legal grounds to cooperate with NGOs, and successful practices of such cooperation can help identify the best ways to specify and/or expand the rights, opportunities, and obligations of the parties to cooperation in the legislation.

These trends are also reflected in legal acts that define specific ways to take into account the gender component in cooperation between the DSS and CSOs, such as the 2021 Annual National Programme under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission³¹ and the 2020 – 2025 National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security.³²

The Presidential Decree on the 2021 Annual National Programme under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission introduced the need to inform citizens about the development of strategic documents on public outreach on European and Euro-Atlantic integration, taking into account the gender equality component, the need to take into account the gender equality component in strategic communications, and the need to inform the public about the implementation of gender equality policy in the security and defence sector.

1.1.3.2. Citizens of Ukraine developed a sufficient level of awareness and information about the government policy in the field of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, which is achieved by fulfilling the following priority tasks:

...

d) development of strategic documents on public outreach on European and Euro-Atlantic integration, taking into account the gender equality component (deadline – 2022);

1.3.3.1. The government information policy and a strong system of national strategic communications have been developed, taking into account the gender

³¹ Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 189/2021 on the Annual National Program under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission for 2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1892021-38845>.

³² Order on Approval of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace, Security” for the period up to 2025 (2020, updated 2022), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1544-2020-%D1%80#Text>.

equality component, which is supported by implementation of the following priority tasks:

2.1.3.2. The government policy on ensuring gender equality is integrated into the processes of reforming the defense and security sector of Ukraine, which is achieved by fulfilling the following priority tasks:

...

d) informing the public about the implementation of the principles of ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the defense and security sector of Ukraine in accordance with NATO principles and policies (deadline – 2021).³³

The National Security Strategy is an area of government policy-making in the field of national security which defines processes for introduction of effective mechanisms of interaction between the national security agencies and civil society, strengthening democratic civilian oversight and supervision of the activities of the national security agencies.³⁴

The 2020 – 2025 National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security defines the aspects of cooperation between the SDS and CSOs in much more detail (especially after amendments were made according to Cabinet of Ministers Resolution No. 1150-r of 16 December 2022). There are ten tasks and 26 measures that envisage implementation of the tasks in cooperation between the security and defence sector and NGOs:

7. Improvement of documents regulating individual behavior and corporate ethics in terms of combating sexism, sexual harassment, psychological and sexual violence, discrimination in recruitment, performance of official duties and participation in decision-making.

4) conducting systematic, regular and mandatory trainings/professional development sessions for personnel of the defense and security sector, civil servants and local self-government officials on gender equality issues, and on preventing and responding to cases of gender discrimination in particular.

9. Ensuring appropriate conditions for the professional development of women working in central government and local self-government bodies, as well as women from among the junior and senior staff of the civil defense service, female students of higher education institutions, cadets of military higher education institutions, and target groups of the National Action Plan.

³³ Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 189/2021 on the Annual National Program under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission for 2021 <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1892021-38845>

³⁴ Decree of the President of Ukraine of February 16, 2022 No. 56/2022
<https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/562022-41377>

1) organizing training for women from among the junior and senior staff of the civil defense service, students of higher education institutions, cadets of military higher education institutions, and target groups of the National Action Plan (management of national security processes, the Women, Peace, Security agenda, leadership development, communication, negotiation and mediation skills)

13. Determining the mechanism of interaction between public authorities to identify security challenges and respond to them with the involvement of civil society representatives, including women and girls

1) substantiation of techniques for assessing the impact of external and internal security challenges on different groups of girls and boys, women and men and ways of responding (action algorithms) according to the level of the crisis situation

2) conducting a gender equality analysis of legal acts on identification, prevention and response to security challenges

21. Training of specialists in provision of preventive psychological assistance to persons affected by the conflict

1) learning about the practice and experience of providing preventive and psychological assistance to the population, in particular to women affected by the conflict, in cooperation with international organizations and public associations

2) development and dissemination of methodological materials on the practical application of conflict prevention mechanisms and the system of protection of the population, including women affected by the conflict, for the staff of psychological support services, police officers, junior and senior civil defense and military personnel

3) development of a training program to provide psychological support to the population, including women affected by the conflict, for the staff of psychological support services, police officers, junior and senior civil defense and military personnel

4) conducting trainings for psychological support services, police officers, junior and senior civil defense and military personnel on providing psychological support to the population, including women affected by the conflict

22. Supporting reliable sources of communication on post-conflict recovery

Conducting awareness-raising campaigns on post-conflict recovery and taking into account the needs of different groups of women and men, girls and boys affected by the conflict

31. Developing tools for recording crimes against life and health, sexual freedom and inviolability, honor and dignity of persons during conflict in accordance with UN and NATO standards

1) making proposals for amendments to criminal and criminal procedure legislation regarding the definition of the term "conflict-related sexual violence"; its types, qualification of war crimes/crimes against humanity/genocide (Article 438 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine); their documentation and investigation; principles of the international procedures for documentation and investigation of conflict-related sexual violence; repeated use of video recordings of victim interview sessions for further investigation

3) reviewing and amending the handbook for investigators and prosecutors to detect criminal offenses against sexual freedom and sexual inviolability of Ukrainians committed by the military of the Russian Federation, their investigation, as well as the mechanism for working with victims of such crimes in accordance with international protocols for documenting and investigating conflict-related sexual violence

32. Development of the institutional mechanism for proper response, documentation and investigation of crimes against life and health, sexual freedom and inviolability, honor and dignity of persons during conflict

1) add a section on the specifics of detecting and investigating war crimes and crimes against humanity, including sexual crimes to the thematic plans for in-service training and retraining of staff employed in the defense and security sector, judiciary and the bar

2) development of guidelines on ethical approaches to covering conflict-related sexual violence in the media with respect for confidentiality, prevention of the spread of psychological trauma in society and psychological "poisoning" of the population; conducting information activities on the ethical culture of covering information on conflict related crimes, including sexual crimes

34. Amendments to legislation on combating gender-based violence in line with international standards

4) establishing tools for identifying cases of gender-based violence

5) improvement of the procedure for interaction between actors involved in preventing and combating domestic and gender-based violence, and responding to cases of gender-based violence, including sexual harassment

35. Ensuring that cases of gender-based violence are identified and responded to appropriately

- 3) development of a uniform training program for all units of the National Police that work on prevention of gender-based violence, response, counteracting, documenting and investigating cases of gender-based violence
 - 4) conducting trainings for different categories of National Police officers, taking into account the specifics of the service of investigative units in terms of identification and investigation of gender-based violence
 - 5) conducting ongoing information campaigns for defense and security sector staff on preventing and combating gender-based violence, sexual harassment, etc.
 - 6) professional development opportunities for professionals who are involved or may be involved in preventing and combating gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence in accordance with UN and NATO standards
36. Ensure regular monitoring of the functioning of the response system against gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence, and human trafficking
- 2) introduce collection of statistical data disaggregated by gender, region, and indicators of difficult life circumstances (in accordance with the Law of Ukraine “On Social Services”), in particular in the judicial and law enforcement systems, with regard to all categories of crimes related to gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence, and human trafficking
 - 3) monitoring the implementation of the MoH Order No. 278 of February 1, 2019, on conducting and documenting the results of medical examinations of victims of domestic violence or persons who may have become victims of domestic violence, gender-based violence, and providing them with medical care
 - 4) monitoring the work of specialized support services for victims of domestic and gender-based violence; using them to provide assistance and services to victims of conflict-related sexual violence, and performing quality control for such type of assistance
38. Ensuring effective and timely assistance to victims of gender-based violence, conflict-related sexual violence and human trafficking
- 6) conducting training for specialists on providing psychological assistance to victims of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence
40. Prevention of violence by individuals who are prone to violence
- 3) development and approval of model programs for perpetrators of gender-based violence, including sexual violence
 - 4) development and approval of guidelines for the implementation of a model program for perpetrators of gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence

41. Ensuring regular acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to fulfill the objectives of the Women, Peace, Security agenda in accordance with UN and NATO standards

3) conducting trainings on the application of gender equality approaches in research and pedagogical activities for teachers who regularly teach military personnel, law enforcement officers, junior and senior civil defense personnel, in particular on the theory and practice of peacebuilding, participation of women and men in peacekeeping and security operations.³⁵

The monitoring plan for the 2025 National Action Plan Implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security includes the following indicators:

- the number of CSOs that cooperate with public authorities on the implementation of the Women, Peace, and Security agenda and the share of CSOs led by women;
- the number of programmes (projects, activities) in the area of humanitarian response, restoration, and peacebuilding that were implemented by public associations using government funds, including the number of programmes (projects, activities) implemented by public associations led by women;
- the number of public consultations with regard to decision-making on response to armed aggression, post-conflict recovery, and transitional justice with the participation of targeted vulnerable groups.³⁶

Ukrainian experience of cooperation between civil society and defense and security sector organizations on gender equality policy implementation

In general, the experience of cooperation between CSOs and SDS in Ukraine is very similar to international trends. The experience of such cooperation in the implementation of gender equality policy is exceptional in many ways.

The Russian military invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was a great “motivator” and “promoter” of this new type of cooperation, according to the interviews conducted in this project. However, many important steps had already been taken before this date.

³⁵ The order on Approval of the 2025 National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace, Security" (2020, upd. 2022) <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1544-2020-%D1%80#Text>

³⁶ Monitoring Plan for the Implementation of the National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, Annex 2, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1544-2020-%D1%80#n14>.

Start of cooperation, relationship formats, and types of activity

The start of cooperation often correlates with the topics on which the organization is working. Relevant topics of cooperation can be identified based on the survey of organizations, including gender equality policy (broad coverage), combating domestic violence, in particular in the families of military personnel and anti-terrorist operation/joint forces operation participants, combating human trafficking, combating sexual harassment in the workplace, and implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security. Conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) has become a stand-alone issue after the large-scale invasion.

The main “motivators” for cooperation between CSOs and the DSS are the adoption of legislation to combat domestic violence (the wording of the 2001 law was changed to “domestic violence” in 2017) and the outbreak of military aggression against Ukraine in 2014.

One organization among the interviewees started cooperation in 1995 – the year of its establishment. That year, girls were first allowed to enter military academies (similar to today’s higher education institutions). The organization has provided training on non-discrimination and gender equality for officer-educators.

The cooperation began in 1995 in connection with the Beijing conference.³⁷ We started with the Kyiv Military Academy, where communications engineers were trained. The first girls came there. We conducted training for 30 political officers (moral and psychological support officers) on gender equality issues. It was our initiative. First of all, the training helped us to identify gender equality issues in the military environment and possible “entry points” for solving them. We talked to the political officers about what prevented girls from serving, and about their needs. During the training, we brought everyone in a circle and used teaching methods that were new to them. And it was not just the content but also the delivery methods that were new. There was some structural rejection at first, but it didn’t last long. (NGO)

The majority of CSOs dealing with gender equality issues began actively working with the DSS after the adoption of the 2016 National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security (hereinafter referred to as NAP 1325).

It started in early 2020, when the 1325 coalition was created in A. [name of region]. (CSO)

We saw that there was no understanding of 1325 at the community level, so we provided them with training – neighbourhood police officers, community-level SESU [State Emergency Service of Ukraine], and local self-government. We

³⁷ Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995.

explained to them how to provide gender-sensitive security services at the community level. (CSO)

CSOs working on domestic violence issues have been cooperating with the police since the implementation of the Law on Combating Domestic Violence (2001) – in other words, since about 2005. Around the same time, public organizations from other countries of the former Soviet Union, including Georgia and Lithuania, began working with the police. Domestic violence legislation was adopted in Georgia in 2006 and in 2011 in Lithuania. Ukraine adopted the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence in 2001.

Our NGO has a long-term relationship with the police on issues of violence against women. We started working 15–17 years ago. The starting point was advocacy for domestic violence legislation in 2011, although in general we started earlier. We had our research and good ties with the police leadership. And then we also started working with lawyers, attorneys, prosecutors, and (in cooperation with the US Embassy) with lawyers from Minnesota Advocates. It was very strong. Police officers from the US would come and talk directly to our police officers in a step-by-step fashion. (NGO, Lithuania)

Channels for establishing contacts

Establishing initial contacts between organizations can be a good foundation and a guarantee of future cooperation, or it can be the beginning of misunderstandings that hinder communications for a long time or forever. This applies to any topic and any participants in such communications.

For organizations such as the DSS and NGOs, so different in terms of their form and nature, this is often crucial.

Often, these contacts involve a third party – an organization or an individual, and the events that facilitated the initial meetings.

There is cooperation with local NGOs; for example, we cooperate with the P. organization. We learned about them through the city council and the councillors' association called Equal Opportunities. (SDS)

A female local council member, the regional coordinator of the Active Community volunteer initiative, spoke to the cadets, and there was also a photo project. We met on 20 February, and she invited us to her place. (SDS)

The adviser to the head of the regional administration invited me to join the 1325 coalition.

We have been cooperating with the organization [an NGO] for a long time. We've got so much literature! I asked them various questions on gender equality

issues and sent letters. They gave me basic information and introduced me to gender equality policy. It was so important! (SDS)

At one training session, I realized what gender equality issues are and how important they are. Before that, I had only heard about it; I didn't try to figure it out and didn't understand it. When I learned how important it is, I also realized its importance for the SDS. (SDS)

The 1325 event, which was organized by an NGO together with the government, was very useful – it helped “open the door”. (DSS)

There was a request from the DSS universities – they were looking for partner organizations when they received some tasks under the NATO-Ukraine programme. (NGO)

We resumed cooperation in 2015, after the outbreak of the war. (NGO) trained new police officers in the NPU [National Police of Ukraine]. This gave me the opportunity to meet the leadership of the National Police. The buzzword was the same – gender is needed everywhere. (NGO)

As the above examples show, there is no prevailing trend as to by whom, where, and under what circumstances initial contacts are established. But the examples show that there are quite a few opportunities, and it is important to take advantage of them.

Forms of cooperation

Collaboration models are more likely to succeed when they use effective organizational approaches.

The review identified four main forms of cooperation.

- Individual requests and one-off instances of cooperation (through exchange of letters or verbal agreements).
- Involvement in joint activities (joint research, training courses, publications, etc.).
- Coalitions and joint advocacy (combating domestic violence, implementation of NAP 1325, etc.).
- Signing of memoranda.

Cooperation may involve different formats or change over time, depending on factors such as needs, political will, institutional and financial capacity, etc.

Individual requests and one-off instances of cooperation

The most common cooperation format is individual requests and one-off instances. Occasionally these turn into more sustainable cooperation over a longer term, and

sometimes they do not last. The human factor plays an important role: much depends on specific people working in the local structures. It doesn't really matter whether the structure is civilian or in the SDS.

We have been cooperating with the SDS since 2015 (still ongoing). Cooperation is highly dependent on the personalities. The approaches change along with change in the members of the Cabinet of Ministers. "There is no institutional memory. Gender equality experts are "second-class citizens." (NGO)

One was a staff member in the research department, the other was the head of the research department and also ran the college's gender equality programme part time (SDS). They attended our workshops on their own initiative, and then we invited them (and the college students) to our final forum. There were representatives of local government and NGOs from [names of regions], and one regional higher education establishment. (NGO)

In general, the significant influence of the human factor is not favourable in promoting or sustaining cooperation.

Sometimes cooperation is a one-off instance due to SDS dissatisfaction with the professional or administrative resources of the NGO. In other situations, cooperation is sporadic or unsustainable because the SDS does not consider NGOs to be sustainable partners in the field of gender equality policy.

We can involve them in the implementation of our action plan objectives, which we carry out with the financial assistance of donors. In other words, donors give money, and CSOs provide expertise and "manpower". (NGO)

After the ratification of the 2011 Istanbul Convention [on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence], CSOs themselves began to approach the leadership of the Ministry [of Internal Affairs]. Now, together with the CSOs, we are thinking about how to publicize the Istanbul Convention and prepare the public for its proper implementation.

Many CSOs want to cooperate, but not all of them know how.

A positive example: we work closely with [names of NGOs]. I found them on my own. They have good lawyers. I needed help with drafting regulations on the Istanbul Convention and amendments to the CPC [Code of Criminal Procedure]. I am very pleased with them. Now I want them to deliver training for me. I don't know who funds the cooperation. I just called and asked for help from lawyers. They provide assistance. I don't know if they are funded by anyone. (SDS)

Involvement in joint activities

Involvement in joint activities can also be a one-off, but in general this format is more sustainable as it usually involves the joint creation of a product – training, research, information, etc.

In 2016 we were the first to launch courses on StratCom [strategic communications]. We considered the gender component to be the leading one, namely how the category of gender can manipulate public consciousness. We knew about the research done by organization I. [CSO], the training group, and analytics. We contacted them. Their classes were highly appreciated by the students. So we continued to have classes and use other types of cooperation. They always had new ideas, research, and messages. They were invited to all the courses. In 2018 we published the Information Security is the Government's Work journal, monographs, and texts by public experts, including those on gender equality issues. In 2019 we started training for the entire academy. In October 2021 Swedish experts in information and psychological counteraction came to Ukraine, and we invited organization I. again. It was very interesting, and we were proud that they didn't have this but we did (SDS).

This form of cooperation allows people to plan and develop joint activities in a more natural way – from initial introductions to the development of new and innovative products.

Coalitions and joint advocacy

Advocacy, i.e. civil society's efforts to motivate the state to change certain aspects of government policy, is a component of the activities of almost all CSOs dealing with gender equality issues: there are still many problems in this area, and in Ukraine fewer than 20 years have passed since the start of implementing a policy of equal rights and opportunities for women and men.³⁸

The increase in the share of women in the DSS since the beginning of Russia's aggression against Ukraine in 2014 has helped to identify many gender equality issues.

Unequal access of women and men to decision-making processes and resources, as well as stereotypes about the roles of women and men in public and political life, negatively affect women's representation and participation in such processes.

Women are much less involved than men in the settlement and resolution of the international armed conflict in Ukraine³⁹ as part of defence and security structures and official negotiation missions.

³⁸ The Law on Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men, 2005, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2866-15#Text>.

³⁹ More on the conflict classification can be found at Rulac Geneva Academy, <https://www.rulac.org/browse/conflicts/international-armed-conflict-in-ukraine#collapse1accord>.

In particular, in 2020 only two women from Ukraine were included in the trilateral contact group for the peaceful settlement of the situation in certain territories of eastern Ukraine, and their job responsibilities included humanitarian and socio-economic issues.

Some positions are also currently off limits for women, including jobs in special operations units in the military, officer positions dealing with the use of explosives, diving operations, and all positions on submarines and surface vessels. There are also problems with appropriate equipment.

There are 59,786 women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, of whom 41,000 are military personnel and almost 19,000 are civilian employees who also perform service. About 5,000 women are involved in hostilities, of whom about 10% have joined the territorial defense forces. Since February 2022, 101 women have been killed, 50 are considered missing, and more than 100 have been wounded. More than 350 women have received government awards, and two of them posthumously.⁴⁰

The adoption of the 2016 NAP 1325 was a strong incentive for finding various forms and methods of cooperation. Women serving and working in the SDS are one of the target groups of the NAP. The objectives are to conduct educational activities and information campaigns for SDS professionals to involve women in peacekeeping processes; provide women in the SDS with infrastructure facilities and logistics in accordance with their needs; create conditions for employees that facilitate a balance between functions and responsibilities in professional and private life, including in the DSS; identify institutional mechanisms to combat sexism, sexual harassment, and psychological and sexual abuse; and ensure that women are not subject to discrimination. CSOs with experience in implementing the principles of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the civilian sector are an important resource for the security and defence sector that should not be neglected.

Collaboration in implementing NAP 1325 and advocating for appropriate changes have also revealed challenges and helped to develop different models and practices.

Memoranda were signed with the Coalition 1325 [in name of region] to implement joint activities for students in the context of development of democratic values in Ukraine. (NGO)

The participation of SDS staff in coalitions for the implementation of local 1325 plans has become a reliable platform for cooperation among many organizations.

Signing of memoranda

⁴⁰ From a speech by Ukrainian Minister of Defence Oleksiy Reznikov, 2022, <https://womenua.today/news/ministr-oborony-sogodni-ukrayinski-zhinky-mozhut-dobre-realizuvatysya-u-zsu/>.

Memoranda of understanding are a common form of cooperation between organizations in general, but are a rather new form of cooperation on gender equality issues between the DSS and CSOs.

In 2016 we started working with sergeants in NCO training centres (using a NATO-like structure). They have our module in their training courses (online and offline). One of the training assignments was to draft a document on the procedure for responding to sexual harassment. They did a good job, including with the forms to be filled out. In 2018 we signed a memorandum with the General Staff outlining areas of cooperation (training, legal advice). The memorandum is a way to put your foot in the door, and a way for them to cooperate in situations when it is usually difficult for them to organize such cooperation. In 2021 we signed a memorandum with the State Border Guard Service, and ran four leadership courses for women from the personnel reserve and press officers. (NGO)

[CSO name] has signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with [name of educational institution] and [name of Armed Forces of Ukraine unit]. These memoranda were signed three years ago. There is also cooperation with the SESU within the proactive group called Coalition 1325 in [name of region]. [Name of foundation] supported a project related to 1325 awareness raising. Coalition 1325 is still active, and [CSO] is the coordinator of this work. (SDS)

The practice of memorandum-based work confirms the more sustainable nature of cooperation, both in planning and in responding to emerging needs.

It is not within the scope of this review to determine the effectiveness of a particular form of cooperation; for this, additional analysis should be conducted by defining relevant criteria and using broader coverage of the structures of the SDS and CSOs.

Work formats

The range of forms of cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs is very wide and covers the whole variety of activities that are commonly used by CSOs with other partners, such as:

- lectures
- training and courses
- consultations (changes in legislation, anti-gender equality groups and influences, etc.)
- mentoring
- joint research
- preparation of joint publications
- scientific and practical conferences
- preparation of changes and amendments to regulations

- advocacy and changes in internal policies,
- providing materials
- creation of information materials
- joint cultural and educational events, round tables, and performances
- others.

The examples below also demonstrate the wide range of topics.

Two-group course: six-day course for women serving in the SBGS [State Border Guard Service of Ukraine]. A course on leadership and women's participation (in the context of 1325). (CSO)

Training for press officers. (CSO)

We provide materials for dissemination. Twenty thousand copies of hand-outs for the military on violence prevention. (CSO)

Recently, we received a request and in response provided 30 publications on gender equality issues and the CEDAW Convention [UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women]. (CSO)

A memo on CRSV, ethical communication norms, an extract from the international protocol, and a "cheat sheet" on how to communicate with victims. (CSO)

We provide various materials to the patrol police all the time, and information on safety audit of the territories for school officers. (CSO)

Drafted proposals for amendments to the Disciplinary Statute. (CSO)

A project has been implemented since the beginning of the lockdown – together with the NPU, we produced 15 video clips for young people (TikTok, YouTube) against domestic violence. We worked with the police on methods of dealing with cases of violence when victims are people with disabilities or drug users. (CSO)

We prepared two types of cards: 10,000 copies of a card with general information about gender equality and non-discrimination, with phone numbers of the relevant hotline and the Ministry of Defence. The second card is about sexual harassment – what it is and why it is unacceptable. The number of copies was even larger. Later, in conversations, we were told that the cards were distributed and people have them. Even the Deputy Minister (of Defence) said at a forum that it was a good card. (CSO)

The work is aimed at strengthening women in the SDS. The stories of six women (three from the SDS and three women volunteers) were posted on outdoor media and billboards, light boxes, and social media – the project was called "Monologues of War. Women". These are the stories of women exposed to war (the story of a mother of the deceased, the story of a widow, the story of a sister who lost her brother, the story of a soldier who went through the war, the story

of a volunteer). All this was presented in the form of a theatrical performance. It was a very loud project. The third part of the project, called “Maidan Monologues”, took place in February 2022. It was about how the Maidan revolution happened and how the war started. Educational work. (CSO)

The training sessions have strengthened cooperation. (CSO)

There was an interesting project with [foundation name] called Leadership for Women from [name of educational institution]. We invited girls from there, and worked with them for over a year. Many saw themselves working in the DSS. We invited female cadets from [educational institution] and successful women from the same place. This conference helped to establish a dialogue. They spoke sincerely about sexism and sexual harassment. They gave advice on how to act in such cases. They were not afraid to talk about such things. (CSO)

Someone from the [SDS] college approaches us, and we suggest what gender equality events can be held there. We prepare and organize them together. They give us [CSOs] participation certificates [speaking ironically]. (CSO)

Representatives of the [educational institution] joined in, and some of them even took this topic for their research work. (CSO)

When interesting people come to our town [municipality], we ask them to appear at meetings for college students. We talk about gender, anti-discrimination, and anti-corruption. (CSO)

Cooperation with the press – we invite the head of the research department from the college, who is responsible for gender equality issues in the college. She always listens to us (it helps), and we organize joint events. (CSO)

In the communities on the contact line, we found that they did not do CRSV identification. And we thought about how to start working on this issue in cooperation with the SDS and how to train people from the DSS to work with such cases on a practical level. (CSO)

Assistance – we were working with [municipality], the shops were closed, people were hiding in the subway and bomb shelters; there were no medicines, no food, and no nappies. The police maintained public order and controlled the situation, and we played things by ear, because we also did not know what to do or how to do it. One day the police found a bomb shelter that no one knew about. There were about 20 babies with their parents. It is hard to imagine how people were there with nothing to help them. Medicines, baby food, warm clothes. A. [CSO activist] brought everything. I have no idea where or how she got it all. (SDS)

This is just one example. There are others. There is a representative of our office in each region – Sumy, Zaporizhzhia, Kharkiv. She also helped a little bit with sleeping bags, thermal underwear, and food for the elderly and children. We cooperated with her on everything. Medicines were very important because

patients with chronic disease cannot have breaks in treatment. We helped to meet these needs, plus the needs of the police. We serve, and we need ammunition and body armour. Before the invasion we served in different conditions and we didn't need certain things, but now the risks have increased significantly. We are still cooperating today. (SDS)

We must not forget that the war is not over. The needs that were present at the beginning of the war remain, such as medicines, equipment, etc. Everything needs to be renewed, and there are many losses. New people are being drafted, and they have needs. Not everyone can get medicines either, because there are people who are immobile, and the police are also helping some of them. Now we are working in Donetsk region and not everyone wants to leave, nothing works there, and there are many elderly people. Our staff continue to help them. The war has reformatted us, it changed us. Our responsibilities have also changed. New functions have been added to our work. (SDS)

Joint activities with students and their families; joint activities to promote patriotism; joint information events on equality in the family, in the service, and among different segments of the public; psychological and physiological rehabilitation, art therapy, and delivery of training by cadets and cadets majoring in psychology; observation of training delivery during the educational process (mentoring); scientific and practical conferences (2018 Gender Mainstreaming Communication Strategy, a public organization's initiative); post-training events – “My Mother is a Border Guard, and My Father is a Border Guard”; activities to prevent domestic violence (within the framework of the Sixteen Days Against Violence event).(SDS)

The above examples are not exhaustive, but they show a tendency for increased cooperation between higher education institutions of the SDS and CSOs. This is mainly due to the intensified implementation of the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the DSS in general and in its higher education institutions in particular, which was facilitated by, among other things, the UN guidelines on integrating gender perspectives into the training system for the security and defence sector of Ukraine.⁴¹

In addition, educational institutions in the DSS are expected to introduce full-time positions for gender equality specialists with specific powers and formally approved job responsibilities.

⁴¹ UN Women, Guidelines on Integrating Gender Perspectives into the Training System for the Security and Defense Sector of Ukraine, 2021 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/storage/app/sites/1/18%20-%20Department/18%20-%20PDF/08.2021/hei-web-final.pdf>

Establishing contacts and further cooperation on gender equality issues between the DSS and CSOs – Obstacles and opportunities

Obstacles

The following obstacles to establishing contacts and further cooperation were noted during the interviews.

- Insufficient information and awareness raising.
- Lack of competence of CSOs and results-oriented work.
- Lack of understanding of the concept and importance of gender equality policy by management of SDS units, and sometimes the inability of CSOs to overcome them.
- Lack of systemic interest.
- Failure to establish contacts and cooperation, which discourages parties from making new attempts.

Insufficient information and awareness raising

The activities of CSOs in cooperating with the SDS are not sufficiently publicized, so those who work or serve in the SDS often do not know enough about these activities even if they are engaged in gender equality policy.

I don't know of any civil society organizations that cooperate with the DSS on gender equality issues. (SDS)

Very few people cooperate. (SDS)

The communication component of CSOs' activities is often underdeveloped, and therefore certain aspects of cooperation are also underreported. Organizations usually do much more than what is covered in media channels.

When DSS institutions cover cooperation with CSOs, they usually do so in an *ad hoc* manner, which makes it difficult to find information about these activities.

Lack of understanding of the concept and importance of gender equality policy by the management of SDS units; and sometimes the inability of CSOs to overcome them

As mentioned earlier, the history of gender equality policy in Ukraine is short. Many changes have been made, but prejudices, stereotypes, and general rejection of this topic remain. The SDS is no exception.

The head of the [SDS] educational organization said that this was all nonsense – no one needed gender. He signed everything, but he did it formally. This was sometimes exhausting and prevented us from doing more, even though people from the educational institution wanted to.

As noted at the start of this report, differences in the nature, formats, and management of the SDS and CSOs can sometimes complicate contacts and cooperation even when it is possible and relevant.

The closed nature of these organizations prevented them from attending coalition events. Some events were initiated by these organizations themselves. (CSO)

The distance gets in the way. That is, the SDS bodies were ready for a certain rapprochement, but no further. There was a feeling that there was a certain distance, and they did not want to get closer. (CSO)

Lack of competence of CSOs and results-oriented work

The SDS's claims about the competence of CSOs were also discussed earlier. There are complaints that organizations declare certain activities are falling within their but do not help when needed, due to a lack of competence or executive responsibility.

A high level of training of the DSS specialists also requires a high level of knowledge among the CSO counterparts – you need to know the topic expertly. CSOs do not study systematically. (SDS)

There is a girl. She's a veteran. A doctor. She suffered from sexual harassment. She filed a report. The report was not registered but thrown into the chat room of the military unit. She then went as far as to file a lawsuit. But there was an internal investigation. They expected her not to file a lawsuit. I mentioned that she needed a lawyer and a psychologist for support. People are looking for contacts and get nothing. (SDS)

Lack of systemic interest

It can be argued that nowadays there is a lack of systemic interest and a systemic approach from both CSOs and SDS structures. Lack of institutional resources is also an obstacle.

When I contacted the organization, because they had been around for many years at the time and I wanted to cooperate with (SCO name), she said, "We are not interested in the SDS." When she was appointed as an adviser, she quickly found me. I wondered what it meant... (SDS)

As far as I can see, NGOs have only started working actively since last year [2021]. NGOs should work with the personnel in the units. But how it can be done? I don't know if they will let us in now. Communication is somewhat poor. As a counsellor, I have a plan that involves cooperation with NGOs. I want to organize regular meetings, because without them nothing will happen. There are issues that need to be resolved. (SDS)

Civil society organizations can work within the framework of civilian oversight. There was cooperation; there were various advisers; videos, exhibitions, books. We see the results of interaction. We don't have a separate body or department that would cooperate with civil society organizations. All structures cooperate [with them]. (SDS)

There is no separate department – it does not need to be established. This work can be given to advisers. (SDS)

We have a group [of gender equality advisers], almost 400 people, but they are inactive. Many of them don't know anything about gender equality. They are not interested. (SDS)

The events were usually attended by the same people, two or three from each [DSS] body. So knowledge and sensitivity were not spread in the bodies. (CSO)

The impression is that some CSOs are afraid – they work only in the social sphere, and they are afraid to leave their comfort zone in other familiar areas. (SDS)

Failures

Failure to achieve the planned results can also hinder further cooperation.

We have not managed to achieve anything with the kindergarten in three years of advocacy. (CSO)

Features

Opportunities can be found in the following key areas.

- Personal contacts and previous positive experience together.
- Value orientations and personal traits.
- Developments in the field of gender equality policy in the DSS.
- “Nothing can stand in the way of a person who wants to do something good.”

Personal contacts and previous positive experience together

Personal contacts are important because similar ideas come up between people once they meet and start working together; these ideas reflect the wishes and requests of the DSS and the wishes and capabilities of the NGOs.

Our cooperation is situational. We are looking for a CSO to fulfil a specific task. There is no regular cooperation. I know a number of CSOs that are smart (there are some that are not so smart, although they are active). I turn to the smart ones. I actually cooperate with them on the level of personal contacts. (SDS)

I mentioned specific individuals because it depends on who is in charge in the police, and how apart from the problems of violence they also understand gender equality issues. It is important when a police chief promotes women. It is generally difficult to talk to him when he is against it. (International NGO, Lithuania)

The head of the gender equality department [in a SDS educational institution] is a former student of mine. The new management [of the SDS institution] accepted the idea and signed a memorandum because there was trust between the parties. So now they readily agree to participate in our events, initiate events themselves, and invite me to participate. They invite me to write research articles for their journals. (CSO)

Value orientations and personal traits

The values that a person professes may hinder the process of implementing a gender equality policy, as mentioned above under “obstacles”, or they can promote change.

Gender equality is in my blood, because I stand for justice - everything on this topic was easy for me. I was looking for ways, people, and the right partnerships, and I came to the city council myself, they invited me. And I stand for cooperation. (SDS)

Humanity attracts humane people. [CSO name] was tired and burned out because everyone expected a quick victory, but it did not come. We had to work harder and harder, and the human body cannot operate 24/7 for a long time.

I had difficulty, because it's hard to work if you don't see the other person. We talked on the phone, planned to meet in a café, but unfortunately everything turned out differently. We were preparing medicines for Donetsk and Luhansk regions. She brought the medicines to the department. That's how we met in person. We thanked her. We stood together for a photo and she laughed, saying we don't do that. It makes me teary-eyed when I see how much of that is on Facebook. (SDS)

A willingness to help resolve pressing issues, even when they are not directly related to gender equality, is a favourable factor in building strong professional and human relationships.

In the early days after the invasion, police and civilians had various urgent needs; in those early days almost everything that people need for living disappeared. I gave my phone number to [CSO name], and we were completely in touch all the time. (SDS)

I was morally exhausted; I wondered how long it would last and how we would live. There were no answers to my questions. She (CSO's person) helped me psychologically a lot. (SDS)

Developments in the area of gender equality policy in the DSS

The government is actively working to implement the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the SDS, so CSOs do not start from scratch in their cooperation on this topic but communicate with structures that have their own developments, strategies, and experience in implementing them. This is one of the cornerstones of cooperation.

If we talk about the all-Ukrainian level, we should mention the guidelines.⁴² It's a blast! That's how much they gave us! We are staying in touch and cooperate, and it helped that I met them halfway. There were people who were looking for me: journalists in particular, through the Department of Moral and Psychological Support, and via Facebook. It was mostly my initiative. I have been cooperating with the [SDS body] since the beginning of the invasion, and we have been fighting using information; we have our own set of objectives, and there are many gender equality aspects. The management was very cooperative. (SDS)

Help came from the leadership of the NPU HQ in the region, and the Head of the Juvenile Prevention in particular. He is a professional, motivated leader. He received many requests for training and support. This week, there was a request for mental health support for women police officers from [regions] who are now in [municipality]. (CSO)

Before establishing official relations (by a memorandum), we communicated with them and they saw the benefits of applying gender approaches in their work. (CSO)

⁴² Guidelines on Integrating Gender Perspectives into the Training System for the Security and Defense Sector of Ukraine

“Nothing can stand in the way of a person who wants to do something good”

These words from an interview with a DSS employee can be used as a slogan by anyone who wants to make changes, because motivation, professionalism, perseverance, organization, and kindness help create enormous changes, and Ukraine’s experience of resistance to Russian aggression is a glowing affirmation of this.

Changes as a result of cooperation

The changes resulting from cooperation have both specific external manifestations (publications, research, training courses, and programmes that influence the policy of SDS structures) and internal ones, such as understanding, confidence, broader and deeper vision of the areas, and ways of further movement.

Cooperation changed a lot of things, and I gained a lot of experience. I worked with organizations in different areas that I had not come across before, such as LGBTQ [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer] and other volunteer organizations. I understood more about Resolution 1325 and how it works with government agencies. I began to understand the mechanism. The ties have strengthened, and I started to influence decision-making on gender equality issues. It even became easy to do. I have many good contacts now and Ms Kateryna [Kateryna Levchenko, Government Commissioner for gender equality policy] supports me. So it’s clear that I have had an impact. (SDS)

Three aspects I would like to emphasize. First, CSOs are about training. This is what makes the difference between the SDS and the NGOs. I was looking for it because I lacked knowledge. Second, this is about literature. Literature is important because it gives you the opportunity to learn and come back. Third, knowledge. Knowledge is obtained in different ways. You can’t move without it. Through your knowledge, you start implementing things. The third-year cadets conducted lectures on gender equality policy and received a certificate. Female and male cadets like it.

You need access to the public, other opinions, open opportunities, and new approaches. You cannot be an expert in everything. Civil society organizations are practitioners, and it is very important for us [SDS] to know and apply this. (SDS)

There would be no recommendations if there was no [NGO name]. UN Women provided technical support. [CSO name] could lend a shoulder when others tripped us. The [CSO] guidebooks were used further in our regular work. CSOs are needed in case of internal policies on sexual harassment. To a certain extent, the role of CSOs was taken over by advisers, and they communicate with each other. (SDS)

You understand the processes in the society better. (CSO)

Developed a dictionary of trigger words; worked on a police officers' code of ethics for working with survivors of violence. (CSO)

We started thinking strategically about advocacy and topics for training. We started working with the penitentiary department. We realized that we had to change the training models, because they should be different for teachers and medics, military personnel, and social services. We also realized that we were too weak operating on our own, so we started the project together with the Ombudsman's office. We also started working with the police academy. Over the course of two years we reached out to about 500 cadets. Gender equality issues were new to them. (International NGO, Lithuania)

Yes, cooperation has changed it. It is now an integral part of our organization's work. We understand that it is important. Before the invasion, women were treated as experts. Now there is a bit of a rollback – “war is a man's business”, they say. We decided to talk to our cooperating TV channels. We have a partnership with them. There are gender-sensitive journalists there. They were told to pay attention to this. (CSO)

The impact of the large-scale invasion of russian federation on cooperation between the DSS and CSOs

The day of 24 February 2022 instantly changed the life of all Ukrainian society, and changes have also taken place in cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs. The words below best reflect the ambivalence of the situation – in some cases cooperation has weakened or stopped, while it is intensifying in others.

There is no general trend. What has weakened is the activity of women's organizations. Many volunteer organizations have reoriented themselves partially or completely. There are also new initiatives. One is an advisory body of the regional state administration. It's the office for assistance to military families and family members, in other words a one-stop shop representing different departments of the regional state administration. It provides consultations, and access to psychologists and lawyers, and all in one place. The Humanitarian Aid HQ is working. We found three women in captivity, and now they are listed for exchange. Other cities want to do the same. But this is a horizontal initiative. The winners are the NGOs that remain independent and cooperate with the authorities, and with the SDS in particular. (CSO)

The following examples demonstrate the diversity of situations, opportunities, and obstacles.

The invasion did not affect the interaction with [educational institution] much. Another branch of [educational institution] relocated to them, so we cannot visit

them in person (both for security and logistical reasons and because they have fewer vacant spaces). But they call us, and we communicate and solve humanitarian issues together. We share humanitarian aid with them. We hold our events in Zoom. (SDS)

We published a handbook for women during the war (3,500 copies) at the expense of [foundation] and [country's] government: 26 pages on how not to become a victim of human trafficking; women's intimate hygiene; how not to get hypothermia in a shelter, etc. That is useful advice for women exposed to war. The target audience was mostly rural women. The military administration took 300–400 booklets from us and then reported to which communities they had been delivered. And we handed over 200 copies to [SDS educational establishment]. (CSO)

Now the activities of the NGOs in [region] are more of a humanitarian nature and less related to Resolution 1325, although they have been sending abortifacients to rape victims. The SDS departments are still quite open, but cooperation is now more like putting out fires, rather than strategic cooperation. It affected us greatly because we were all very vulnerable to the invasion. The authorities and the DSS accept our help entirely. But I already notice a return to the old patterns of interaction. This extreme openness is gradually coming to an end. (CSO)

The invasion had a great impact. Everything came to a standstill. The command acted in a stereotypical way – they removed girls from performing of their duties, and no one consulted me. They said if I survive, I will destroy gender. (CSO)

Almost everything has been stopped because it is "not timely". If necessary, I will find everything I need on this topic. (SDS)

After the invasion, everything faded into the background, and this topic (gender equality) as well. (CSO)

The cooperation became more active. They started shooting the movie. Again, there is also a Part I. (CSO)

Now there is a new topic: CRSV. (CSO, SDS)

After the outbreak of the war (the large-scale invasion), cooperation with NGOs intensified, especially at the cultural and artistic level.

1) Presentation of an exhibition on "War through the eyes of children". Children who were exposed to the military conflict make drawings and tell their stories. An event for the general public.

2) Exhibition on "Women who bring victory closer". Pictures of volunteers and cadets. Held at the educational institution and in military units for three days.

3) *Drawing competition on “My Border Guard Agency”. Winners of first, second, and third places received cash certificates. The media were invited during peacetime, but now cooperation with the media is limited because of the war.*

4) *One-page essay competition for cadets on “What is equality and equality above all!”, written in English, German, and Slovak languages. (SDS)*

Cooperation is ongoing. We worked with the NPU both during COVID and during the war (the large-scale invasion). (CSO)

New topics include support for the mental health of female police officers from [regions] who are currently serving in [municipality]. (SDS)

There is a need to support the mental health of male and female managers, as they are under a lot of stress. (CSO)

We are not working with [SDS structure] now – they have no more capacity. They are very active in responding to shelling and fires, and then they need time to est. That’s why we don’t even touch them now. (CSO)

The invasion definitely led to increased cooperation, especially with the NPU and SBGS. They bought equipment for women from the SBGS. (CSO)

We cooperate with the Human Rights Compliance Department of the NPU. They had a full list of shelters for the civilian population. We covered the urgent humanitarian needs of people staying in these shelters. We bought bulletproof vests and equipment for female police officers. We raised the money and bought it. (CSO)

We complained to the SDS regarding unlawful inspections of women by men at checkpoints, and they responded. They issued an internal order to stop this practice. Insider information showed that this order actually reached everyone, with instructions for those at checkpoints. (CSO)

We provide methodological materials for the UAF – a leaflet on CRSV. We usually provide support to the UAF with literature, or produce something specifically for them upon their request. (CSO)

After the invasion we began to work more intensively on CRSV. We started back in 2015. We were on the first documentation mission together with U. (NGO name). (CSO)

Back in 2016 our interaction with the DSS bodies on CRSV was as follows: we wrote a report; we saw trends, issues, and mistakes; and we held two working groups attended by more than 20 people representing all stakeholders – the prosecutor’s office, SSU (Security Service of Ukraine), the military police, the NPU, and the deputy minister of the Ministry of Temporarily Occupied Territories. At the time there was no publicity. It was very difficult to verify the

cases. Few victims could be found who would agree to testify. But we have accumulated knowledge. (CSO)

Cooperation between the CSOs and the SDS has weakened, but criticism is a hostile narrative. The situation is a stalemate, but we have no right to go ahead and make a scene. There is already a lot of criticism coming from all directions. After 24 February, the burden has been very high on everyone. (SDS)

We had a dialogue with Zaluzhnyi until 24 February. Now we don't. We have personal connections. I lack legal knowledge!!! I can't propose legislation. (CSO)

Honestly, now there are more opportunities to respond to day-to-day challenges than to plan something long term and new. (CSO)

Many national-level documents were planned with a clear emphasis on advocacy. Now advocacy is not quite timely, and it is necessary to re-strategize. (CSO)

Our classes have become more interactive and practical, because we have a common goal – to convey information. We have also developed a methodology of how to talk about CRSV, what words to use, how to combine emotionality and relevance. (CSO)

Prospects for cooperation on gender equality issues between DSS and CSOs

We need to find at least five more people like me in the SDS – motivated and interested. (SDS)

Most people need practicality. The cadets asked me: what will happen when we know more than our commanders? I had nothing to say. We need to train commanders, this is the number one task. It is also effective when senior commanders have the knowledge, and then the junior officers start to copy their behaviour by using femininities and improve treatment of women, etc. (SDS)

Not enough work with psychologists – they do not have knowledge of gender equality. (SDS)

There should be systematic inclusion (of CSOs) at various levels, including on the topic of CRSV. Everything must be brought to the leadership's attention, because these are serious issues. (SDS)

We need to engage them more actively and more often; it gives practical results. (SDS)

We have many international NGOs working in this area [gender equality]. They do networking, but mostly they provide services. We need more advocacy, in particular, in working with the police. (International NGO, Lithuania)

More practical cases, events – interesting topics. (CSO)

There should be training and workshops from practitioners on how to work with CRSV. Fast and practical cooperation. We don't need monographs now, it's time for short, informative texts. (Public authority)

If CSOs were involved in conducting theoretical and practical classes, if the SDS, despite being busy, were involved and learned more, CSOs could help to disseminate knowledge. They also carry out tasks of preventing and investigating human rights crimes, work even under occupation in the liberated territories, and solve other issues. (SDS)

There is a need for research on the principles of improving cooperation between NGOs and the SDS, mechanisms of interaction and overcoming stereotypes, and training for various structural units and managers on gender equality issues, as a lack of knowledge and incompetence are evident. Also, some students are more knowledgeable than some teachers and managers. (Public authority)

We want to work more on the topic of a comprehensive approach to security. This has been a key topic for us since January 2022. We see many gaps in the understanding of this topic in the SDS. (CSO)

I usually need help to organize an event, trainers to conduct a training session, or lawyers to help with regulations. Often, such assistance can be obtained from experts, donors, but not from CSOs. Again, our cooperation with CSOs is ad hoc.

1) There is a lot of work to be done on the topic of CRSV.

2) An integrated approach to security.

3) Policies on sexual harassment: only universities have them, although they are quite deficient (sexual harassment is considered a conflict between two parties, instead of aggression of one party against the other). Such policies are also needed in government agencies.

4) Institutional changes. Training was provided for gender equality advisers when their positions were created under the NATO-Ukraine Action Plan. Today, the network of advisers does not meet the criteria of sustainability and institutional capacity. (SDS)

The issues of women on the front line, women with weapons, their hygiene, and uniform, have become even more relevant since the beginning of the war. (SDS)

Back when we conducted the research in 2020, I said that something serious was about to happen. What had previously taken years was now changing in months.

Early warnings and analytics are important: big data and forecasting. Currently, the forecast does not include a gender component and it is not received or recognized by decision-makers. "russia-Ukraine war" signals have been coming since January 2021; the narrative changed from "can there be a war?" to "there may be a war". Serious analytics should be taken into account. (SDS)

Uninterrupted work is important because of staff changes. If you do not work continuously, it will eventually come to naught. Information security is not cheap. (SDS)

Possible obstacles to the realization of prospects

When discussing obstacles that may arise during the implementation of long-term plans, the imperfection or insufficiency of the CSOs' resources (expert, organizational, and financial) was the most frequently mentioned problem in the interviews, in addition to the list of obstacles provided in the section on "Establishing contacts".

Lack of consistency

The human factor, people (training, qualifications, outlook), depends on the tasks being performed. If they study, work, and develop, they can cooperate effectively. The factor of professionalism is important. Managerial qualities also have an impact. If you have a responsible attitude, then cooperation produces results. Unfortunately, it can also be the other way around.

The organization's capabilities. There are always obstacles in any type of work: administrative and bureaucratic. The bureaucracy of government agencies often prevents effective communication.

The ability of NGOs to perform their tasks. People are involved in different activities, and the availability of time can be an asset or an impediment. There are also many material, financial, and technical factors. Is it possible to make site visits or not? When you want to teach you need to have the premises and conditions. All of this requires a lot of money to make sure that it actually produces tangible results. (SDS)

An important factor is the presence of elitist thinking(!). This is not an easy process, and it only seems that anyone can handle it. (SDS)

Resources are limited, and first of all expert resources. You need to have people, knowledge, and expertise. Maybe we need training for NGOs on how to work with the DSS, although it sounds silly. (CSO)

The lack of sustainable funding and the absence of a strong, qualified team hindered the project. Few people understand Resolution 1325 and are willing to

work on it. Those who do not understand it either have a condescending attitude (“we love our dear women”) or are generally against women in the SDS. (CSO)

Even motivated advisers have no influence on decision-making in councils and the SDS bodies. It is necessary to involve champions to influence decisions; it does not work very well without this. (SDS)

Many CSOs want to cooperate, but not all of them know how to do it. We try not to cooperate with those who are not competent enough. CSOs often do not understand the context or have no experience in doing certain work. Sometimes they are overconfident in their qualifications. Also, some CSOs do not know how to stop. When they have completed a short project with someone, they then offer to participate in other projects that they may not understand. (SDS)

Another problem is that CSOs often do not have their own budgets to work with, and if money is needed to perform a certain task or organize an event, then it is better to turn to donors, because they are the ones who make the decisions. There are virtually no obstacles to our cooperation when there is trust. It’s great when there is cooperation with the councilors and “Equal Opportunities” groups, the women’s lobby, cooperation involving different stakeholders (government, councilors, and public sector). (SDS)

A gender adviser has been appointed to [SDS structure]. Unfortunately, she is not ready for this job. No matter how many times she is invited, she simply does not come to our meetings. The problem is that formally they seem to be trying to comply with the regulations, but it is not systematic. Training gender equality advisers requires them wanting to do the work. I don’t know if it is good that she was appointed. (CSO)

There will be new challenges as we retake territories. There is no understanding of the challenges and what to do with the territories occupied since 2014. There is no real understanding of the situation there. (CSO)

The attitude towards gender equality issues can be described as “all this is unimportant and untimely”. There are gender stereotypes in general and stereotypes about specific individuals (those who have no experience in the defence and security sector...). (CSO)

You have to find ways to solve any problem. (International NGO, Georgia)

Funding of cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs

Very often, cooperation takes place on a voluntary basis. It can be good, but if this becomes a common practice it will become problematic, since without funding it is impossible to develop cooperation on a sustainable basis for a long time.

In 1995 we implemented the project on our own; we also covered the sergeants. In general, we did a lot of things on our own, without grants or payment. We travelled at our own expense. On the one hand this seems to be bad, because it depreciates invested labour, but on the other hand it supports the continuity of operations. And it always produces results sometime later. (CSO)

There were also private contributions for [CSO]. (CSO)

The main source of funding for gender-related projects in the DSS is international technical assistance projects, which usually involve experts who work for their respective NGOs instead of involving the NGOs themselves. In cases of experts' personal involvement, their organizations will receive neither cash nor institutional experience of cooperation with the DSS.

Only one foundation was regularly mentioned in interviews as a source of support for such initiatives. Its projects to support Resolution 1325 coalitions in the regions have made a significant contribution to the establishment of cooperation between the CSOs and the DSS.

Recommendations received during the interviews

Various recommendations were made during the interviews, and they were organized into three groups:

- legislation
- security and defence sector
- non-governmental organizations.

Legislation

The need to regulate cooperation.

The Law on National Security regulates public oversight and cooperation, but now, according to the law, the regulations governing the work of individual DSS structures should be amended. This will make it possible to define the functional duties of the persons responsible for such cooperation.

Security and defence sector

Establish a coordination centre for professional development on gender equality issues in the DSS and cooperation with CSOs in this area.

Raise awareness (through information and training programmes) of the principles of cooperation with CSOs.

Introduce an organized approach to cooperation on gender equality issues with CSOs. This approach involves signing memoranda, joint planning, informing, and raising awareness, in particular among commanders at all levels.

Cooperation on CRSV issues.

Non-governmental organizations

Raising awareness (through information and training programmes) of the principles of cooperation with the DSS.

Raising the level of expertise on gender equality issues in the SDS.

Internships for male and female cadets and students of the DSS higher learning establishments at NGOs.

Advocating for the resolution of gender equality issues in the SDS.

Cooperation on the CRSV issues.

General conclusions and recommendations

The array of data obtained by analysing the information gained in interviews provides grounds for the following conclusions and recommendations.

- The international experience of civil–military cooperation in certain aspects is in line with the Ukrainian experience, but there are also significant differences. The international experience is mainly focused on the complementary use of international and local NGOs in peacekeeping missions, and on cooperation with the police in domestic violence prevention. The Ukrainian experience demonstrates unique models of cooperation between equal partners to implement jointly the policy of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the SDS. **It is important to analyse the Ukrainian experience further, disseminate it internationally, and actively develop successful practices at the national level.**
- Despite the shortcomings and challenges, the Ukrainian experience of cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs shows institutional changes. In particular, the interviews revealed a deeper understanding of the importance of gender equality; a vision of new opportunities for further development of gender equality policy; sustainable trilateral cooperation (Public administration, SDS, CSOs); and examples of successful advocacy. **The cooperation creates the basis for comprehensive, in-depth integration of the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men into the SDS, and these foundations need to be strengthened and developed in a comprehensive manner.**

- A feminist approach to the DSS often addresses the risks of militarization of the public, especially following long and severe armed conflict. It is important to distinguish between the natural desire to defend oneself from the aggression of attackers and the abnormal desire to establish hegemony over others by promoting the idea of war as a “common phenomenon” and making people accept and embrace it. The latter attitude reflects a patriarchal approach and is a source of constant threat to the world. **Intensification of cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs will be a key to avoiding militarization of the public and strengthening patriarchal values by introducing the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in combination with democratic principles of CSO management.**
- Russia’s large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 is seen as an escalation of the international armed conflict that has been going on since 2014, like any conflict, opens new “windows of opportunity”. This was mentioned more than once in the interview. **The strengthened use of windows of opportunity in the process of cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs is feasible, relevant, urgent, and necessary.**
- The mapping process revealed the obstacles to successful cooperation identified by the participants in the interviews. **Special attention should be paid to removing these obstacles or reducing their negative impact.**
 - **Insufficient information and awareness raising.**
 - **Lack of competence of CSOs and results-oriented work.**
 - **Lack of understanding of the concept and importance of gender equality policy by the leadership of the DSS units; their rejection of the issue and distancing themselves from it; and sometimes the inability of CSOs to overcome these barriers.**
 - **Lack of systemic interest.**
 - **Failure to establish contacts and cooperation, which discouraged the parties from making new attempts.**
- The DSS gender equality advisers (male and female) were mentioned by SDS staff several times in the interviews. Most of the feedback was critical with regard to the motivation, capacity, and effectiveness of this mechanism. **The advisers’ mechanism goes beyond this mapping, as the advisers are not CSOs; they work or serve in the DSS or act as individual experts. However, the issue requires detailed study and resolution.**
- The problem of insufficient information sharing between the SDS and CSOs is addressed in legal acts, including for example the 2021 Annual National Programme under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission.⁴³ **Public hearings on the implementation of the principle of equal rights and**

⁴³ Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 189/2021 on the 2021 Annual National Program under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1892021-38845>

opportunities for women and men in the DSS could become a new format of cooperation on gender equality issues between the SDS and CSOs.

- The 2021 Annual National Programme under the auspices of the NATO-Ukraine Commission also emphasizes the importance of cooperation on gender equality issues in strategic communications, which is extremely important in the context of countering russian aggression. **The institutionalization of this cooperation will have a long-term effect on the development of the area as a whole. This institutionalization should include areas that have become important as a result of russian aggression, namely assistance to CRSV survivors and security audits of the territories, for their further development and implementation.**
- Many processes dealing with the implementation of the principle of equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the SDS require detailed, in-depth analysis. In the absence of a single structure that would deal with all these issues, this function could be temporarily performed by think tanks dealing with gender equality issues.
- The lion's share of CSOs' work on gender equality issues in cooperation with the DSS has been carried out on a volunteer basis or in combination with other project activities. This does not facilitate either the use of a systemic integrated approach or its sustainable development. **It is important that international and donor organizations pay attention to supporting CSO work on gender equality issues in cooperation with the DSS, instead of merely supporting the activities of international projects.**