**Information on the increase of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine and Odessa Oblast**

1. **To what extent has there been an increase of violence against women, especially domestic violence in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns? Please provide all available data on the increase of violence against women, including domestic violence and femicides, registered during the COVID-19 crisis.**

The level of violence against women in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ukraine has risen. Official statistics from the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs differs from data collected by non-governmental organizations. The police say that the number of calls concerned with domestic violence has not recently changed. Psychologists explain that many women are simply not appealing to the police. The majority of victims of domestic violence don’t want to speak about their situation publicly, and often seek help anonymously. They do not write statements to the police. At the same time, the call-centre of NGO “La-Ukraine” recorded 2,051 appeals, while in January and February this number only reached 1,273. It is noted that an overwhelming majority of the appeals came from women.

In the Odesa Oblast (region) during the quarantine period, 661 administrative reports were recorded, concerning people admitting the facts of domestic violence (during the same period last year there were only 481 of these reports).

On the website of the President of Ukraine, there is a registered petition on the need to ratify the Istanbul convention, which received more than 26 thousand votes, enough for the issue to be submitted for consideration by the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) of Ukraine.

12.06.2020 The Cabinet Ministries of Ukraine have developed a governmental program concerning the equal rights and opportunities of women and men.

1. **Are helplines run by Government and/or civil society available? Has there been an increase in the number of calls in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

In Ukraine there are 2 national telephone helplines for violence prevention. 0800 500 335 (for landline telephones) and 116 123 for mobile phones, there is an opportunity to receive consultation through skype, “La-Strada Ukraine” Facebook account, and regional hotlines. Additionally, there is a government centre for combating violence – phone number 15-47, and a hotline for free legal aid 0800-213-103.

1. **Can women victims of domestic violence be exempted from restrictive measures to stay at home in isolation if they face domestic violence?**

Yes, if there is the necessity, women can be placed in shelters or centers for victims. In many regions there are rooms for emergency accommodation. In addition to government centers, centers that are run by public organizations continue to work; for example, there are 3 of these centers in the Odesa Oblast (region): the public movement “*Vera, Nadezhda, Liubov*” (“Faith, Hope, Love”), the center “*Strumochok*” (“Stream”) in the Tartarbunary district and the center “*Stezhka Dodomu*” (“the Path Home”) in the Kiliia district.

1. **Are protection orders available and accessible in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Yes, they are available, courts and police are operating normally in compliance with safety measures.

1. **What are the impacts on women's access to justice? Are courts open and providing protection and decisions in cases of domestic violence?**

Yes, courts are open, decisions on cases are being made.

1. **What are the impacts of the current restrictive measures and lockdowns on women's access to health services? Please specify whether services are closed or suspended, particularly those focusing on reproductive health.**

Medical facilities are open. Registration must be completed online or by phone with the doctor to avoid the congestion of people in queues.

1. **Please provide examples of obstacles encountered to prevent and combat domestic violence during the COVID-19 lockdowns.**

The constant presence of women with the aggressor in the same premises prevents her from seeking help.

* Distrust of police officers and fear of being accused of provoking domestic violence.
* Women are afraid of their families being put on record as dysfunctional by the police and social services.

1. **Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by Governments.**

The work of police emergency response group to domestic violence “Polina” in Odesa, mobile consultation teams composed of social workers and psychologists are working in centers providing social services for families, children and young people in all city districts.

In cities and districts there are coordinated councils working on the formation of gender politics, prevention of domestic violence and human trafficking; under these coordinated councils, multidisciplinary working groups were formed, working on the prevention of domestic violence, which is considered an issue of coordination and planning, and other cases. In every state institution and local government, the positions of responsible persons for work in this direction is defined.

In May 2020 in Kyiv, in the Presidential Reception House, a meeting was conducted between representatives of civil society and country leaders, with the participation of the first lady, where the issue of countering domestic violence and further steps, aimed towards improvement, were discussed.

In April 2020, work on the Gender Council began under the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, one of the directions of work in tackling the issue of countering domestic violence.

1. **Please provide examples of good practices to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence and to combat other gendered impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic by NGOs and NHRIs or equality bodies.**

Community organizations in Ukraine are included in the development of recommendations for legislation, the organization of training for government and law enforcement representatives; with the support of community organizations and technical help from donors together with local governments, shelters have been established for women, as well as consultation centers; community organizations also run centers (shelters) for women and children. Regional NGOs take part in the development of regional and city social programs. In Odesa, these programs are endorsed by sufficiently strong funding – 14 million hryvnia/UAH. One of the most serious and largest parts of this program is the issue of preventing domestic violence.

1. **Please send any additional information on the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on domestic violence against women not covered by the questions above.**

With the example of the city of Odesa. During the pandemic, a Center for Combatting COVID-19 was established, which included NGOs, charitable funds and civil activists. A program for the protection of people in difficult living situations, including families, where there were recorded cases of domestic violence. They were assisted with the provision of food, medicine, and consultation support. A hotline was created under the Mayor’s office. Only our organization, with volunteers, delivered more than 2,000 food parcels using our own transportation.

Tetiana Semikop, PhD,

Chairwoman of the Public Movement “*Vera, Nadezhda, Liubov*” (“Faith, Hope, Love”)

Ukraine, Odesa

Olga Kostiuk,

Vice-chairwoman, lawyer