



# UNICEF USA TWO YEARS OF LOSS AND RESILIENCE



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**UNICEF's response in Ukraine and neighboring countries**  
**A report prepared for Lori Golitzin**

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**For two long years, the children of Ukraine have withstood relentless hardships.** Two years of destruction and displacement, violence, separation from family members and friends, loss of loved ones, and disrupted schooling, health care and social services have led to a mental health crisis and a learning crisis among Ukraine's children. Their classrooms moved into basements, and their playgrounds littered with mines and other remnants of war – which now cover a third of the country.

Children in Ukraine's frontline areas have been forced to spend between 3,800 and 4,500 hours – up to half a year – sheltering in basements as air raid alerts sound above. They have experienced prolonged disruption of schooling and routine, leaving them at significant risk of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These feelings, coupled with isolation manifest in ways that make it challenging for children to feel happiness, learn, and participate in everyday life.

More than 5.9 million people have fled to safety in neighboring host countries and beyond – the largest displacement of people in Europe since the Second World War. Many children who sought refuge in neighboring countries are still struggling to access education, health care, and protection services, and, as the war wages, face the prospect of long-term displacement and deprivation.

As the intensified war drags into a third year, maintaining hope is essential. Ukraine's children need this war to end. They also need sustained commitment and resources to be able to recover. **Thanks to generous supporters like you, UNICEF is continuing to respond in Ukraine and neighboring host countries to address the evolving needs of children and their families.**

<b>579 CHILDREN killed</b> <b>1,284 CHILDREN injured</b>
<b>3,798 EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS bombed or shelled</b>
<b>HALF OF ALL STUDENTS in Ukraine rely on online or blended education</b>
<b>87 PERCENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS report the war exacerbated gender-based violence</b>
<b>16.6 MILLION people in need of humanitarian assistance</b>



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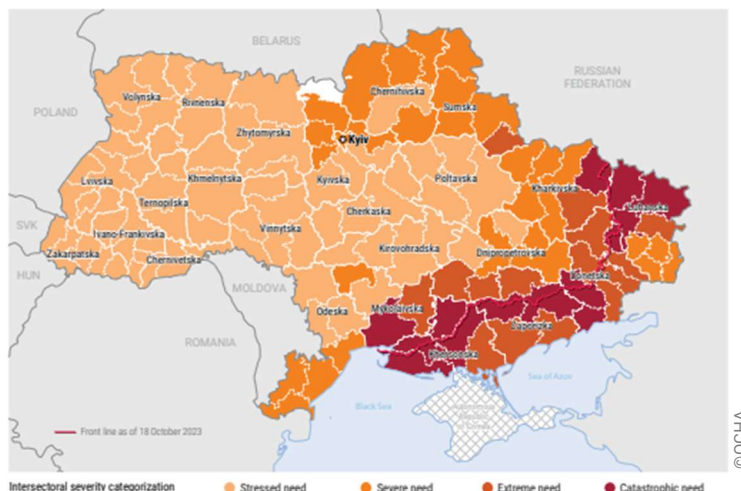
**Ukrainian refugee children enrolled in the Romanian educational system, pursuing their education in safety. In fall 2023, they received backpacks and essential supplies from UNICEF**



# UNICEF IN ACTION

UNICEF was in Ukraine long before the war escalated, and in the years since, has stayed and delivered. UNICEF stands with the children of Ukraine and will continue working with partners to support them through the war and beyond.

Since 2022, UNICEF’s humanitarian response has swiftly adapted to on-the-ground realities and scaled up emergency response – first with lifesaving supplies and then expanding to provide essential services. UNICEF focused on children on the frontline and extended its presence to the most conflict-affected regions.



UNICEF also significantly expanded the response across 19 countries where children and families fled the war in search of safety. UNICEF used existing national services and structures to implement humanitarian programs for refugee children and their families while strengthening these systems for long-term resilience. In 2023 and moving into 2024, strong partnerships facilitated the shift from short term crisis relief to long-term strategies to integrate support within national systems and services. Continuing into 2024 and beyond, UNICEF has been working alongside government, international agencies, and a network of partners to deliver relief and support recovery.

This war has been devastating for children. Children with disabilities, children without parental care, children at risk of family separation, and children in institutions remain particularly vulnerable. **Ukraine’s long-term recovery depends on the recovery of children who are affected by the war today.** So far, UNICEF has been able to achieve the following results for children and families in Ukraine and in refugee-hosting countries:

2022-2023 Results			
		2022	2023
<b>HEALTH AND NUTRITION:</b> Children and women accessing primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities and mobile teams	Ukraine	4,926,077	5,033,280
	Neighboring Countries	433,701	346,968
<b>EDUCATION:</b> Students accessing formal or non-formal education, including early learning	Ukraine	1,451,665	1,328,602
	Neighboring Countries	588,778	1,259,838
<b>CHILD PROTECTION:</b> Children and caregivers accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support	Ukraine	2,978,598	2,561,399
	Neighboring Countries	846,033	1,316,114
<b>SOCIAL PROTECTION:</b> Households reached with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>UNICEF-funded humanitarian cash transfers in Ukraine</li> <li>Cash transfers through existing government systems with UNICEF technical assistance in neighboring countries</li> </ul>	Ukraine	309,100	59,858
	Neighboring Countries	47,494	76,131
<b>WASH:</b> People accessing sufficient quality water	Ukraine	4,649,974	5,421,369
	Neighboring Countries	100,350	24,928

# 2023 RESPONSE AND RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

There have been some 1,277 attacks impacting health care facilities in Ukraine since the escalation of the war, leaving many facilities damaged or destroyed by shelling, and killing and causing serious injuries to health workers and patients – including children.

Disruptions to primary health care services make children much more vulnerable to preventable diseases and delay their recovery from shock and injuries. In Ukraine, UNICEF and partners have prioritized interventions to mitigate the long-term impact of war on children’s health and nutrition.

Beyond Ukraine, UNICEF’s focus extended to improving refugee access to national health care systems and supporting capacity-building efforts across refugee-hosting countries in order to benefit refugees and host communities.

In 2024, UNICEF will support the national vaccination system in Ukraine through mobile teams to reach children in frontline areas and promote infant and young child feeding practices. In refugee-hosting countries, UNICEF will continue strengthening the capacities of national health ministries to include refugee children in the national maternal and child health care system, including the immunization program.



**Dnipro, Ukraine**- Olha Maltseva showing the bomb shelter at the Regional Medical Center for Family Health in Dnipro Since February 2022, UNICEF has been helping to restore bomb shelters in medical facilities across Ukraine. So far, seven shelters have been restored and equipped in health care facilities in Chernihiv, Dnipro and Kyiv.

### UKRAINE

- Over **5 million children and women** with access to primary health care in UNICEF-supported facilities and mobile teams
- More than **100,000 children** vaccinated against measles by July 2023
- **2,500 vaccination sites** reinforced with new cold chain equipment
- **Over 111,477 caregivers** received Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) counseling

### REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

- **346,968 refugee women and children** accessing primary health care services
- **Over 40,000 children** under 15 years old vaccinated
- Poland: Over **1,300 health practitioners** increased skills in ICYF counseling
- Czech Republic: More than **800 Ukrainian health workers** gained local accreditation
- Slovakia: **27,771 children and women** reached by primary health care services by Ukrainian health professionals

## EDUCATION

Across the country, 40 percent of Ukraine’s children cannot access continuous education due to a lack of facilities. In areas nearer to the frontline, half of school-age children are unable to access education. Latest data show that the scale of learning gaps seen in 2022 compared to 2018 is equivalent to two years loss in reading and one year loss in math.

UNICEF has been collaborating with the Government of Ukraine to rebuild war-damaged schools and assist in offering catch-up classes and online education. In 2024, UNICEF will continue to work to repair educational infrastructure, improve digital learning systems, and focus on the needs of the most vulnerable children by addressing mental health.

In cooperation with refugee-hosting governments and local partners, UNICEF is facilitating the seamless integration of refugee children into local school systems by providing tailored support in learning the new language and alternative learning opportunities. In 2024, integration will continue to be a priority for refugee children who risk a third year without formal education.



**Kharkiv, Ukraine-** Two years ago, the school, where Stepan (15) and Yaroslav (16) used to study, was destroyed by shelling. Since then, it has remained in ruins, and they have switched to remote learning.

## UKRAINE

- Over **1.33 million children** accessed formal and non-formal education, including early learning
- Over **5,000 teachers** trained in inclusive education
- Safe spaces for children established in schools to ensure learning continuity
- Over **700,000 children** benefited from socio-emotional learning and school-based mental health interventions
- **65 education facilities** underwent rehabilitation
- 'Sports for Development' programs developed resilience in more than **380,000 children**, including 1,800 with disabilities

## REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

- In two years, **1.26 million children** reached with formal and non-formal education support
- Over **15,000 educators** equipped with teaching aids to promote integration
- **729,109 children** receiving learning materials **5,022 tablets** and **3,074 computing devices** enhanced digital access and educational capabilities
- Moldova: Back-to-school campaign reached **223,000 children** focusing on enrolling refugee children
- Poland: **573,000 children** received learning supplies

## CHILD PROTECTION

Two years of war in Ukraine has resulted in pervasive trauma for children. Survey data found half of 13- to 15-year-olds had trouble sleeping, and one in five were experiencing intrusive thoughts and flashbacks – typical manifestations of post-traumatic stress disorder. At a time when care from a parent is needed the most, half of parents surveyed report that they are struggling to support their children. Stigma and a lack of access to support have prevented children from getting the mental health care they need. Three-quarters of children and young people aged 14 to 34 recently reported needing emotional or psychological support. However, less than a third of them sought help. Children without family or trusted adults can also face heightened vulnerability to abuse, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking.

UNICEF's response in Ukraine has been multifaceted, providing gender-based violence prevention and response services, mental health interventions through specialized individual care, online and outreach platforms, and schools and health programs. Moving forward, UNICEF is focusing on longer-term support for vulnerable children through family-strengthening interventions where children can be raised in safe, nurturing households.

In refugee-hosting countries, UNICEF facilitated the capacity-building of frontline mental health workers and created safe spaces where children can rest, play, learn, and receive support. Mental health services have been provided through education hubs for refugee children, local health centers, and national helplines. In 2024, UNICEF will ensure that refugee children and families can continue accessing mental support through health facilities, schools and local services.

## CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES (SPILNO CHILD SPOTS AND BLUE DOTS)



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**Kharkiv, Ukraine-** Nika (11) is sitting at the UNICEF Child Spilno Spot, a humanitarian hub run by UNICEF. At the Spilno Child Spot, teachers, coaches and educators provide children with a comprehensive opportunity to learn, relax, be creative and receive mental health assistance. Classes are free and, most importantly, safe, since the building has shelter where lessons continue even during air raid alarms.

*"The things that make me smile are the things I really like," adds Nika. "So now, three times a week, I often smile when I come to Spilno to play games."* The Spilno Child Spot has also inspired a new hobby – photography.

*"I realized how important it is to notice the good, even if it is almost absent," she says. "When the war started, I was nine years old, and now, I am eleven. How old will I be when it ends? I do not know. That is why I want to remember at least something good about this time."*

Nika lives in Kharkiv with her younger sister and parents. This large city has been on the frontlines since the beginning of the full-scale war. She no longer attends school, as it

has been destroyed. She has also lost many hobbies and her friends, who are scattered around the world with their families.

Her winter photo diary has become one of her main sources of joy. Through it, she tries to capture pleasant and important childhood moments, which the ongoing war threatens to destroy forever.

UNICEF works the Government, local authorities, non-governmental organizations, volunteers, and the private sector to develop and run activities at **Spilno Child Spots** within Ukraine. Spilno means "together" in Ukrainian – providing social services and protection to children and their families. Using play activities, Spilno Child Spots provide a sense of normalcy for children to escape the anxieties of war, and operate out of existing community spaces, tents, train and metro stations, and shelters for displaced people. Between 2022 and 2023, the number of Spilno Child Spots increased from 182 to 217. Of the 2.5 million visits, 1.5 million were children who came to find a sense of normalcy, escape the stressors of war, and access educational, recreation, mental health support, and health and nutrition services.

In parallel, UNICEF and UNHCR jointly established **Blue Dots** in seven refugee-receiving countries and a **digital Blue Dot** platform to assist the increasing number of Ukrainian refugees entering European countries. They served as a crucial support system for over 1.2 million people, providing essential services, family reunification for unaccompanied and separated children, psychological support, and legal counselling.

In 2023, in response to changing patterns of refugee movements, plans were underway to integrate the Blue Dots into the broader framework of specific government-led protection and social services. For example, in Romania, Blue Dots are being transitioned to a '**Blue Grid**' system that will refer Ukraine refugees and other affected groups to various local social services.



## UKRAINE

- **2.56 million children, adolescents and caregivers** accessing community-based mental health and psychosocial support
- Over **100,000 children** and families received case management and referral to social support services
- **1.1 million girls, boys, and women** provided with prevention, mitigation and response for sexual exploitation and abuse
- **74,360** children who have received individual case management
- **67,000 adolescents** including those with disabilities supported with mental health in youth centers
- More than **8.7 million people** reached with mass messaging on explosive ordnance risk education

## REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

- **1.32 million children and caregivers** able to access mental health services
- **1.22 million people** accessed safe spaces and support services, including through Blue Dots
- Nearly **1 million people** had hotlines and other safe channels to report sexual exploitation and abuse
- Moldova and Poland: More than **600,000 people** with access to mechanisms to report sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel

## SOCIAL PROTECTION

Humanitarian cash support offers a lifeline to families with children who have lost their possessions and livelihoods. UNICEF, in partnership with the Government of Ukraine, governments in refugee-hosting countries and other key partners, launched humanitarian cash transfer (HCT) programs to enable displaced families to make choices that meet children's basic needs. In frontline areas, families typically prioritized children's clothes and shoes, food, and hygiene items.

UNICEF is now working with the government to transition from HCTs to a shock-responsive social protection system that can be activated quickly to help children and families cope with sudden adverse events that cause significant harm or disruption to their lives.

In 2024, UNICEF will work with governments in Ukraine and refugee-hosting countries to strengthen their social protection systems and make them more shock-responsive. In addition, it is imperative that children and families who urgently need continued livelihood support can access cash transfers and other social benefits through a more robust national social protection system.



**Zahony, Hungary-** In the town of Zahony, Hungary, on the border with Ukraine, UNICEF's humanitarian cash assistance program is helping refugee children and vulnerable local families access schooling, shelter and social services.

## UKRAINE

- **59,858 households with children** supported with UNICEF-funded HCTs

## REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

- **21,826 households with children** supported with UNICEF-funded HCTs
- **76,131 households** reached with cash transfers through an existing government system with UNICEF support
- Poland: **36,971 children and caregivers** received social protection services such as vouchers, housing support, and help obtaining disability certificates
- Moldova: **56,000 households** facing winter economic challenges received cash assistance

## WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)

In Ukraine, water trucking and lifesaving supplies such as bottled water, purification tablets, water tanks and hygiene kits were delivered immediately when the war escalated to affected families. UNICEF partnered with 65 water utilities to keep water and sanitation systems functioning, providing chemicals and equipment, and helping rehabilitate damaged infrastructure. UNICEF also brought clean water for 1 million people following the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in July 2023.

At strategic locations such as Blue Dots, schools and refugee accommodation centers, UNICEF provided essential hygiene items such as menstrual products and baby supplies and improved WASH facilities. UNICEF support to host countries to improve WASH infrastructure is also creating long-term benefits for both refugees and people in host communities.

In 2024, UNICEF is prioritizing rehabilitating critical infrastructure in Ukraine. UNICEF, governments, and other partners are working towards sustainable and, where possible, climate-resilient solutions and institutional strengthening of water utility companies.

In refugee-hosting countries, to ensure integration with national services and future preparedness, the provision of emergency WASH services is being transitioned to host government systems.



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**Kharkiv, Ukraine-** Artem (5) already knows what it is like to live without water. When the fighting first broke out, water barely flowed from the taps. After a shell hit the pumping station, the water supply disappeared completely.

Since then, the water supply has been restored. UNICEF works to provide children throughout Ukraine with an uninterrupted supply of safe water.

### UKRAINE

- **5.4 million people** with improved access to WASH
- **2 million people** (340,000 children) received lifesaving emergency WASH supplies in frontline areas
- WASH access enhanced in 394 schools, 107 health care facilities and 3 collective centers serving 137,000 people

### REFUGEE-HOSTING COUNTRIES

- **56 refugee centers** equipped with toilets and washrooms
- **55,000 children** accessing WASH in learning facilities and safe spaces
- Poland: **177,000 children and caregivers** received hygiene supplies
- Moldova: Hygiene and menstrual kits benefitted over **86,000 people**, including 2,466 adolescent girls
- Belarus: 3,280 extremely vulnerable people received hygiene supplies, including children with disabilities

## WINTERIZATION

In Ukraine, winter temperatures plummet to -5 degrees during the winter, posing risks to children living in damaged homes. In October 2022, strikes against the country's infrastructure left up to 7 million children without reliable access to electricity, heat and water.



UNICEF pivoted quickly, providing power generators, heaters and boilers to keep critical services functioning while distributing warm clothing to families. In December 2023, winter clothing kits kept 64,706 children warm and dry. In addition, 4,755 households received cash assistance to help manage the cost of children's winter essentials.

In refugee-hosting countries, high inflation and soaring energy prices were particularly challenging for refugees. In Moldova, UNICEF provided 3,430 children under 12 years old with winter clothing kits. In Slovakia, a winterization grant offered a single payment to support the energy and winter expenses of 6,216 families (6,011 children).

## ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

UNICEF's adolescent and development participation (ADAP) approach focuses on the strengths and potential of young people. ADAP programming empowers youth to make positive life choices, transition safely to adulthood, and contribute to strengthening social cohesion, protection, resilience, and economic development.

Through the UPSHIFT program, UNICEF has transformed young people into successful, innovative social entrepreneurs motivated to make a positive difference in their communities. U-Report is UNICEF's digital community where young people can raise their voices and share opinions on topics that matter to them.

In 2024, UNICEF is set to expand its successful UPSHIFT program throughout Ukraine and ensure that the voices of youth continue to be heard by maintaining support for the U-Report platform and fostering peer-to-peer volunteering via school and youth club networks.

In refugee-hosting countries, UNICEF-supported youth engagement and non-formal education initiatives, run in collaboration with partners such as the Scouts, Junior Achievement, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award, reached over half a million adolescents and young people.



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11-year-old Bohdan lives in Izyum, a city that has endured near-total destruction over two years of conflict. *"The war changed my life a lot,"* says Bodhan *"I don't attend school anymore, I avoid places where there could be mines and don't go far for walks or summer swims in the river. Before the war, Izyum was whole. Everyone was happy and kind, and now everything is broken, and there's no one left. Many friends have departed."*

Bohdan's life revolves around his home, due to the danger of landmines. With education restricted to online classes, his only connection to teachers and classmates is via a small phone screen. *"My school is in ruins,"* he says, *"I wish I could return there to see my friends and stroll around. But online studying is tough due to potential electricity and internet outages. Using my phone for studies is challenging as the battery runs out, and I can't hear the teacher well. Besides, my eyes get tired and worsen."*

Bohdan's grandmother has very little money left for winter clothes for Bohdan and his sister. However, he recently received a set of winter clothes from UNICEF. UNICEF's winter response supplies are part of a larger effort to repair essential infrastructure, including heating and water systems in hospitals and schools.

## THE PATH FORWARD

In 2023, the immense generosity of donors provided UNICEF with \$705 million towards the Ukraine and Refugee Response appeal, enabling UNICEF to deliver results for children and families within Ukraine and across Europe. This support made Ukraine one of the top-funded emergencies in 2023 but continued the trend of earmarking funding in emergencies with over half of all emergency funding earmarked to only five emergencies out of the hundreds UNICEF responded to.

Today's overstretched humanitarian system is struggling to respond to the sheer scale of crises, with action too often coming after lives, livelihoods and safety nets have already been destroyed, without the flexibility to adapt responses to meet rapidly changing needs. Emergencies are also increasingly exacerbating impacts on children across borders. For example, the war in Ukraine increased food insecurity for children in the Horn of Africa. Flexible emergency funding, such as the [Global Thematic Humanitarian Fund \(GHTF\)](#), equips UNICEF to respond equitably for children in crisis, regardless of location or media attention. It also ensures more cost-effective responses. Every \$1 invested early in high-risk humanitarian contexts saves an average of over \$4 on the next emergency and speeds up operations by more than 12 days. **This means greater impact is achieved with limited resources.** To continue equitably addressing crises for children globally, and upholding UNICEF's mandate for *every* child, additional flexible support across emergencies is needed.

**As the war enters its third year, UNICEF's capacity to remain agile and prepared to respond to changing needs reflects the importance of flexible funding and ensures that every dollar spent has a direct impact on enhancing the lives of children who continue to endure the effects of the conflict.** Humanitarian needs remain acute, and UNICEF is poised to intensify its humanitarian efforts while laying the groundwork for recovery. This year, UNICEF's appeal for Ukraine and refugee-hosting countries is \$580.5 million to address the needs of 5.3 million people, including 1.3 million children.

**Your support has been and will continue to be essential to UNICEF's ability to reach the most vulnerable children suffering the devastating effects of years of war.**



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