



6 months of war and displacement for Ukraine's children

Key messages

I. Overarching impact

The children and families of Ukraine have now endured six months of devastation and displacement since the war escalated in February 2022. Children are caught in the crossfire of ongoing hostilities, while schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure on which they depend continues to be damaged or destroyed. With 5.2 million¹ children in need of humanitarian assistance, children are suffering the deadly consequence of a brutal war not of their making.

- 356 children have been killed and 595 maimed², with the use of explosive weapons causing most of the child casualties. Once again, as in all wars, the decisions and recklessness of adults are putting children at extreme risk.
- Ongoing hostilities are preventing children and families from evacuating and finding safety, while constant bombardment in parts of the country continues to heavily restrict humanitarian access, inhibiting affected populations from accessing life-saving aid.
- The hostilities in Ukraine have caused significant damage to critical water infrastructure, severely impacting children and communities' access to water, increasing risks of water-borne disease. Need for public water, sanitation and hygiene supplies and facilities have increased as water sources have been damaged, raising health concerns further.
- Attacks on hospitals and health centres continue to hamper people's access to health, putting children's survival at risk, while life-saving medicines, vaccines, and health services are unable to reach children in areas under active fighting.

Child protection

Since the war escalated, children continue to face high risks of violence, exploitation and abuse with decreased access to protection services. The war has also left invisible wounds that must be addressed without delay through sustained efforts to prioritise children's mental health and psychosocial needs, and build their resilience.

¹ Source: UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian and Refugee Response SitReps, 3 August 2022

² Source: OHCHR, 7 August 2022

- In any situation of conflict and displacement, children face increased risks of violence, exploitation and separation from family. The war in Ukraine is no exception. Yet while protection needs have increased, access to child protection services has been severely impacted as Ukraine's social workers and psychologists have also been directly affected by the war.
- The war has caused enormous mental distress on children, who have witnessed family and friends killed and injured, their homes, schools and neighbourhoods destroyed. Six months into the conflict, children continue to cope with fear, anxiety and grief associated with loss of loved ones, separation from family, forced displacement from their homes, isolation, and complete upheaval of their childhoods.
- As the war draws on, children's mental health and psychosocial needs must be prioritised in the face of ongoing threats of exposure to violence, compounded stress, the loss of or separation from family and friends, and ongoing displacement. This should include age-appropriate interventions to minimise harm, provide nurturing care, build resilience, and especially for older children and adolescents, provide safe opportunities to voice their concerns and help them realise their own agency.
- Support must also be provided to parents, caregivers and the child protection workforce, recognising that any negative impact to their mental health poses additional risks to children's mental wellbeing.

Education

With less than two weeks to the start of the school year, children must be given every opportunity to continue their learning – whether that means a return to classrooms where it is safe, through online learning, or a combination. ³

- Inside Ukraine, thousands of schools remain inaccessible to children – some damaged or destroyed, others used in the conflict, or as shelters for displaced populations and distribution points for humanitarian aid.
- Where it remains unsafe for children to return to school in person, we must ensure they can continue their learning online. Inside Ukraine, access to internet and lack of devices are one of the biggest challenges facing learners and teachers accessing online education.
- As some schools reopen in Ukraine, we need to ensure we reach every child with access to learning, assess their learning levels and support them to catch up, while also ensuring they have sustained emotional and psychosocial support to help them heal and recover.
- In neighbouring countries, children have the option to enrol into local schools, and must be supported with catch-up learning programs and language support so they can be ready for the start of the school year.

³ For more education key messages, please refer to BackToLearning campaign messaging document.

II. UNICEF response

UNICEF stands with the children of Ukraine and all those who support them. We have been working in Ukraine for 25 years and stand firm in our commitment to stay and deliver throughout this war and beyond.

- UNICEF was in Ukraine before the war escalated, and in the weeks and months since, our teams have stayed and delivered. We stand with the children of Ukraine and will continue supporting them through this war and beyond.
- We are proud to partner with authorities, local organizations, youth groups and communities who are working tirelessly on the frontlines of this response – we are committed to continue working together for the children of Ukraine.
- We commend the incredible strength of parents and teachers, social workers, and the healthcare workforce – in Ukraine and neighbouring countries – supporting children as they weather this conflict.
- Thanks to the incredible support from the international community, together with our partners, since February UNICEF has⁴:
 - provided learning supplies to nearly 290,000 children and engaged over 402,000 in formal and non-formal education **inside Ukraine**; and worked with local governments and refugee-hosting municipalities to provide access to formal and non-formal education for over 600,000 refugee-children **in neighbouring countries**.
 - reached over 1.4 million children and caregivers with mental health and psychosocial support; over 63,000 children with specialized care through case management and referrals; and over 52,000 women and children with gender-based violence response services **inside Ukraine**; and provided integrated services to women and children on the move through 40 UNICEF-UNHCR Blue Dots situated along major transit routes. **In neighbouring countries**, UNICEF works closely with local authorities, municipalities and NGOs to provide child protection services to thousands of children, including the most vulnerable.
 - enabled access to safe water for over 3.4 million people **inside Ukraine** living in areas where networks have been damaged or destroyed; and provided sanitation and hygiene supplies to nearly 455,000 people; UNICEF also provided access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services at Blue Dot spaces along major transit routes. In some

⁴ Source: UNICEF Ukraine Humanitarian and Refugee Response SitReps, 26 July 2022 – these numbers will be updated on 22 August.

neighbouring countries UNICEF has been distributing hygiene items and setting up hygiene facilities in preparation for winter.

- Enabled 4 million people to access healthcare as a result of supplies distributed in war-affected areas **in Ukraine**; and supported Ministries of Health **in neighbouring countries** to provide access to health services and immunisation for refugee women and children.
 - reached over 422,000 people with multi-purpose cash assistance **inside Ukraine**, and thousands of refugees **in neighbouring countries**, including nearly 62,000 people in Moldova and nearly 10,000 families in Slovak Republic.
- UNICEF has expanded its presence to 10 different locations in Ukraine to reach children and families in need of humanitarian support across the country. UNICEF is working with Governments and municipalities in 13 countries hosting refugees from Ukraine to address the needs of women and children.

III. Impact beyond Ukraine and global solidarity

The Ukraine war has sparked displacement on a scale and speed not seen since World War II – with far-reaching impact across the region and beyond. UNICEF welcomes the international solidarity shown to Ukraine’s children and those across the globe negatively impacted by the war.

- Of the 6.6 million refugees from Ukraine across Europe, the majority are women and children.
- The conflict in Ukraine and subsequent displacement has led to the most rapid mobilisation of international assistance on record. The solidarity shown to the people of Ukraine in the face of this war is an example of the best of humanity, and has demonstrated the type of humanitarian response that is needed in today’s cascading crises of conflict, malnutrition, COVID-19 and climate crisis.
- We recognize and applaud the many countries across Europe and beyond who have welcomed Ukrainian women and children with open arms. In a time of unprecedented global displacement, this welcoming of refugees from Ukraine is an example to the world of what is possible when we come together in solidarity.
- As the conflict and displacement continues and winter months approach, continued support is needed across the region to ensure refugee children are not left out in the cold – and that children around the world impacted by rising food and fuel prices and growing malnutrition, are not paying the price of this war with their lives.

IV. Moving forward

UNICEF will continue to call for (1) principled and unimpeded humanitarian access, (2) for an end to attacks on children and the infrastructure they rely on, including schools, hospitals and critical water and food infrastructure; (3) to avoid use of schools or other facilities in this conflict; and (4) to stop the use of explosive weapons in populated areas, directly responsible for killing and maiming hundreds of children.

- UNICEF will engage with parties to the conflict as and where their support is needed to reach affected populations, including children.
- UNICEF has been in Ukraine for many years and has maintained a principled humanitarian approach in past instances of violence and conflict, to ensure continued access to vulnerable populations. Since the start of this war, UNICEF together with our UN partners has continued to advocate for respect for humanitarian principles, international humanitarian law, and human rights law, including to end and prevent grave violations against children.
- Above all, UNICEF will continue to advocate for an end to hostilities. Children need an end to this war and sustained peace to regain their childhoods, return to normalcy and begin to heal and recover.

As winter approaches, hostilities continue unabated, and needs continue to increase, UNICEF renews our commitment to stay and deliver for the children of Ukraine, and requires support to meet growing needs in the months to come and beyond.

- UNICEF is preparing for the upcoming winter season, when temperatures are expected to plummet, raising significant concerns for children's survival as families are unable to heat their homes because of damage or destruction to their houses, lack of access to adequate shelter, and overall lack of access to electricity or fuel. In addition, damage to critical infrastructure further limits access to heating not only in households in Ukraine, but also in hospitals and schools. This will particularly impact infants and young children who are especially vulnerable to the cold and are more susceptible to illness and infection. Timely and flexible funding is needed to support preparedness for the piercing cold.
- As the frontlines of the conflict shift and some families begin to return to their homes, child-centred recovery that meets the immediate and longer-term needs of children will be critical. This must be focused on strengthening the systems that support children's health, education and protection, to ensure all children – whether trapped in active conflict areas, displaced within the country, or as refugees – have equitable access to all these services.
- Current and future response and recovery efforts must ensure a deliberate focus on reaching the most vulnerable children, such as children in institutional care and children with disabilities. All efforts must benefit from continued close collaboration with local and national authorities to ensure the provision of essential, integrated social services and a continuum of care that builds resilience and equity, for every child.