

Policy study

Engaging the Media in a Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Approach to Ukraine Recovery Programs:

Recommendations for International Organizations



Authors:

Liza Kuzmenko, an expert and trainer on issues of gender equality and non-discrimination in media, head of Women in Media NGO, member of the Commission on Journalistic Ethics.

Olha Bilousenko, a media analyst, head of the Research Department of the Lviv Media Forum.

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Introduction

Due to the full-scale war and the ongoing humanitarian crisis, the role of the media in Ukraine goes beyond the scope of informing the public. They become important players in documenting, monitoring, promoting the interests of communities, and developing trust for governmental and international institutions. The support of content and approaches fostering inclusiveness and gender equality in the context of recovery demand special attention.

In this analysis, Women in Media NGO proposes a number of recommendations for international organizations regarding cooperation with Ukrainian media in the context of a gender-responsive approach to recovery.

Since the media are largely responsible for shaping public discourse, such recommendations will help to make this cooperation more effective.

They will help to make the voices of women, as well as those of other underrepresented groups, heard in the process of recovery, contributing to a balanced coverage of events and strengthening of democratic values.

The recommendations are based on 12 semi-structured in-depth interviews with representatives of regional and national media. The sample of surveyed media included: Ukrainska Pravda. Life; Hromadske, Livyi Bereh, Babel, Suspilne, Liga, Hromadske Radio, The Ukrainian Week, the network of hyperlocal media Raion.in.ua, the Sumy media outlet Cukr (Tsukr), Kyiv oblast media outlet Bucha Is the Best City, and the media of the ABO network.

In addition, the recommendations were informed by the quantitative survey of journalists "Covering the subject of gender-responsive recovery of Ukraine: Media experience,"¹ conducted by Women in Media NGO in 2024.

1 Women in Media NGO / "Covering the subject of gender-responsive recovery of Ukraine: Media experience," 2024. Access: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/hendernochutlyvoho-vidnovlennia-ukrainy/>





section 1

What We Mean by Gender-Responsive Recovery of Ukraine

Gender equality and inclusion as principles of the recovery process were enshrined in the so-called Lugano Declaration² during the first Ukraine Recovery Conference in 2022. The document emphasizes that “the recovery process has to be inclusive and ensure gender equality and respect for human rights, including economic, social and cultural rights.” Particular attention should be paid to reducing gaps and disparities.

Women’s Information and Advisory Center NGO emphasizes³ that a gender-sensitive lens on Ukraine’s recovery envisions equal access for all people – girls and boys, women and men – to opportunities, institutions, services, and resources, without identifying specific social roles and expectations rooted in gender stereotypes (gender inclusion).

2 *Outcome Document of the Ukraine Recovery Conference URC2022 “Lugano Declaration,”* Lugano, 2022. Access: https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/625d81ec8313622a52e2f031/62cd2e0ba5613c953a9b52d4_Lugano%20Declaration_UA.pdf

3 *Olena Suslova, WIAC NGO / Gender-Sensitive Lens on Ukraine’s Recovery, 2023.* Access: <https://wicc.net.ua/post/genderne-bachennya-vidnovlennya-ukrayiny>

Since 2023, Ukraine has a **Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery**⁴ under the Commission for Coordination of Executive Bodies Regarding Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men. Its activities are aimed at applying the gender-sensitive approach to all the priority areas of recovery, including energy, transportation, agriculture, infrastructure, IT industry, and human capital development.



Photo: NGO "Women in Media". In the photo – Iryna Andreytsev, editor-in-chief of the Vechir publication, with her team.

At the Ukraine Recovery Conference in June 2024 in Berlin, the **Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery**⁵ was established with the support of governments, UN agencies, the private sector, and civil society. The goal of the Alliance is to coordinate efforts aimed at improving the funding and ensuring gender equality in Ukraine's recovery.

Alliance members are encouraged to support initiatives that promote gender equality, protect and empower women, and prioritize the needs of internally displaced women, returnees, women with disabilities, women veterans, women from rural areas, and LGBTIQ+ women, ensuring their participation in recovery-related decision-making processes.

4 Government portal. Platform for Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery Comes into Operation, 2023. Access: <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/rozpochala-robotu-platforma-zabezpechennia-hendernoho-meistryminhu-ta-inkliuzii-u-vidnovlenni>

5 UN Women, "Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery was established with the support of governments, UN agencies, the private sector, and civil society," 2024. Access: <https://ukraine.unwomen.org/uk/stories/novyny/2024/06/za-potuzhnoyi-pidtrymky-uryadiv-ahentsiy-onn-pryvathnoho-sektoru-ta-hromadyanskoho-suspilstva-zapochatkovano-alyans-z-henderno-vidpovidalnoho-ta-inklyuzyvnoho-vidnovlennya-v-ukrayini>



The Dual Role of the Media: Critical Infrastructure and a Communications Stakeholder

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In the situation of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, the Ukrainian media have been suffering significant financial losses and physical destruction, similarly to the entire sector of economy and infrastructure.

The Russian aggression has struck at the media on several levels: physical (destruction of TV networks, editorial premises, technical equipment); economic (loss of income, drop in profits); personnel (forced migration of media workers abroad, mobilization of employees, as well as gender-based challenges faced by women journalists).

Many media workers have suffered physical losses both while performing their professional duties in the combat area and in their private life due to Russian shelling. As of March 20, 2025, at least 117 media workers have been killed in Ukraine since the start of the full-scale invasion, 18 of them while performing their professional duties.⁶

6 National Union of Journalists of Ukraine "List of Journalists Who Died since the Beginning of the Full-Scale Russian Aggression (Updated)," 2025. Access: <https://nsju.org/novini/arman-soldin-stav-14-ym-mediapraczivnykom-shho-zagynuv-pry-vykonanni-profesijnyh-obovyazkiv/>

The economic losses of the Ukrainian media have been devastating: experts say that the advertising market has not recovered, content sales have declined, and owners' investments have significantly dropped. Some newsrooms were forced to go fully remote, shut down entirely, or relocate to safer areas.

According to the Institute of Mass Information (IMI), 329 media outlets shut down in 2022–2024, of which 277 were unable to restore their work having lost their teams, audiences, and their voice in the public space.⁷

The World Bank's new **Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4)**⁸ report assessing the damage and needs of Ukraine, emphasizes that the telecommunications, digital, and media sectors are key to supporting the resilience of Ukrainian society by ensuring access to information, facilitating remote work and learning, supporting emergency response, and countering disinformation.



Photo: "Kordon Media". The Congress Center of Sumy State University was once a hub for journalism events in the Sumy region. The building was damaged as a result of a Russian shelling.

Notably, the needs for the recovery of the telecommunications, IT, and media sectors are estimated at USD 1.02 billion. Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Donetsk oblasts have the greatest recovery needs in this sector for the period of 2024–2027.

7 Institute of Mass Information "329 Ukrainian Media Have Closed Since the Beginning of Russia's Full-Scale Invasion: IMI Research," 2024. Access: <https://imi.org.ua/monitorings/329-ukrayinskyh-media-zakrylys-z-pochatku-povnomasshtabnogo-vtorgnennya-rf-doslidzhennya-imi-i64960>

8 World Bank, "Fourth Rapid Damage and Needs Assessment (RDNA4)", 2025. Access: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/O99022025114040022/pdf/P1801741ca39ecOd81b5371ff73a675a0a8.pdf>

Significant amounts of funding are also needed for Mykolaiv, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts. Sumy, Chernihiv, and Luhansk regions have lower yet still significant needs.

Recovery needs include rebuilding destroyed facilities, restoring broadcasting capabilities, supporting displaced media workers, and strengthening independent journalism to ensure access to reliable information.

Priority investments according to this assessment include strengthening media organizations' cybersecurity, expanding digital broadcasting infrastructure, and developing media literacy initiatives to combat disinformation.

After the start of the full-scale war, the media sector had to adapt to new conditions, including through transitioning to grant funding. Grants have become one of the main sources of support for the Ukrainian media. In 2022–2023, donors prioritized newsrooms' survival; however, later support became more selective, and the funding volumes gradually reduced, as recorded in the study by the Lviv Media Forum "The Donor Landscape of Media Support in Ukraine."⁹

After the curtailing of American budget funding for Ukraine, the grant support of Ukrainian media suffered a sharp decline. As indicated in the study "Black Swan of Donor Support: How Local Journalism is Surviving the Suspension of USAID Program Funding,"¹⁰ newsrooms were not ready for the sudden termination of aid, with regional media suffering a particularly hard blow. This has led to risks of staff cuts, delayed paychecks, and even closure of independent newsrooms, especially ones near the front line.

9 Lviv Media Forum, "The Donor Landscape of Media Support in Ukraine," 2024. Access: <https://lvivmediaforum.com/en/page/the-donor-landscape-of-media-support-in-ukraine>

10 Media Development Foundation, "Black Swan of Donor Support: How Local Journalism is Surviving the Suspension of USAID Program Funding," 2025. Access: <https://www.mediadevelopmentfoundation.org/research/chornyj-lebid-donorskoyi-pidtrymky-yak-regionalna-zhurnalistyka-perezhyvaye-pryzupynennya-finansuvannya-z-program-usaid/>

COMMUNICATIONS STAKEHOLDER

Despite the ongoing war and Russian shelling, the process of Ukraine's recovery has already begun. There are a number of programs operating in Ukraine for the recovery of social infrastructure, housing, healthcare, economy, and other sectors. The success of these processes largely relies on high-quality communications, including ones through the media.

The study "How to Communicate Ukraine's Recovery: Analysis and Recommendations,"¹¹ conducted by the Lviv Media Forum in 2023, showed that society remains insufficiently informed about key events, plans, and issues linked to the recovery processes. In public discourse, the material side, such as repairs and reconstruction of buildings and infrastructure, tends to be excessively highlighted.

This trend is illustrated by the survey "Covering the subject of gender-responsive recovery of Ukraine: Media experience,"¹² conducted by Women in Media NGO in 2024, where 117 media workers from 94 Ukrainian newsrooms were surveyed.



Photo: NGO "Women in Media". In the photo – a journalist from Public Broadcasting at work.

11 Lviv Media Forum, "How to Communicate Ukraine's Recovery: Analysis and Recommendations," 2023. Access: <https://lvivmediaforum.com/page/yak-komunikuvaty-vidnovlennya-ukrayiny-analiz-i-rekomendacziyi-eng>

12 Women in Media NGO / "Covering the subject of gender-responsive recovery of Ukraine: Media experience," 2024. Access: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/hendernochutlyvoho-vidnovlennia-ukrainy/>

It was found that journalists have very different ideas of what the process of “Ukraine’s recovery” would actually entail. This is likely a result of unclear communication from stakeholders. In particular, difficulties arise when defining the concept of reconstruction beyond the physical dimension – when it comes not only to construction and infrastructure, but also to the restoration of social, cultural, and educational sectors. Some journalists believe that due to the ongoing war, it is too early to talk about reconstruction. In addition, some newsrooms note that they do not perceive the topics they are working on as part of the general idea of reconstruction, mistakenly considering it to be exclusively specific to media in frontline areas.

In 2024, on the eve of the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Berlin, more than 120 Ukrainian media and international organizations published an open appeal “Media Recovery as an Integral Part of Ukraine’s Recovery.”¹³ They called for including the subject of media recovery in the URC agenda, urged the government to communicate the needs of the media industry on the national and international levels, and emphasized the need to support the media in recovery programs. The appeal was shared with the European Commission's Directorate-General for Neighborhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR).

The authors emphasized that without systemic support for independent media – especially regional ones – there is a risk of their disappearance. The appeal also emphasized that the media not only inform about the reconstruction processes, but also ensure public control over the use of international assistance. The loss of local voices reinforces disinformation and undermines citizens’ trust in Ukraine's recovery.

13 “Media Recovery as an Integral Part of Ukraine’s Recovery,” an open appeal regarding the Ukraine Recovery Conference, 2024. Access: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1AwvRpisBJepmTwjhK2ljuUwAv-Z4aR5TDZdEX55vltc/edit?tab=t.O#heading=h.w6xsywm5bavn>



Lessons Learned From the International Experience: How the Media Can Facilitate an Inclusive Recovery

The practice of other countries shows that effective communication of recovery processes and active involvement of women can significantly strengthen post-crisis transformations.

● Example 1. **Nepal: The role of the media in rebuilding communities**

After the earthquake in Nepal, many women took an active role in the community recovery process, particularly by taking up “non-traditional” professions such as construction. This was made possible thanks to the support of international organizations and media, in particular BBC Media Action.

A report on the BBC's activities in Nepal¹⁴ notes that in the year since the earthquakes, as the primary needs of communities have shifted from recovery to reconstruction, the content of radio programming has also changed.

For instance, in the first phase of the **KathaMaala** program following the earthquake, the central character of Maala was conceived as a milk saleswoman who went door to door sharing critical information with people living in temporary shelters. During the reconstruction phase, the heroine was given a new profession: after training, Maala became a bricklayer and began working in her village – not only rebuilding houses and encouraging residents to hire qualified professionals to reconstruct their homes, but also inspiring other women to choose the profession of a bricklayer.

● Example 2. **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Women in post-war reconstruction**

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the application of a gender-sensitive approach in post-crisis recovery processes is actively supported through the media and the activities of civil society organizations.

For example, the Post-Conflict Research Center (PCRC), founded by journalist Velma Šarić, uses media to promote peace and gender equality.

Through the Balkan Diskurs platform, the Center publishes stories of women who play an active role in rebuilding society, thereby changing public perceptions of women's role in the post-war period.

● Example 3. **Syria: Documenting sexual violence through the media**

The Women Under Siege project initiated by the Women's Media Center uses journalism to cover sexual violence during conflicts, particularly in Syria.

14 BBC Media Action "Supporting earthquake-affected communities through radio in Nepal", 2019. Access: <https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/supporting-earthquake-affected-communities-august2019.pdf>

Online and through social media, the project documents how rape and gender-based violence are used as instruments of war and genocide.

They used crowdsourcing and social media to map incidents of violence, providing a platform for women's voices and drawing attention to their needs in recovery processes.

The experience of Nepal, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria, and other countries demonstrates how communication can not only rebuild infrastructure, but also change public perceptions and support women's rights in recovery processes.



section 4

Gender Challenges in the Ukrainian Media During the War

An analysis of the situation with Ukrainian media shows certain challenges with gender equality, access to management positions, and protection of women journalists, which affects the resilience of the media sector and the quality of its participation in recovery processes.

According to the Gender Profile of the Ukrainian Media,¹⁵ the majority of employees in the media sector are women (58% versus 42% of men). However, women significantly predominate in journalist positions (70–80%), while accounting for just over a half of management positions.

It is important to understand that working in the media requires high emotional involvement and the ability to handle significant volumes of information, while not often being well-paid. So the preponderance of women in this area can hardly be called a positive phenomenon. Especially considering that fewer women reach management positions than do entry-level jobs. The size of newsrooms affects gender representation and workload: in small teams, women leaders often cover several positions due to the lack of personnel and resources.

15 Women in Media NGO, *Gender Profile of the Ukrainian Media*, 2025. Access: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/gender-profile-2024/>

According to the study¹⁶ by Women in Media NGO and the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy (2023), over a third of Ukrainian newsrooms (34%) have no formalized gender equality policy, only 3% introduced policies to promote women's leadership, and 68% have no mechanism to complain about cases when equality principles are violated.



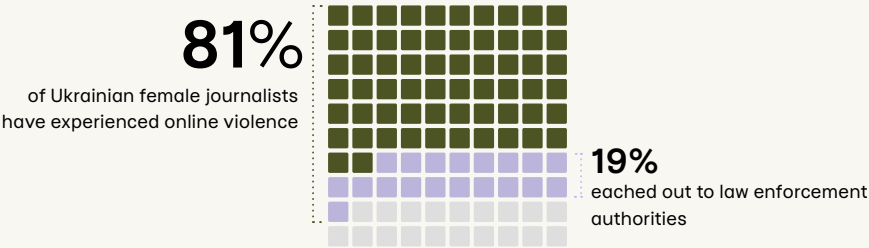
Photo by Serhii Tomilenko. Svitlana Karpenko, editor-in-chief of Trudova Slava newspaper in Orikhiv.

In its 2023 study "An Underestimated Threat: Gendered Disinformation about Ukrainian Women Journalists,"¹⁷ Women in Media NGO recorded Russia using gendered disinformation to suppress the voices of Ukrainian women journalists and to form a negative perception of gender equality and the role of women in democratic societies.

16 Women in Media NGO, "Gender Balance in Decision-Making in Ukraine's Media Organizations," 2023. Access: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/hendernyy-balans-u-pryyniatti-rishen-v-media-orhanizatsiakh-ukrainy-rezultaty-doslidzhennia-ho-zhinky-v-media/>

17 An Underestimated Threat: Gendered Disinformation about Ukrainian Women Journalists," 2023. Access: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/doslidzhennia-nedootsinena-zahroza-henderna-dezinformatsiia-shchodo-ukrainskykh-zhurnalistok/>

A 2025 study¹⁸ conducted by Women in Media NGO together with UNESCO showed that 81% of Ukrainian women journalists have encountered online violence, with the most common forms including misogynistic and sexist language (phrases like “journawhore”) and defamation aimed at harming the professional reputation (particularly by creating a false image of a “pro-Russian journalist”). Only 19% of those targeted by online violence reported these instances to law enforcement.



The attacks resulted in a deterioration in psychological wellbeing, reduced work capacity and self-censorship, which becomes a serious deterrent considering the prevalence of women in journalism. It is especially dangerous during the war, when society is critically dependent on truthful information.

18 Women in Media NGO, “Her Voice, Their Target: Gendered Online Violence against Ukrainian Women Journalists,” 2025. Access: <https://wim.org.ua/materials/study-online-violence/>



Gender-Sensitive Coverage of the Recovery: Challenges for the Ukrainian Media

In general, the Ukrainian media are increasingly covering the subject of Ukraine's recovery, including both physical and social infrastructure. In numerous instances, journalists focus on quality, engaging different voices and using a gender-sensitive, inclusive approach. However, even with good intentions and professional standards, there are certain internal and external challenges arising in practice which complicate systematic work with this subject.

Based on the in-depth interviews with editors of national and regional media, we have formed a list of key challenges and problems that Ukrainian newsrooms face in the process of covering Ukraine's recovery with regard to the gender-sensitive approach.

INTERNAL MEDIA CHALLENGES

- **Having policies ≠ applying in practice:** many newsrooms have declared gender or inclusion policies, but do not always integrate them into daily editorial work. This mainly concerns maintaining gender balance among commentators in materials, as there are still critically few female expert voices in the media.



"We use a special system to measure the expert representation of men and women on air. This measurement is done for each topic separately, since social and political programming tends to have a lower representation of women than in culture-related content. This is our way to track whether the gender balance is maintained every month. If we see issues with the balance, we discuss the situation with the editors. They note that finding women experts for socio-political topics requires additional effort from guest editors. We even considered engaging additional resources, including bonuses for editors who actively work on equal representation," shared one of the interviewees.

However, there are newsrooms which do not find the issue of gender balance a priority:



We do not think about gender balance as we write a material because in our texts, we always look exclusively to experts, to the relative importance of a certain newsmaker. We cannot refuse comments by men in favor of comments by women experts. If they are there, we do record them. If not, we are not going to waste time and wait a week or two on the material just to find two comments by men and two comments by women specifically," says a representative of another national media outlet.

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“I support quotas for women’s presence in the content. But when you’re writing about recovery and all the experts, regional leaders and business leaders are men, it’s difficult. This is a real problem,” said another respondent.

These remarks illustrate real difficulties encountered by newsrooms while preparing materials in a rapid news cycle. Focusing on the competence of sources is an important principle of journalism.

However, it is worth pointing out that gender inequality in representation is not a consequence of women experts being nonexistent as such, but rather due to the insufficient effort by newsrooms to find and invite them. Gender balance is not about replacing male experts with female ones “for the sake of balance,” it is about a conscious expansion on the expert pool to avoid one-sided coverage of events. This is especially important considering that, in many sectors, women are already qualified professionals but remain invisible for the media. It is important not to expect the perfect conditions or gender parity in every article, but rather to change the editorial practice step by step – for instance, by creating a database of women experts, assisting guest editors, setting internal goals at the policy level etc.

- **Insufficient understanding of the essence of these approaches:** the notion of “recovery” is often reduced to physical objects only, not taking into account social aspects or the needs of different groups.



"This is due to the fact that there are really many critical problems. Well, for example, when we write about demining, which is very important and we need to show how it happens, who does it, how much money it takes... the main thing here is to talk about this problem and we don't think about it in terms of: who does it and how to bring some kind of gender context here. Or when we write about the restoration of water supply, there are huge problems there, and we have, in fact, a huge city in southern Ukraine, Mykolaiv, which has been living without water supply for three years. It is kind of difficult to shoehorn the principles of gender-sensitive recovery in the material somehow," shared a representative of a national media outlet.

"I don't know what specifically can be considered recovery. I mean, okay, let's say, there's rebuilding infrastructure. Recovery, so to speak, is almost all positive stuff that is happening in the country now, all of it belongs to recovery. If you look at this broadly, then yes, we do write a lot about recovery," shared one of the interviewed media workers. "We wrote about attempts to give a new life to education in Zaporizhzhia, about rebuilt and newly built underground schools."

- **A narrow interpretation of inclusivity**, which is mostly associated only with the physical accessibility of buildings, rather than with the broad inclusion of vulnerable groups — such as veterans, IDPs, women, LGBTQ+, people with disabilities, etc.

“We definitely need to make sure that our recovery is accompanied by making all infrastructure suitable for people who are in the military, for example,” shared one of the respondents. “While rebuilding Irpin, they did not take it into account in a single project. That is, no ramps, no accessible sidewalks, none of this was part of the projects designed to rebuild the city. And, unfortunately, the authorities pay little attention to this. And now we will have millions of visible people who will need such inclusion, who will need a different parking next to a supermarket so that they can get out of the car. They will need special elevators.”



Photo: NGO "Women in Media". Editor-in-chief of Hromadske, Khrystyna Kozyra, with her team.

SYSTEMIC BARRIERS AND EXTERNAL CONDITIONS

- **Demand for recovery materials among the audience remains relatively low:** journalists are forced to balance between topics that arouse interest and those that they consider socially important.

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Recovery is not among those topics that concern the audience the most. It's not a priority for Ukrainians now. But we try to write about it in a way that's interesting, and we do it because it's important. When there's some kind of scandal, embezzlement in the context of recovery — this gets a lot of traction,” shared the editor of a national media outlet.

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“Gender-sensitive content is very difficult to ‘sell’ to the audience right now. When the main concern is survival, people are less focused on these issues,” commented the editor.

Even though audiences have little interest in topics of gender equality or inclusion due to the general focus on issues of survival, some editorial offices continue to cover important social topics, focusing on the strategic importance of such materials for society.

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“We still make some materials even though they do not bring in a lot of views because it is strategically important for our country,” said another respondent.

- **Limited access to information:** newsrooms face bureaucratic obstacles, especially at the local level, as well as a lack of official data on recovery.

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“The most difficult thing while writing about the recovery is access to information, to data. We were doing a big project, wanted to make a story on how regions spend money. For example, how much was allocated for recovery and how much was spent. And it was a complete disaster because we were shut down, many didn’t want to share this data, and we had a very hard time collecting it, then turning it into infographics so that people could see it. What was restored, where, how many objects, how much money was spent. It literally took several months to call various regions, to correspond with people... because access to this data is not really transparent, and that’s quite problematic,” shared a representative of a national media outlet.

The fact that journalists encounter difficulties with receiving comments when writing about recovery was also supported by a representative of a regional media outlet:

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“They don’t give us comments. We send official requests and receive answers. But sometimes you want in-person contact, to meet up, to see the recovery process on the ground. And sometimes employees are reluctant to share information or it is difficult to contact management.”

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“The main problem is access to local authorities. They often perceive journalists as enemies who will ‘write something bad’ and ruin their reputation. Although our goal is to create dialogue and raise important social topics. So, it happens that the authorities either do not provide information, or delay it, or answer in a very generic way. They often cite ‘military secret’ even when that’s not the case. In recent years, our projects have been focusing on building a dialogue between the authorities and the media to show that this can be a partnership, not a confrontation.”

- **Lack of thematic projects:** Media often lack support to produce in-depth, systemic materials on recovery.

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“First of all, there are no financial resources to hire a large enough team and, for example, travel to make video content. People would definitely watch that, but it does take a large team. To do this efficiently, it must be a good team, with good equipment, very mobile. There are neither enough financial resources nor enough human resources. The shortage of personnel is very much an issue. It's a little easier now than last year, but there really is a lack of qualified people. Thus, finances and people are the biggest thing,” shared a representative of an interviewed media outlet.

One of the respondents pointed out that many international organizations and embassies finance large projects about the recovery of specific cities and regions.

In her opinion, it would make sense to support the media to cover and oversee the use of these funds. She explained,

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“If we could receive the funds for a certain media outlet that covers all these processes, shares these stories, control and calculates where the money went, it would be constructive. Then we could write about mental health in the context of recovery or about gender equality. It would be more visible and effective, but otherwise, the media are doing the most important thing, just the tip, and there are not enough resources for everything else.”

- **Lack of a centralized source of information:** There is no single platform or database on projects, processes, and policies related to recovery, particularly taking into account a gender-sensitive approach.

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“The main difficulty is the lack of a unified database on relief and recovery. You have to collect information bit by bit,” said one of the interviewed editors.

Furthermore, one respondent pointed out that Ukraine has a shortage of organizations which would actively promote recovery-related topics and initiate information cooperation with the media. Interaction typically only occurs when journalists themselves take the initiative. She also noted that the materials sent by organizations often resemble activity reports rather than in-depth coverage of issues. She emphasized, “Organizations don’t always understand how to cover a certain topic best.”

CONTEXT OF COOPERATION WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

- **Insufficient partnership approach:** newsrooms strive for horizontal interaction, rather than the role of implementers of grant projects.
- **Lack of feedback:** journalists do not always understand why their projects were not supported, or how to improve their applications. The problem of interaction with donors is not only about bureaucratic difficulties, but also about the lack of proper feedback that enables organizations to improve their work.

According to one of the respondents, although donor support is important for the functioning of the media, the process of interaction is often limited to formal requirements without a thorough analysis of the results. *"If you want to get the funding, you will play by the rules that the donor proposes."*



Photo by Serhii Tomilenko. Svitlana Karpenko, editor-in-chief of Trudova Slava newspaper in Orikhiv.

However, it is not enough for the organization to develop effectively and to improve its work. The respondent added that quality feedback would be useful, allowing the organization to understand why their applications were not supported and what could be improved to achieve success in the future. This approach would not only help refine the organization's applications, but also create a clear understanding of what donors are looking for in each specific project. *"This would actually teach grant writers and, in principle, project managers the understanding of what donors are looking for now,"* said the media representative.

- **Lack of flexibility:** donor instruments sometimes do not take into account the real needs and pace of work of small newsrooms. One of the most clearly articulated requests by newsrooms is for a flexible component in donor support that would allow organizations to budget for basic team needs. It involves not only salaries or technical resources, but also taking care of the staff to avoid burnout, maintain motivation, and ensure long-term sustainability. In particular, respondents pointed to the inability to provide for expenses related to employee well-being in grant applications, such as health insurance or support for parents.

PROGRESS AND POTENTIAL

- **The path from stereotypes to diversity.** At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the media mostly asked for comments from military experts, brigade commanders, etc. Over time, the focus began to shift to a broader range of topics and groups.

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“We managed to see that our information product had become predominantly masculine. That is, it was mostly about men, about military servants, and women’s roles were quite stereotypical for wartime — wives, household keepers, volunteers,” shared a representative of a national media outlet. “When we noticed it, we realized that we had to work on our content offering more carefully. We managed to discuss this honestly with the editorial team, and gradually expand the range of topics, which led to also expanding our pool of experts.”

“We write about veterans, inclusion, injuries, return to civilian life, the impact of war on women. Women were affected the most because they had to take on many new social roles. We also write about children and the accessibility of education. Our local newsrooms have changed a lot in recent years. Now they work on the topic of recovery in communities — and they pay attention by themselves, without reminders, whether it is inclusive, whether there is a ramp, whether they took into account the needs of people with disabilities. This is a big change,” said a regional media outlet representative.

- **Awareness of gaps:** journalists themselves note the lack of coverage of topics such as the needs of veterans or IDPs, or other vulnerable groups.

- **There is a need for support, not only resources:** newsrooms seek not only funding but also knowledge, access to information sources and partnerships.

“I want donors and international organizations to ask, how can we cover it for your audience? How do you promote this to your audience? Is this important to you at all? Do you work with this?” shared one respondent.

Another respondent from a national media outlet noted that there may be a need for training, as the concept of inclusion encompasses not only wheelchair users, but also various types of disabilities and limitations that require adaptation of conditions. She emphasized that journalists could all benefit from expanding their knowledge in this sector, since not everyone had the opportunity to undertake workshops dedicated to this.

“This is a field where we can strengthen our knowledge.”



Recommendations for International Organizations and Stakeholders

This section includes 15 recommendations for international organizations working with recovery in Ukraine and cooperating with the media. The recommendations cover institutional, financial, educational, and communication aspects.

01

Integrate media support into Ukraine's recovery strategy

The needs of the Ukrainian media industry should become a clear component on the agenda of the Ukraine Recovery Conference (URC2025). The media are a key element in sustaining democratic processes, protecting human rights, countering disinformation, and ensuring a transparent, inclusive, and gender-sensitive recovery in Ukraine.

At the same time, previous URC conferences, held in Lugano, London, and Berlin, did not look at issues of recovery as connected with the media sector development. The media remained mostly observers, rather than active participants in the recovery processes.

This situation needs to change. Journalists should be systematically involved in the discussion, monitoring and evaluation of recovery projects. Their participation will help identify gaps, understand the real needs of communities, enhance transparency in decision-making, and integrate a gender-sensitive approach into recovery communication.

URC2025 should include a separate session dedicated to the restoration of the media industry, as well as ensure the full participation of the media community in the development of recovery strategies. Supporting independent media is not only a matter of democracy and freedom of speech, but also a key factor in Ukraine's sustainable and fair recovery.

02

Promote a gender-responsive and inclusive approach in media projects

Calls for grant applications from the media should include clear requirements for inclusion and gender sensitivity. It is necessary to support those initiatives that not only cover recovery processes but also demonstrate the experience of women, veterans, IDPs, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ and other vulnerable groups, as participants, not just as victims. While previously there were more projects funding the creation of materials about gender equality, women's rights, various minorities, now that the American funding for Ukraine is terminated, which also directly affects the Ukrainian media, such projects have dwindled.

03

Provide the media with access to systemic information about recovery

To cover the subject of recovery well, journalists require structure and regular access to information. There should be open information platforms with data on programs, budgets, and contractors. Another important aspect is advocacy for greater transparency from local authorities, which tend to create excessive secrecy. Most of the media representatives surveyed responded that in order to cover Ukraine's recovery more comprehensively, they would benefit from a platform that would summarize data on the progress of recovery, allocated funds, implemented projects, etc.

04

Invest in sustainable training formats for media, including those that address gender equality

One-off trainings are inferior in effectiveness to mentoring programs, long-term editorial fellowships, or the creation of thematic hubs. The focus of such programs should be on data skills, ethics, understanding human rights, and recovery in a broader social context. Such training should also include explanations of why a gender-sensitive approach to recovery is important.



Photo: NGO "Women in Media". The editorial team of Hromadske Radio.

05

Rethink the logic of grant support

Small newsrooms often lack the resources to go through complex submission and reporting procedures. Grant programs should be simpler and more transparent, and include mechanisms for quality feedback for those who did not receive support, for learning and further improvement. Easing of bureaucratic procedures and donor flexibility will help the media become more effective in the context of reporting information, as they will be able to focus directly on journalistic work.

Grant programs should also include a flexible component that allows for costs to support the basic needs of teams – such as health insurance, measures to prevent burnout and enhance online safety, and assistance for employees who have children. Caring for the wellbeing of employees is an important condition for the sustainability of media in times of war and recovery.

06

Support partnerships rather than contractual formats

Journalists should be viewed as equal partners in projects rather than “implementers.” This means involving the media at the stage of planning thematic projects and joint development of products. It is also worth stimulating the formation of networks of journalists who focus on recovery issues, in particular from regional media outlets. Special attention should be paid to long-term support for media initiatives that systematically work on the topics of gender equality, inclusion, and the rights of vulnerable groups.

07

Promote intersectoral cooperation

Joint projects between media outlets and organizations working with vulnerable groups will contribute to better coverage of complex topics and help journalists gain access to expert understanding of the needs of these groups. Such partnerships should be formalized in the form of hubs or joint initiatives. In addition, it is important to encourage local authorities to engage more actively with regional media through information partnership mechanisms, as well as cooperation with women's organizations and other civil society representatives – not only in terms of communication, but also at the stage of planning and implementation of recovery strategies.

08

Invest in researching the media landscape

Regular assessment of content inclusiveness, representation of vulnerable groups, and methods of covering certain topics allows donors and partners to adapt their programs flexibly. Such research should cover both large national media outlets and regional newsrooms.

09 Support local and regional media

Recovery begins on the ground, and it is regional newsrooms that are the first to respond to changes in communities. Dedicated support programs for media in regions where recovery is taking place should be established: this could include providing technical infrastructure, grants for content creation, or training programs for teams.

10 Amplify the voices of vulnerable groups through the media

The media can write not only about vulnerable groups, but also with them. Initiatives that engage representatives of such groups in content production, for example through training programs, guest materials, or participatory formats, should be supported. This changes the optics of representation – from the object to the subject.



Photo: NGO "Women in Media".

11 View the media as stakeholders, not just tools

It is important that the media be involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of recovery processes at the community level and national recovery strategies. Their representation in advisory bodies, coordination platforms or supervisory boards will increase the transparency and quality of decisions.

12

Fund media initiatives that cover recovery on the ground

Journalists who work deeply with communities can show the complexity and contradictions of recovery processes. This type of content should demonstrate not only the result, but also the process: why it takes so long, what conflicts or compromises accompany the changes.

13

Support the development of analytical journalism

High-quality media coverage of reconstruction processes should include not only positive cases, but also critical analysis of policies and decisions. Newsrooms working with analytical genres – investigations, explainers, reports – require additional support. This will allow for accountability of authorities and contractors.

14


Support the internal institutional sustainability of newsrooms in terms of equality and inclusion

Implementation of real editorial policies of equality, development of internal mechanisms for monitoring gender balance among experts should be supported, and organizational support should be provided for the development of inclusive practices.

15

Promote the topic of recovery among the audience

Support should cover not only the production of recovery content, but also the development of communication strategies to draw public attention to inclusive and gender-sensitive recovery processes.



The proposed recommendations are an important step towards strengthening the role of the media in a gender-responsive and inclusive recovery of Ukraine. However, the list is not exhaustive. Changes in the context of war and recovery constantly create new challenges, but also opportunities. Therefore, it is important to ensure regular review of approaches, expand dialogue with the media community, vulnerable groups, and local communities, and invest in continuous improvement of cooperation mechanisms. Only dynamic, responsive support will help make the recovery process truly inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

About Women in Media NGO

The Women in Media initiative was founded in April 2019 by Liza Kuzmenko and Viktoriia Yermolaieva, who were working together at Hromadske Radio at the time. It all started with a small Facebook group, which later grew into a powerful community that unites over 1,700 women journalists, editors, producers, and other media professionals from all regions of Ukraine and different types of media. In September 2019, Women in Media NGO was officially registered.

We unite women in media to address challenges at two levels: equality in newsrooms (ensuring equal opportunities, access to management positions, and fair compensation) and equality in the media content (combating sexism, supporting women's leadership, and developing resources to protect women's rights).

Our activities are focused on providing organizational, psychological, expert, and financial support for women media professionals, including in a peer-to-peer format. We conduct analytical research, initiate advocacy events and actions, celebrate journalists' contribution into overcoming gender inequality, and organize educational opportunities.

The organization works towards the accomplishment of its mission to form a community of Ukrainian women journalists united by the values of mutual support, feminism, and professional development, and to facilitate the establishment of gender-sensitive newsrooms.

Women in Media NGO is an active participant of key platforms and advisory agencies in the sector of gender policy and freedom of speech in Ukraine. The organization is part of: The Equal Rights and Opportunities Platform under the Government Commissioner for Gender Policy, Kateryna Levchenko; Public Council under the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Freedom of Speech; Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery in Ukraine;

Platform for Ensuring Gender Mainstreaming and Inclusion in Recovery, established on the initiative of the Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine Olha Stefanishyna; Working (Negotiation) Group on Digital Transformation and Media, which is preparing Ukraine's negotiating positions for concluding the Agreement on Accession to the European Union.

In 2024, Women in Media NGO was shortlisted for the international IPI-IMS Free Media Pioneer Award, which celebrates organizations protecting freedom of the press and implementing innovations in the media sector.

Website wim.org.ua

