



Kirkon
Ulkomaaanapu



Save the Children



People
in Need



“I want a peaceful sky”:

**Education and children’s wellbeing
in wartime Ukraine**

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was written by Daniel Gorevan with support from Mary Ada Greer, Emma Wagner, Kateryna Lytvynenko, Viktoriia Adamenko and Olesia Gorobets who provided input, expert comments and review. Data collection was conducted by Save the Children, Middle East Consulting Services (MECs) and Thuzo FZE.

Names in this report have been changed or omitted to protect the identities of those featured in the stories.

Published by Save the Children savethechildren.net

First published July 2024

This publication may be used free of charge for the purposes of advocacy, campaigning, education and research, provided that the source is acknowledge in full.

Cover photo: Children run up the stairs at a lyceum in Chernihiv region. Photo credit: Oleksandr Khomenko/Save the Children



With support from
Finland's development
cooperation



Views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

The document is produced with the financial support of the Swedish International Agency for International Cooperation Sida. The author is responsible for the content. Sida does not necessarily share the views and interpretations expressed.

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive summary | 4 |
| Methodology and sources | 9 |
| Background | 10 |
| 1. Attacks on education and the impact of the war | 11 |
| 2. Learning during wartime: Efforts to continue schooling in Ukraine | 16 |
| 3. Mental health challenges for children | 23 |
| 4. Specific needs and equitable access to education | 28 |
| 5. Strains on the system and challenges for teachers | 30 |
| Conclusion and recommendations | 35 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The war in Ukraine has caused massive displacement, economic damage, and human suffering in the country. The UN has recorded 32,100 civilian casualties, with 1,800 children amongst those killed or injured. The war has also caused the largest civilian displacement in Europe since World War II, with nearly one-third of Ukrainians forced to flee their homes in 2022.

Ukrainian cities face continuous aerial bombardments, drone attacks, and artillery fire, particularly near the front lines. Civilian infrastructure, including schools, water, and power stations, have been deliberately targeted.

This report documents the ongoing impact of the war in Ukraine on children's education and mental health, based on comprehensive research conducted by Save the Children in 2023 and 2024. This research included over 1,000 surveys of children and parents, a survey of 460 teachers, key informant interviews, and focus groups across five geographical clusters, including the regions most affected by the war.

1,000
children
and parents
surveyed

460
teachers surveyed

Over
60
interviews and
focus group
discussions



Interior of the damaged school outside of Kyiv. Photo credit: Oleksandr Khomenko/Save the Children

Impact of the War on Education

Save the Children's findings show the devastating impact the war in Ukraine continues to have on children's right to an education:

- Over half of the surveyed families reported that their schools had been damaged, with the figure rising to over 90% in heavily affected regions like Kharkiv and Donetsk.
- 42% of respondents said that damage to schools led to limited or restricted functioning of educational facilities.

Two-thirds of parents surveyed said that "exposure to the conflict" remains the most significant risk for their children, and ongoing conflict is the main obstacle for children in accessing full-time in-person quality, inclusive education. Interviewed and surveyed parents and teachers shared that the absence of shelters capable of withstanding attacks led to them feeling unsafe and fearful for their children.

Learning during wartime

Despite innovative strategies to continue education in person, including setting up classrooms in metro stations and managing limited school shelter capacity through shifts, almost half the school students in Ukraine (44%) learn remotely.

Whilst generally positive attitude about the suitability of remote education as a short-term alternative to in-person schooling, it is severely hindered:

- 79% of respondents cited poor internet connection as a major obstacle.
- 42% reported a lack of hardware devices.
- Nearly 40% mentioned electricity shortages as a significant barrier, an indication of the impact of the Russian Federation's attacks on energy infrastructure on the education of children in the country.

While children across Ukraine are learning remotely, authorities in the East and North of the country (e.g. Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Chernihiv) rely on remote learning more heavily due to their proximity to front lines or to the border with the Russian Federation. Children in these regions face the challenges – and the risk of exposure to conflict – far higher than those in other regions.

Despite safety concerns, survey respondents strongly preferred in-person education, stressing the importance of engagement with teachers and peer interaction.

PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

Nine out of ten school-aged children surveyed are experiencing at least one or more psychological effects of ongoing conflict. More specifically,

- 73% of surveyed children feel unsafe or fearful,
- 64% have lost interest in learning, and
- 54% experience sadness and low self-esteem.

Schools are not only places to learn, but for children to socialize and develop with their peers, and a protective environment where they can access services and support. The war has created a negative feedback loop where the conflict and damage to schools has impacted children's mental health, but also disrupted the sense of normality provided by school attendance. Even for those attending in-person, however, frequent air raid alerts and shelter stays cause significant emotional distress and affect their focus on studies.

In addition, only 19% of those surveyed said that mental health support services were available: the higher percentage of respondents whose children attend school in person (26%) and said these services were available suggests that children who attend school are more likely to be able to access them.

Resilience and weaknesses in the education system

Remarkably, 93% of surveyed children report attending school (in-person, remote, or blended) with no recent interruptions, a testament to the efforts by authorities, teachers, parents, and children to continue education despite immense challenges.

However, the conflict has exacerbated existing educational disparities. The Government of Ukraine has had to redirect funds from the education sector at a time when it needs them most, causing local authorities to cut bonuses, scrap payments for extra work, and encourage unpaid leave. Many teachers, the vast majority of whom are women, have been displaced or must balance teaching with humanitarian work, and those interviewed by Save the Children said that the low pay, increased workload, and psychological stress affect both teaching quality and staff retention. Only 10% of teachers surveyed felt their salary is sufficient to cover their basic needs.

Parents and caregivers who responded to the survey also noted these structural challenges:

- 45% of respondents noted insufficient learning resources and equipment.
- 30% mentioned irrelevant subjects and curricula, and 28% pointed to unqualified or understaffed teachers as the main reasons for low-quality in-person education services.

While the Government of Ukraine receives substantial bilateral funding from its allies, including for public services, this does not cover the shortfall amidst the government's competing priorities. Local, national, and international humanitarian organizations play a role in addressing critical education needs. Still, there is a 45% funding shortfall in the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan for education, which is significantly larger than last year's 15% gap.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The Government of the Russian Federation should:

- Immediately stop attacks on educational and civilian infrastructure, avoid using schools and kindergartens for military purposes, and endorse the Safe Schools Declaration.
- Protect the education rights of children in the territory it occupies, and refrain from any form of violence or threats of violence against education personnel and students.

The Government of Ukraine should:

- Expand psychological support services for children, teachers, and families.
- Rebuild schools with adequate shelters for all children, including those with special needs.

- Provide computers and internet access to children in remote or blended education, prioritizing regions with the highest needs.
- Offer professional development for teachers, including training in digital technologies, diverse needs education, and psychological first aid, and increase teacher salaries.

Donors to Ukraine should:

- Provide budget support for the Government of Ukraine to improve the educational system, with a view to long term recovery and reconstruction of the country, and fully fund multi-year education, mental health and psychosocial support programmes for children through Ukrainian NGOs, UN agencies, International NGOs.

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

This paper draws on a wide variety of sources and data to provide insights into the barriers to education in government held areas of Ukraine in the last school year and the impact on their mental health.

Surveys

Save the Children surveyed 579 children across 12 regions in five geographical clusters in Ukraine, namely North-Northeast (3), Capital (1), East-Southeast (3), South (2), and Northwest-West-Southwest (3). Respondents were 51% female and 49% male, ranging in age from 6 to 17 years old, and the average age of children participating was 12 years old¹.

61% of these children were in households which had not been displaced (residents), while the remaining 39% were either within internally displaced (28%) or returnee (11%) households. 89% of surveyed children reported they had no form of disability, with 10% of respondents reporting either visual (7%) or physical (3%) disabilities.

584 parents were also surveyed across the same 12 regions. Respondents were predominately women (73%), with an age range between 25- and 67-years-old, and the average age was 40 years old. 60% of surveyed respondents are resident households while the remaining 40% are divided between IDP (28%) and returnee (12%) households.

A survey of 460 teachers was conducted by Save the Children between December 2023 and February 2024. Respondents to this survey were mostly women (91.5%), with responses across the country but predominately from Kharkiv (39%) and Ivano-Frankivsk (23.5%) regions, more than half of respondents overall were in rural areas (57.8%).²

Key informant interviews, testimonies, focus group discussions

Qualitative interviews were conducted with 57 key informants directly involved in remote and in-person education, including teachers, school administrators and education authorities.

This report also draws on individual testimonies and interviews conducted by Save the Children staff in the 2023-2024 school year and focus group discussions with children. It is informed and has been consulted with Save the Children's programme staff who run education programmes which assisted over 100,000 children across Ukraine in 2023.³

Secondary sources and data

The report also draws on a range of secondary data sources related to the education of children in Ukraine in the context of the ongoing international armed conflict, following a comprehensive literature review.

Limitations

While the sampling for the survey allows comparative analysis between areas of conflict intensity and other analytical categories, it does not cover the whole country. Notably, primary data for this report was collected only in areas of Ukraine which are under the control of the Government of Ukraine.

BACKGROUND

In February 2022, the Russian Federation dramatically escalated the ongoing conflict in the country which had started in 2014. This led to intense military action across the country, with major cities, including Mariupol and Kherson in the south of Ukraine, conquered by Russian forces, and others, such as the capital Kyiv and Kharkiv in the north, facing intense fighting and bombardment.

The Government of Ukraine reclaimed significant amounts of territory in 2022, and the conflict has since been characterized by offensives and counteroffensives by each party, while Ukrainian cities and towns – across the country and more intensively closer to the front lines – face aerial bombardment, drone attacks, artillery fire and attacks on civilian infrastructure. Massive destruction has caused extensive economic damage and dire humanitarian needs, with devastating effects on children.

According to the UN, there have been 32,100 civilian casualties (10,946 killed and 21,154 injured), with more than half of these casualties occurring in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.⁴

Children are amongst the casualties. Nearly 2,000 children have been killed or injured since February 2022,⁵ more than 4 per day.⁶

The war has uprooted millions of people across the country from their homes, leading to a breakdown in social cohesion and causing the largest displacement of civilians in Europe since World War II. In 2022, approximately one-third of all people in Ukraine were forced to flee their homes.⁷ As of May 2024, UNHCR has recorded nearly 6.5 million Ukrainians who have fled to other countries⁸ - with estimates that up to 80 per cent are women and children - and 3.4 million people were displaced within the country.⁹

In December 2023, around nine hundred airstrikes per week were undertaken by the Russian Federation, including attacks which targeted civilian infrastructure, with many attacks injuring children or leaving them without heating¹⁰ in their homes and schools for prolonged periods. Attacks have also damaged essential water infrastructure.¹¹

1. ATTACKS ON EDUCATION AND THE IMPACT OF THE WAR

“

We felt anxious and tired because of constant danger and loud explosions. We can already distinguish it by sound, whether it is a missile or a drone flying. But I want a peaceful sky without missiles.

Nina, an eight-grader from the Kyiv region¹²*

”

Attacks on educational facilities, the electricity grid, and telecommunications infrastructure have significantly impacted Ukraine's school system, which had already been facing significant challenges prior to 2022.

At least 3,000 educational institutions have been damaged and 300 destroyed in the course of the war, comprising over ten per cent of Ukraine's schools.¹³ As well as direct damage, schools have also been repurposed by military forces and civilian authorities, including to shelter civilians, treat wounded soldiers, and reported use of schools to encamp soldiers, detain civilians, and store ammunition.¹⁴

Damaged schools and kindergartens require significant resources for renovation, particularly for water and heating infrastructure and air raid shelters, resources that school directors struggle to secure.¹⁵ Workers contracted to repair schools – a substantial number of whom are women, as many men have joined the military – have reported waiting months after completing their jobs to receive payment.¹⁶

The threat of air attacks, with regular air alerts requiring children and teachers to seek safety, as well as attacks on energy infrastructure which lead to power cuts, also significantly disrupt children's education.¹⁷

Save the Children's findings

56% of surveyed parents report that school infrastructure has been damaged by conflict activity. These results are significantly higher amongst respondents in the frontline regions of the East-Southeast (70%) and North-Northeast (81%).¹⁸ Within those regions, some are even worse hit: asked whether schools in their area had been damaged during the war, 97.1% of respondents from Kharkiv and 96.3% respondents from Donetsk regions said yes. As a school principal in the Donetsk region explained, “for the second year in a row, evacuations have been taking place from various cities of our community, which are close to the contact lines and where the security situation is extremely difficult...There are

many destroyed schools in Kramatorsk, there is a ban, and it is still in effect for full-time education.”

The North-Northeast region is the most affected in terms of the level of damage as well: on average conflict-related damage was reported as “moderate” (10%) or amounted to half (7%) of education infrastructure across all geographic clusters, contrasting to 21% of respondents reporting that this damage has impacted most (12%) or almost all (9%) the education infrastructure in those regions.

Key informants interviewed in regions in Eastern and Northern Ukraine, especially those closer to the border with the Russian Federation and the frontline, highlighted the

“

Ivanna, 43, and her three children live in a frontline town in the Kharkiv region that was besieged and occupied early in the war. Ivanna's older son, Danil*, 16, counted more than 700 explosions as the family was hiding in their basement before it eventually collapsed.*

"He said: 'Mom, if we get out of the basement, we must leave the city. If we stay here, we will all die together'", – Ivanna recalls the words of her older son, Danil, 16, right before they were forced to flee to central Ukraine. 'It is very painful to hear it from your child. He grew up very quickly. His childhood is over.' The younger daughter, Alina*, 7, has been feeling withdrawn and isolated and has started stuttering, and her smaller brother, David*, 5, has stopped talking.*

"My youngest son used to talk, used to sing songs... But one night the basement collapsed on us. And David stopped talking. He was almost 3 years old. It is very painful when your son used to talk... but then he became silent, and he does not even say 'mother'", – Ivanna* said about her younger child.*

”

interruptions in education services caused by attacks or occupation, repurposing of schools for other reasons, displacement of students and teachers as well as a reduction in educational resources. “Teachers do not consider their places of work to be safe,” a Deputy Principal in the Kharkiv region said, “If full-time education were to resume now, schools would not be ready, there would be no equipment and resources. There is a significant shortage of teachers.”

Survey responses show the ongoing impact of this damage too, with 42% of respondents reporting that the functionality of education infrastructure is either “restricted” (22%) or “limited” (20%), again corresponding to most conflict-affected regions, and an even higher proportion in the South (“restricted” (47%) or “limited” (16%) functionality).¹⁹

Continued risks

Of the 584 parents surveyed 67% said that “exposure to conflict” remains the most prevalent risk for their children. This response was consistently high across the country and irrespective of residency type but particularly high amongst IDP respondents in the Capital, East-Southeast, Northwest-West-Southwest, and South.

Interviewed and surveyed parents and teachers shared that the absence of shelters capable of withstanding attacks led to them feeling unsafe and fearful for their children. As one parent in the Donetsk region put it: “I don’t know where [missiles] will fly next time, we have explosions first, and then [comes] anxiety. The children will not have time to run to the bomb shelter.”

Several regions have functional protective shelters in schools, but their quality differs across communities, and many of them lack basic amenities like air conditioning, sanitation, and adequate space: “The safety of children is at risk even when they are in a shelter, because shelters are basements where it is cold, humid, dark, the smell of sewage, children sit dressed on wooden benches sometimes for 3 hours, then it becomes stuffy”, said an organiser in the Vinnytsia region. There is also the fact that, according to one teacher, the Dnipropetrovsk region, “the parents do not really trust the shelters of the school but have no other choice (they have to work).”

Alina hugs her brother David* at the Child Friendly Space in Kharkiv region.
Photo credit: Anastasiia Zahoskina/Save the Children*



Impact on quality

Parents who responded to Save the Children’s survey reflect the impact that this reality is having on the quality of their children’s education, with 82% reporting “ongoing conflict” as the primary reason for the low quality of in-person education.²⁰

“Conflict-related damage” was also referenced by over one third (36%) of caregiver responders as one of the other main reasons for the low quality of in-person education

services. According to key informants interviewed, rural areas often face more significant challenges due to limited resources to repair infrastructure damage and or refurbish schools to provide safe spaces for education.

86% of respondents report that they “fear for their children’s prospects” amid these conditions while 78% of respondents note that they are concerned about “further hostilities and destruction”.

Other notable concerns mentioned by respondents include “childcare and child well-being” (38%), most commonly amongst those who learning remotely, and “family migration and separation” (33%).

Figure 1. Main Concerns Regarding Structural Damage to Education Infrastructure by Modality

| | Modality of education services | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | Combination | In-Person Learning | Remote Learning | Grand Total |
| Fear for Children's Prospects | 86% | 79% | 91% | 86% |
| Further Hostilities and Destruction | 86% | 70% | 83% | 78% |
| Childcare and Child Well-Being | 31% | 34% | 44% | 38% |
| Family Migration and Separation | 37% | 35% | 29% | 33% |
| Lack of Education Support and Assistance | 18% | 23% | 20% | 21% |
| Inability of Authorities to Repair Damage | 11% | 24% | 21% | 20% |
| No Concerns | 4% | 4% | 0% | 2% |
| Other | 0% | 4% | 4% | 3% |

RELEVANT OBLIGATIONS ON PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

All children have a right to an education under international human rights law, which binds both the Russian Federation and Ukraine. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948, states simply that ‘everyone has the right to education’. The right to education has been reaffirmed in various international and regional treaties since then, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), Articles 28 and 29 of which elaborate on all children’s right to an education and its quality and content. Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) also recognise the right of all children to education.

In international armed conflicts, such as that in Ukraine, international human rights law continues to apply. In addition, states have specific obligations under international humanitarian law (IHL) to protect civilians and civilian infrastructure which relate to the education of children.

The Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols are core treaties of IHL that both Ukraine and the Russian Federation have ratified. Under these treaties civilians and civilian objects shall not be the object of attacks.²¹ While schools and other educational facilities are not per se protected, if for example they have been repurposed to host artillery or soldiers, a deliberate attack against a school which has not lost its status in this manner constitutes a grave breach of IHL, i.e. a war crime.²²

Attacks on schools and hospitals during conflict is one of the six grave violations against children recognised by the UN Security Council,²³ and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court lists intentional attacks on educational buildings that are not military objectives as war crimes within its jurisdiction.²⁴

The Russian Federation also has specific obligations under the Geneva Conventions as an occupying power, including that it “shall, with the cooperation of the national and local authorities, facilitate the proper working of all institutions devoted to the care and education of children.”²⁵ It also must ensure that orphaned or separated children are cared for and educated, including that “their education shall, as far as possible, be entrusted to persons of a similar cultural tradition.”²⁶

Ukraine was the 100th country to endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, an inter-governmental political commitment, which goes beyond what is required by international humanitarian law and establishes guidelines to protect schools and “draw on existing good practice and aim to provide guidance that will further reduce the impact of armed conflict on education.”²⁷ The Government of Ukraine adopted an action plan for the implementation of the guidelines in 2021,²⁸ and in 2024 ordered it to be updated to remove measures “that have already been implemented and the extension of other measures to the entire territory of Ukraine”.²⁹ The Russian Federation has not endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration.

2. LEARNING DURING WARTIME: EFFORTS TO CONTINUE SCHOOLING IN UKRAINE

The Government of Ukraine, educators, parents and children have had to adapt rapidly and repeatedly to the war to ensure children can go to school and can continue to learn.³⁰

In locations such as Kyiv City, better defence systems, coupled with its relative distance from the front line, mean children can attend in-person education services more regularly and safely, and remote education services via online learning is relied on when air strike warnings prevent parents or teachers getting to school.

“

I need a good tablet because the screen is broken.

FGD respondent (boy), urban school

”

Some regions closer to the front line have adopted innovative strategies to resume in-person schooling. In Kharkiv, local institutions have built sixty classrooms in the city's metro stations (underground), able to host more than 1,000 students at a time.³¹ Offering lessons in shifts has been a strategy across schools, including those whose protective shelters have limited capacity.³² Many schools now have electricity generators that help them manage blackouts caused by missile strikes by the Russian Federation on infrastructure, as well as shelters for children when there are air alerts.³³

Despite the highlighted above efforts, significant safety risks and challenges remain. Many schools and kindergartens still lack any form of shelter, or the shelters require rehabilitation, and are therefore unable to provide in-person education services. Schools and kindergartens within twenty kilometers of the border with the Russian Federation, or those lacking adequate protective shelters, are prohibited from providing education services in-person.

Schools and education authorities have therefore relied heavily on remote learning. Across Ukraine, according to the Ministry of Education and Science, 12,604 schools are operational, 7,190 are holding classes in-person (57%), 2,575 are operating remotely and 2,839 are using a blended format.³⁴

The type of education (remote, in-person, blended) varies significantly amongst regions.³⁵ Within overarching standards set by the central government, regions have a degree of

“

I won't have the opportunity to study in this shelter because I'm in my last year, but at least my younger sister will study in safety.

FGD respondent (girl), learning centre

”

autonomy in curriculum selection and how they provide educational services. Parents can also choose how their children learn, including remote learning for those residing abroad or in different cities, or when they have concerns over the safety of their children.

Save the Children's findings

Remarkably, particularly given the fact that those surveyed included the regions of Ukraine most affected by conflict, 93% of surveyed children report that they attend school (in-person, remote or blended), with no recent interruptions or disruptions to their education. This is a testament to the success of the efforts by the authorities, educators, parents, and children to continue the education of children in Ukraine despite the immense challenges and barriers to do so.

Furthermore, 78% of respondents either “agree” (54%) or “strongly agree” (24%) that access to education is both equitable and inclusive regardless of gender, with only 7% reporting that they disagree with this statement. 68% of respondents either “agree” (55%) or “strongly agree” (13%) that access to education is equitable and inclusive regardless of place of origin, with only 11% disagreeing.

Challenges with remote and blended learning

44% of parents surveyed said their children are learning remotely. This the most common method of learning across the surveyed sample, whether displaced, returnee or host, and is particularly evident in regions closer to the frontline, specifically the South, North-Northeast and East-Southeast.

Importantly, 69% of parents surveyed said they are either “positive” (52%) or “very positive” (17%) about the suitability of online education as a short-term alternative to in-person learning.

Despite this overall feeling of the suitability of remote learning in the circumstances, survey respondents raised that there are several barriers and technical issues which undermine its effectiveness:

- 79% of respondents report that poor internet connection is the main obstacle faced by children in accessing online education services. This was reported relatively evenly and consistently regardless of residency status, and as a particular challenge for respondents in the East-Southeast, South and Northwest-West-Southwest.

- Lack of hardware devices (42%) is another considerable obstacle for children in accessing online education services, particularly for respondents in the East-Southeast and South. As one child in a focus group discussion in Mykolaiv stated 'My phone freezes, and it's hard to hear. And... that's all'.
- Respondents in regions closer to frontline conflict activity are disproportionately impacted by poor internet and a lack of devices, and this challenge was reported more frequently by IDP households.
- Nearly 2 in 5 respondents reported "electricity shortages" as a key barrier, an indication of the impact of Russian Federation's attacks on energy infrastructure on education of children in the country. This was reported as a more pressing obstacles for children in the Capital and South.
- Children interviewed often face some or all of these challenges: "sometimes they turn off the lights and almost every day they turn off the internet" as one boy in the South told Save the Children.
- Other challenges noted by respondents include "unsuitable household space" (35%) and "lack of adult assistance" (30%).

Remote learning does not always refer to "online" or synchronous learning using platforms like Zoom, Viber and so on. Especially for those with limited internet connectivity, remote learning can also encompass recorded lessons, self-study or the completion of tasks set by teachers over SMS or email.

Authorities in the East and North of the country (e.g. Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk, Chernihiv) mostly use remote learning due to security concerns based on the proximity of above mentioned cities to the line of contact or along the border with the Russian Federation, and children in these regions face the challenges – and the risk of exposure to the conflict – far higher than those in other regions.

Of the 44% of children receiving education services via remote learning, results are relatively consistent across boys (40%) and girls (38%) within IDP households while the proportion of girls receiving remote learning within resident households (48%) is noticeably higher than boys (33%).

“

The quality of the lessons is completely satisfactory, but the children are not motivated to learn.

Parent

”

Quality of remote and blended learning

Respondents to Save the Children's survey were generally divided in their opinion on the quality of remote learning. 35% of respondents said that remote education services are either strong

(33%) or very strong (2%), 28% believe that they are either weak (25%) or very weak (3%).



Primary school classroom in the Kharkiv underground school. Photo credit: Anastasiia Zahoskina/Save the Children

Children study in an underground school in Kharkiv.

In Kharkiv, the city government decided to equip a space for schoolchildren in the metro and prepared for a separate underground school.

Save the Children provided special tablets and headphones for schoolchildren to make classes even more varied and interesting.

37% said they were neutral about the quality of remote education.

Positive perceptions were particularly high amongst IDP households, while negative perceptions of remote learning are particularly and consistently high amongst respondents who both attended school remotely and in-person (blended).

When asked about quality, “lack of face-to-face time with teachers” (57%) was cited as a main reason for the low quality of remote

education services. Amongst other notable reasons for the low quality of remote education services include “inconsistent schedules” (39%), was reported most commonly by those whose children are using varying formats of learning.



Iryna* and her daughter Mariia*, 8 in Zaporizhzhia. Photo credit: Anastasiia Zahoskina/Save the Children

“

Mariia*, 8, lives with her mother, father, and 11-year-old brother in Zaporizhzhia. The children are very frightened by the war and the explosions they often hear in their city.

Due to heavy shelling in October 2022, the family was forced to leave their home for a month. Then they came back. Iryna* says that her children slept in the corridor for a year and a half because of the frequent attacks on their city.

Mariia* is in the second grade, but her entire learning experience has been online because of the war. Iryna*, Mariia's* mother, says that online learning slows down her daughter's progress: "She doesn't meet her teachers. But in the offline learning mode, there is a teacher who monitors, answers questions, and says what is wrong."

To fill the gap in Mariia's* education and lack of communication, her mother takes the girl to the Digital Learning Centre run by partner Posmishka and Save the Children, with support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (FMFA). There, Mariia* can study and develop her creativity as well as play and talk with peers.

”

In addition to survey data, teachers and educators interviewed by Save the Children said that children's increasing reliance on digital devices is affecting their communication and social skills. Maryna*, a teacher in a village in the Kherson region, said: "There are no schools that operate in-person in our community. And the importance of school education is not about good marks and learning itself, but in developing communication skills, socialization, capability to get along with peers and with adults."

Children put the challenge of lack of classroom interaction and school socialising when learning remotely in more blunt terms 'There is no one to talk to, it's boring. My legs are numb from sitting', one boy told Save the Children.

Preference for in-person education, despite challenges

In contrast to the perception of remote learning, most survey respondents were positive about their children attending school in-person. Overall, 60% of parents and caregivers report that they hold either “positive” (33%) or “very positive” (27%) attitudes towards children attending in-person education services.

Further from the front line, and therefore more likely to be attending school in-person, the highest levels of positive attitudes are concentrated in the Capital, the Northwest-West-Southwest and, to a lesser extent, the South, where some locations, such as Odesa, are less directly or regularly impacted by conflict.

75% of respondents said that amongst the reasons for their positive attitude, “continuing education” is the most important, followed by interaction with peers (70%). This was important for children who participated in focus groups too. As one boy said, “I would like lessons to be held here at the school and everyone to study here as before. The whole class.” Another boy from Mykolaiv said, “I dream that the war will end so that we can go to school and learn.”

Other notable factors that inform positive attitudes towards children attending school in-person include the quality of teaching and teachers (46%), because parents need to work (44%) and the better access to equipment and resources (35%). The consistency of these

Figure 2. Challenges with Remote and Blended Learning

| | Host / Resident | IDP | Returnee | Grand Total |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|-----|----------|-------------|
| Internet Connection | 79% | 79% | 80% | 79% |
| Lack of Hardware Devices | 38% | 51% | 39% | 42% |
| Electricity Shortages | 43% | 37% | 24% | 39% |
| Unsuitable Household Space | 37% | 33% | 27% | 35% |
| Lack of Adult Assistance | 28% | 32% | 34% | 30% |
| Insufficient Knowledge of Platforms | 19% | 21% | 26% | 20% |
| Lack of Digital Capacities | 22% | 14% | 21% | 20% |
| Psychological Distress | 11% | 12% | 9% | 11% |
| Disabilities | 2% | 2% | 3% | 2% |
| Other | 8% | 5% | 17% | 8% |

responses reveals that the positive factors pulling children towards in-person education services are widely shared. As one surveyed caregiver said, “online is not a substitute for regular school.”

Key informants interviewed highlighted that schools in western regions are actively switching back to in-person learning. Communities choosing to return to in-person schooling must frequently administer sessions in two shifts due to the lack of capacity in existing protective shelters. This is especially so in Northern and Eastern parts of Ukraine (e.g. Kyiv, Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk). However, the State Emergency Services in June 2022 stipulated that the requirement for protective shelters is mandatory and applies to all regions of Ukraine. By extension, a school is only permitted to host as many children and adults at any given time that can fit safely into the shelter.

Of the 27% of respondents who had negative views of children attending in-person



There is not a single teacher or parent who does not understand the benefits of "face-to-face" learning.

Teacher, Zaporizhzhia



education services, the lack of safety caused by the war and attacks on schools, cities and infrastructure was the main cause. Ninety-three per cent cite “child safety on the way to school” as the main reason behind these negative attitudes, followed by “attacks on education infrastructure” (82%).

Children’s perspectives on quality and needed improvements

Fifty-six per cent of surveyed children report that they are either “happy” (45%) or “very happy” (11%) with their received levels of education and learning support.

Thirteen per cent of respondents report that they are either “unhappy” (12%) or “very unhappy” (1%), and 31% say they were “neutral”. There was a slightly higher proportion of “unhappy” girls compared to boys surveyed in resident and returnee households, in addition to the noticeably higher share of boys in IDP households that express “unhappy” attitudes compared to girls.

Children interviewed expressed mixed feelings about their education. 12-year-old Anna*, from Kherson, must study online using a smartphone with a broken screen, says, “The teachers are good, especially our class teacher.” But she also misses in-person schooling, she adds. “Somehow, I would like to study at school but not online, at school to talk with teachers, with children so that there is communication with friends after all. My friend lives far away, I would like to talk to her.”



Anton*, 11, poses for portrait during online classes at his home in Mykolaiv region. Photo credit: Artem Rybakov/Save The Children

When asked what would improve their education, over half (53%) said that they needed “more interesting lessons”. They also said that they needed “equipment (e.g. laptops or tablets)” (44%) and that their damaged schools need to be repaired and fitted with protective shelters (39%).

3. MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES FOR CHILDREN

In the first year of full-scale hostilities since February 2022, the UN estimated that a large majority (75%) of parents commented that their children had symptoms of psychological trauma and 16% mentioned their children had impaired memory, shorter attention span and decreased ability to learn.³⁶ Other studies have similar findings, one in 2022 finding that around 75% of parents have indicated their children exhibited ‘special symptoms’ since the conflict began, including mood swings, increased anxiety, and sleep disorders.³⁷

As the war has continued, these concerns for the well-being and mental health of children have persisted. The UN estimates that 1.5 million are at risk of mental health issues including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety due to the conflict,³⁸ and has highlighted the impacts this will have on children’s ability to concentrate in the classroom.³⁹

Save the Children’s findings

According to teachers and educators, children across all regions are experiencing increased levels of stress and fear due to the conflict, attacks on education and school closures. Children in regions closer to the frontlines experience severe stress due to their direct exposure to shelling, bombardment, and occupation. “It’s dangerous in schools because an

ordinary basement can't protect you from a rocket," a Representative Dept of Education in the Vinnytsia region said, "we are all worried."

Emotional burnout and chronic stress amongst children are common. "Children face the risk of separation from family members, and there are many children living in daily fear of losing their father or relatives" who are in the armed forces, said a teacher in the Chernihiv region. Interviewees mention that children have become demotivated and, in some cases, suffer depression and PTSD.

In addition to these direct mental health impacts of damage to their schools, the disruption to education caused by the conflict removes schools, which are not only places to learn, but



Kateryna, 16 passes a test in a classroom of a school which she attends since her school was severely damaged.
Photo credit: Oleksandr Khomenko/Save the Children*

for children to socialize and develop with their peers, and a protective environment where they can access services and support. The risks creating a negative feedback loop where the conflict and damage to educational facilities impacts children's mental health, and the mechanisms they could rely on to address these challenges – a sense of normality through school attendance, socializing and sharing experiences with peers, accessing services - are disrupted or unavailable. "Socialization is especially important for children who have been in stressful situations," said a DLC coordinator in the Chernihiv region.

Even for those attending school in-person, frequent air raid alerts and the necessity to stay in shelters cause significant emotional distress and impacts the ability of children to focus on studies. "It is very difficult emotionally and morally. Periodic air raids, blackouts, lack of Internet... Children are afraid," a teacher in the Lviv region said.

Survey data reinforces the prevalence of mental health concerns highlighted by key

“

I observe increased nervousness, anxiety, fear for the future in children.

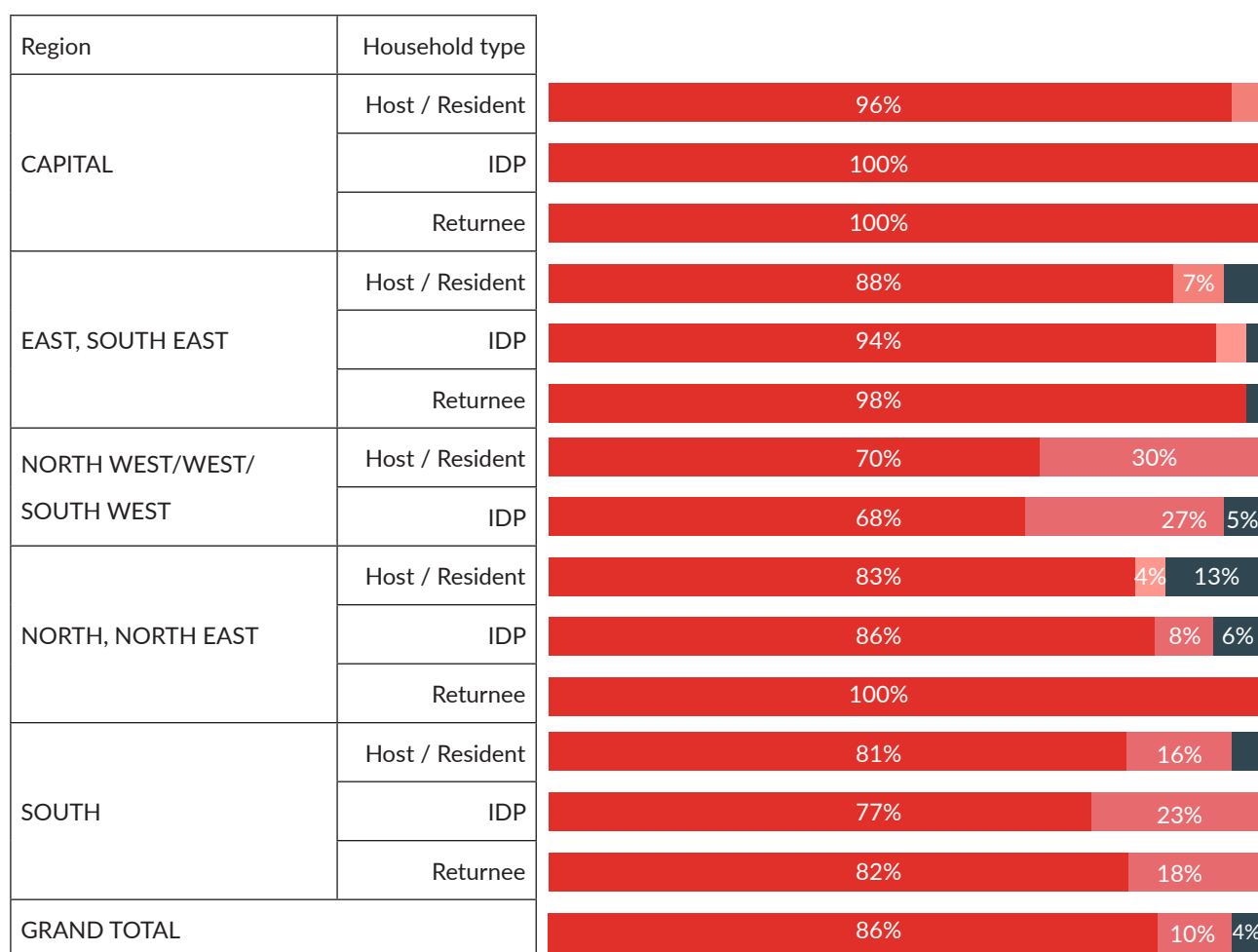
Some children react critically to air raid sirens.

Teacher in the Dnipropetrovsk region

”

informants, with 86% of respondents reporting that children are experiencing the emotional and psychological effects of ongoing conflict. The levels are very high across the country, regardless of whether they are displaced, returnees or residents who have not fled (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Impact on children's mental health



DNA ■ Yes ■ No ■

These effects on children manifest themselves in several ways. Most commonly (73%) respondents report that children feel unsafe or fearful. High percentages report a disinterest in learning (64%) and sadness or low self-confidence (54%).

One third report their children experience anger and frustration, with higher percentages in the regions most affected by conflict and insecurity.

Broadly, the emotional and psychological effects the ongoing conflict has on children are not only widespread, but the ways in which they impact and subsequently affect the behaviours of children across geographical clusters are similar.

Figure 4. Psychological impact of war/behaviour change by Geographical Cluster Limited access to mental health and psychosocial support services

| | CAPITAL | EAST, SOUTH EAST | NORTH WEST/ WEST/SOUTH WEST | NORTH, NORTH EAST | SOUTH | Grand Total |
|---------------------------------|---------|------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|-------|-------------|
| Feeling Unsafe or Fearful | 73% | 76% | 75% | 68% | 61% | 73% |
| Disinterest in Learning | 68% | 71% | 42% | 62% | 55% | 64% |
| Sadness and Low Self-Confidence | 57% | 53% | 69% | 36% | 70% | 54% |
| Anger and Frustration | 38% | 22% | 28% | 39% | 36% | 30% |
| Quiet and Solitary Behaviour | 19% | 29% | 38% | 22% | 57% | 29% |
| Lack of Motivation to Play | 22% | 11% | 5% | 32% | 2% | 16% |
| Loss of Appetite | 8% | 6% | 2% | 31% | 7% | 11% |
| Other | 4% | 10% | 6% | 4% | 11% | 8% |

Most teachers, child protection and mental health professionals interviewed by Save the Children say that their regions have some form of MHPSS services, typically offered through school psychologists and social educators, alongside some external support from NGOs and civil society organisations.

Psychologists, social educators, and medical professionals are also making individual efforts to address mental health issues by educating parents, discussing the issues on social media, organising lectures and seminars.

However, these professionals also report a widespread shortage of professional MHPSS staff, and in particular an insufficient number of psychologists trained to work in wartime conditions. A teacher in the Donetsk region said psychological support services are mostly provided by international organizations and private donors, and that “teachers and

psychologists of educational institutions have to learn how to work with trauma, attend training specifically to work with children suffering from the conflict.”

Some regions, such as Dnipropetrovsk, even report that these services are non-existent amid funding cuts as the national budget is stretched as the Government of Ukraine prioritizes resourcing the military effort. Interviewees also emphasized that the lack of consistent and structured national-level programmes tailored to the needs of the most vulnerable groups means that the resources which do exist are not put to best use. One headteacher in the Zaporizhzhia region said, “The small number of psychologists in schools cannot meet the real needs of children [or] provide quality assistance to everyone who needs it”.

The general weakness in the availability of mental health and psychosocial support services for children was reflected in the survey data. Only 19% of surveyed respondents report that the availability of these services is strong. Conversely, 30% of respondents report that the availability of these services is either weak (17%) or very weak (13%).⁴⁰

Notably, there is a higher percentage of respondents whose children are in in-person schooling who have a positive view of the availability of these services (26%) than either remoter or blended (both 14%).⁴¹ This suggests that, within the overall context of weak MHPSS support, children who attend school are more likely to be able to access these services.

4. SPECIFIC NEEDS AND EQUITABLE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

The impact of the war in Ukraine on children’s education is not uniform across the country. Regions face unique challenges, as shown throughout the sections above, and in particular those which are closest to the fighting face the greatest risks of damage to schools and kindergartens, and rural areas facing specific problems.

Beyond the geographic differences, however, some children face existing barriers to education that have been exacerbated by the war.

Key informants interviewed by Save the Children in almost all regions report a lack of adapted facilities, such as ramps, restrooms, and classrooms, making physical access to education challenging for children with disabilities. They also point to a lack of trained assistant teachers and thematic specialists as well as budget allocations to cater for the specific needs of these children. While some areas like Kyiv City have inclusive resource centres, others report near complete or total absence of facilities and resources for inclusion. “The level of inclusiveness of schools is very low [and] understanding usually ends

DETERIORATING EDUCATION OUTCOMES

While other countries were emerging and recovering from the dramatic disruptions to education caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, children's education in Ukraine was thrown into even further disarray by the war. Recent studies point to significant and growing gaps in knowledge and skills amongst children in Ukraine. For example, already in 2022, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found 'significantly' lower rates of proficiency in mathematics, reading, and science among 15-year-old students in Ukraine than in other OECD countries, highlighting the extent to which attacks on education are impacting significantly on the lives, rights, and future of children in Ukraine.⁴²

A 2023 survey found that 85% of parents said that these learning gaps will have an impact on the development and opportunities available to their children.⁴³ Similarly, UNICEF found that 57% of teachers identify a deterioration in language abilities, 45% note a reduction in mathematics skills and 52% highlight the reduction in foreign language abilities.⁴⁴ These figures demonstrate some of the main challenges confronted by the Government of Ukraine in maintaining education infrastructure and improving education services amid intensified conflict and greater demands on its limited resources.

with the presence of ramps," an NGO worker in Kyiv said, adding that inclusiveness is "little studied at the level of school administration and the education system as a whole. At the moment, no school in the city is adapted for children with physical or mental problems."

Of survey respondents, 51% of respondents either "agree" (41%) or "strongly agree" (10%) that access to education is equitable and inclusive regardless of disability. Conversely, 22% report that they either "disagree" (18%) or "strongly disagree" (4%) with this statement.

Children and their families who have been displaced internally also reported specific issues. Approximately half of the displaced respondents said that IDPs face challenges in accessing the education system because of "documentation issues". A quarter referred to challenges related to "linguistic and cultural barriers", likely related to the fact that Russian is more commonly spoken in the areas of origin of most IDPs. Perceived cultural differences between eastern and western Ukrainian communities, including language, have been heightened in government-controlled areas in the context of the war post-2022. Relatedly, amongst the other notable sources of challenges mentioned by survey respondents, particularly in the East-Southeast include "negative perceptions of IDPs" (49).

Teachers interviewed in most regions emphasised that IDPs need support with education services and necessary tools, such as tablets, smartphones, and internet connectivity for remote learning, as well as the fact that they need support to have adequate accommodation, recommending that these interventions should be specifically tailored to address the most acute and immediate needs of IDPs in each locality.

Of note, however, is that of the participants in Save the Children's survey, IDPs were the



Damian, 12, likes his teachers in Chernivtsi where his family moved fleeing the war.
Photo credit: Yuliia Achymovych\Save the Children*

most likely to have received humanitarian assistance in the last six months.⁴⁵ Caregiver responses illustrate that IDP households not only record the highest average monthly income compared to their resident and returnee counterparts, but they also maintain the highest average monthly surplus.⁴⁶

5. STRAINS ON THE SYSTEM AND CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS

Teachers and educational staff face enormous challenges, and this contributes to the overall strain on the education system. With over, 43,000 teachers displaced either internally or abroad, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science acknowledged this issue required managers of education institutions to make their own decisions on the viability of in-person education services based on availability of teachers.⁴⁷ Teachers are also leaving their roles due to retirement, low salaries and the longer-term impact of war-related stress.

“

I might go blind soon because I have been using my smartphone for years to study."
Myroslav*, 12 years old, from the Kharkiv region, says, "How long have I been using it this way – for two or three years?"

He told Save the Children some of the challenges he has experienced with remote learning: "There is a bad connection at home. It is only now that we have just set up Wi-Fi. So, it should be better. Sometimes, I can't connect to the Math lesson. I sent a request to join the online class; the teacher approved it, but I didn't manage to join."

Even when his Wi-Fi is working, there are planned electricity outages, and his teacher also faces technical issues: "Our English teacher now lives in Izyum. She has a very bad connection and internet in Izyum. Although we have Wi-Fi now, she consistently failed to connect to the lesson. She assigned tasks for us to complete on our own."

When electricity is cut off, he must go to the school to get printed materials to complete on his own. "I am getting lower grades due to this way of studying" he says.

Of his friends, he said, "we miss each other. [We would like] to get together to go to school. It's enjoyable to run through school corridors during breaks. When we came to school for the first time after the village was no longer occupied...We were running around, we were happy. It was so amazing."

"However, it seems that we will continue with remote learning until the war comes to an end".

”

The impacts are not geographically uniform. Since the beginning of the war, the education department in the Kharkiv region reports that it has lost nearly 3,000 of 21,500 teachers.⁴⁸ The resource strains are particularly acute in rural areas and smaller settlements. As one teacher in the Dnipropetrovsk region said, “There is a staff shortage in smaller settlements or communities...Good specialists do not see their future in smaller cities.”

A Needs Assessment Survey conducted by the Education Cluster reported that up to 25% of teaching personnel were also engaged in humanitarian duties, adding to their workload and stress. Teachers have also reported challenges with online learning, with 59% reporting technological issues, and half reporting challenges with involving all students in the lesson and checking learning.⁴⁹ Based on survey data by the UN, 90% of teachers identify their psychological state as “deteriorating” and 55% as “significantly deteriorating.”⁵⁰ The vast majority of teachers in Ukraine, and therefore those who are facing these challenges, are women (82%).

Underlying these multiple challenges, the war has led the Government of Ukraine to redirect funds away from the education sector at a time when it is in greater need of investment and resources. In particular, the Government of Ukraine is under immediate pressure to increase defence spending at the expense of public and social services. For example, in 2023 the Government of Ukraine allocated 87.5 billion hryvnias (USD2.45bn) for teachers' salaries, which is approximately 20% less than the figure allocated the previous



Throughout his academic years, Myroslav has only spent half of the time actually in school, while the rest has been in remote settings due to the coronavirus pandemic and now the war. Photo credit: Anastasiia Zahoskina/Save the Children*

year, out of an entire budget for Ukraine's Ministry of Education that amounts to 156 billion hryvnias (USD 4.34bn). Under these circumstances, local authorities are compelled to scramble money together to maintain and supplement teachers' wages. In addition, local authorities are taking various measures, such as cutting bonuses, scrapping payments for extra work, and encouraging teachers to sign-up for unpaid leave.⁵¹

Partners and allies of the Government of Ukraine, principally the EU and its Member States and the USA, have provided significant bilateral funding to support the governments, some of which is dedicated to the functioning of public services, but which also includes military assistance.⁵²

Humanitarian organisations – local and national organisations, as well as INGOs and the UN – fill the most acute gaps in the education sector. However, there is currently a 45% funding gap for education in the 2024 Humanitarian Response Plan,⁵ compared to last year education in the HRP was 85% funded and a gap of USD 17m in the Education Cannot Wait multi-year resilience plan.



Maryna*, a school director in Kherson region, holds a bell that once signaled the start and end of the academic year. Due to security, it's been silent as local children study online. Photo credit: Artem Rybakov/Save The Children

Save the Children's findings

Teachers from eastern regions of Ukraine told Save the Children they have faced redundancy and that their rights under labour laws had not been respected. They also said they felt responsible for the lives of children attending in-person educational services, which exacerbates feelings of pressure and anxiety. A teacher in the Dnipropetrovsk region explained "Today, teachers have to take on the functions of psychologists. Find an approach, motivate the child to gain knowledge, regardless of the form of education."

Save the Children's survey of teachers found that:

- Over 75% of teachers experience stress or anxiety related to their work to some degree. Teachers have their own coping strategies for managing their workload and self-care during distance education, with tactics ranging from resting and relaxing to practicing time management to maintaining a work/life balance.
- 22% of teachers feel safe where they live and work.

The pressure and stress teachers are under is compounded by a lack of systematic psychological support, which is either limited in scope or unavailable. Even when it is available - by a range of actors, including local educational authorities, NGOs, volunteer organisations and professional development institutes - teachers often do not use the services due to the lack of time.

Reflecting some of these structural issues, the respondents to Save the Children's survey of parents, while emphasizing the impact of the conflict in the first instance also highlighted insufficient learning resources and equipment (45%), irrelevant subjects and curricula (30%) and unqualified or understaffed teachers (28%) as amongst the other main reasons for the low-quality inperson education services. Notably, these are similar across geographic clusters, suggesting they are the result of issues with the education system as a whole and not related to direct proximity to active conflict. Parents also raised the issue of class sizes: "You need an individual approach to each child...Teachers have neither the strength nor the opportunity to do this, especially if there are 50 children in the class."

"Charitable foundations and humanitarian organizations play a very important role," a school principal in the Donetsk region told Save the Children, and key informants highlighted the importance of refurbishment of schools, in particular equipping protective shelters, providing educational materials and the broader assistance to families which helps them. Several highlighted the importance of organizing extracurricular activities, particularly those which provide "psychological relief to children and teachers" as one Deputy principal in the Dnipropetrovsk region said.

EDUCATION IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

Schools that are in areas controlled by the Russian Federation or have been during the war, are amongst the most impacted. Some towns in the occupied territories in the Kharkiv and Donetsk regions, for instance, have reportedly witnessed a collapse of basic educational services.⁵⁴

Russian authorities require students to attend in-person classes in the Russian curriculum. The changing of the curriculum in areas it controls has been the policy of Russian authorities since 2014, introducing the Russian curriculum in Crimea and prioritising Russian language instruction, for instance, with consistent reports of threats to teachers and educators to comply with new regulations.⁵⁵

This has been greatly expanded in scope and scale as more areas of Ukraine have come under occupation by the Russian Federation since 2022. Russian authorities have prohibited online study in the Ukrainian school system and changed the language of instruction from Ukrainian to Russian, and "attempts to resist or circumvent Russia's educational policies on the occupied territories, open or tacit, by the teaching staff, families and school children, exposes them to coercion and the risk of arrest and abduction".

Teachers in occupied territory face the prospect of being coerced into teaching at newly reopened schools, but also face the prospect of being charged and imprisoned by Ukrainian authorities under laws against collaboration should territory change control again.

Despite the prohibition on children in occupied territory continuing their education remotely, about 80,000 pupils in 2023 have done so, and the Ministry of Education and Science reports that 94,000 children in occupied areas continue to receive education in 1,230 schools in government-controlled areas.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The war in Ukraine continues to have a dramatic impact on the ability of children to enjoy their right to an education, has worsened existing educational disparities, and has led to significant learning gaps.

Despite these significant challenges, children, parents and teachers, and Ukraine's education system overall, have shown a remarkable resilience through innovative strategies and adaptation efforts. Continued support from governments, donors, and the international community is crucial to mitigate the impact of the conflict on education and ensure children's right to education is upheld.

Ultimately, however, for children in Ukraine to enjoy an unfettered right to education, the widespread violations of international humanitarian law which have characterized the conflict must be stopped.

The Government of the Russian Federation should:

- Immediately cease all attacks on schools, kindergartens and other civilian infrastructure, and refrain from using explosive weapons with wide area effects
- Avoid using schools and kindergartens for military purposes
- Endorse the Safe Schools Declaration, and ensure its armed forces implement the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2601 on the protection of schools and kindergartens in armed conflict
- Ensure that the education of children in territory occupied by the Russian Federation respects their right to education, including schooling in their own language, and refrain from any form of violence or threats of violence against education personnel and students due to their work and study

The Government of Ukraine should:

- Ensure its armed forces fully implement the updated Safe Schools Declaration implementation plan and the United Nations Security Council's Resolution 2601
- Provide computers/laptops and stable internet access to children and schools, and focus immediate efforts on regions and areas which have the highest proportion of children engaging in remote or blended education, and rural areas
- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers, including on making the best use of digital technologies, educating children with diverse needs, psychological first aid for children, and techniques for managing their own well-being
- Ensure teacher's salaries are paid on time, and increased to retain teachers and attract new recruits
- Expand psychological support services for children, teachers, and families

- When rehabilitating or rebuilding schools damaged or destroyed, ensure that protective shelters are adequate for all children, and cater to special needs or children with disabilities
- As part of the EU Accession process, prioritize steps to implement the EU Strategy on Child Rights, and develop a national action plan for implementation of the European Child Guarantee to improve access to inclusive and quality education
- Regularly conduct monitoring and comprehensive surveys to identify regional and locally specific gaps and issues, and provide resources and support to local authorities to address them

Ministry of Education, regional authorities and local municipalities responsible for education should:

- Implement programmes designed to improve children's communication skills and educate them on proper emotional responses.
- Develop an effective transition process for students from remote to in-person learning, with a focus on supporting them develop communication skills and identifying any psychological problems or issues
- Support teachers and improve the quality of education by updating curricula, reducing workloads and paperwork, and introducing innovative subjects
- Organise and fund catch-up programmes that combine subject-specific learning to compensate for educational gaps and losses along with activities that improve mental health

Donors to Ukraine should:

- Continue to highlight and condemn attacks on education and other civilian infrastructure in Ukraine
- Provide budget support for the Government of Ukraine which prioritizes improving the educational system and adapting to the constraints imposed by the ongoing conflict, and with a view to long term recovery and reconstruction of the country. This should include:
 - Rebuilding and improving damaged or destroyed schools
 - Ensuring schools have effective safe spaces and shelters in which children can continue classes
 - Teacher salaries, training – particularly 'structured non-specialised' Mental health and psychosocial support for children.
- Provide funding for multi-year, sustainable programming for education, mental health and psychosocial support for children to Ukrainian NGOs, UN agencies, International NGOs and others
- Fully fund the Education Cannot Wait Multi-Year Resilience Programme in Ukraine

The UN and international humanitarian organisations should:

- Continue to highlight and condemn attacks on education and other civilian infrastructure in Ukraine
- Expand both education and mental health and psychosocial support programmes in the areas of highest need, particularly those most affected by the ongoing conflict and attacks on schools, and areas hosting high numbers of displaced children. In doing so:
 - Ensure that programme design includes children and teachers to best meet their needs, immediate priorities, capacities, abilities, priorities and preferences.
 - Ensure that analysis of needs includes but is not limited to or prioritized on the basis of displacement status
 - Support the technical capacity of authorities and Ukrainian civil society organisations to deliver quality education services

ENDNOTES

1. This survey also included one 18-year-old female and one 19-year-old male.
2. Full survey data, targeting and methodology is available upon request.
3. For further details of the assistance Save the Children provides in Ukraine see Hope Amidst War: The Ukraine Conflict Two Years On, February 2024 https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/CH1979298_Ukraine-Two-Year-Report-2024-Global-Version-SCI.pdf
4. Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, OHCHR (2024) https://ukraine.un.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/Ukraine%20-%20protection%20of%20civilians%20in%20armed%20conflict%20%28April%202024%29_ENG.pdf The real figures are likely higher, as the ongoing hostilities in some regions have led to delays in reporting and a number of sources report higher numbers of casualties
5. Nearly 2,000 children killed or injured since the escalation of war in Ukraine, UNICEF (2023) <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/nearly-2000-children-killed-or-injured-escalation-war-ukraine>
6. A Heavy Toll: The impact of one year of war on children in Ukraine, Save the Children (2023). Available at: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/a-heavy-toll/>
7. Ukraine situation, UNHCR <https://reporting.unhcr.org/ukraine-situation-global-report-2022>
8. Ukraine Refugee Situation, UNHCR <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine?utm>
9. Ukraine Situation Reports, UN OCHA <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ukraine/>
10. Ukrainian Crisis Situational Analysis Data Friendly Space (2023) https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukrainian-crisis-situational-analysis-19-december-2023?_gl=1*1jb1lnw*_ga*MTU0Njg3NTU2NS4xNzA1MzE1Mzky*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTcwNTMzODUxNS41LjEuMTcwNTMzOTQzMjYyNi4wLjA
11. Kindergartens in Ukraine reopen thanks to water repairs, UNICEF (2024) <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/en/stories/kindergartens-in-ukraine-reopen-thanks-to-water-repairs>
12. Ukraine: Two Out of Every Five Children Will Miss Out on Fulltime School as Second Academic Year Starts During War, Save the Children (2023). <https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/news/media-centre/press-releases/ukraine-two-out-of-five-children-will-miss-school>
13. Estimates vary, see saveschools.in.ua for updated statistics, available at: <https://saveschools.in.ua/en/> as well as Ukraine Common Country Analysis 2023, UN Country Team in Ukraine / UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine (2023) https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-common-country-analysis-2023?_gl=1*11v68hc*_ga*MTU0Njg3NTU2NS4xNzA1MzE1Mzky*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTcwNTMzODUxNS41LjEuMTcwNTMzOTQwOC41MC4wLjA
14. "Tanks on the Playground" Attacks on Schools and Military Use of Schools in Ukraine, Human Rights Watch (2023). https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2023/11/ukraine1123web_0.pdf
15. A chance to go back to school, NRC (2023) https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/chance-go-back-school?_gl=1*xi8rtz*_ga*MTU0Njg3NTU2NS4xNzA1MzE1Mzky*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTcwNTMzODUxNS41LjEuMTcwNTMzOTQxOS4zOS4wLjA
16. 'We must not lose a generation' Knight, C. (2023). <https://www.eib.org/en/stories/russia-invasion-ukraine-investment-schools>
17. Eighty-nine per cent of students could not attend due to electricity cuts, and 49% pointed to air alarms as a barrier, Ukraine: Education Sector Assessment in Conflict-Affected Areas, February 2023. REACH Initiative / UNHCR (2023) <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-education-sector-assessment-conflict-affected-areas-february-2023>
18. Elsewhere, the proportion of respondents reporting that school infrastructure has been impacted and damaged by conflict activity is lower and consistent across the remaining geographical clusters of the Capital (28%), Northwest-West-Southwest (27%), and South (25%).
19. This discrepancy may be partly explained either by the prevalence of remote learning in the South, with respondents thereby more equipped to comment on perceived functionality over damage, or by the relatively small sample of respondents in the South (55), which may limit results to specific local experiences.
20. These responses are both high and consistent across geographical clusters, especially the South, East-Southeast and Northwest-West-Southwest.
21. Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, 8 June 1977, arts. 51 and 52 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/api-1977>
22. Geneva Convention IV, 1949, art. 147 <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gciv-1949>; Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, art. 85, ibid.
23. Attacks on schools and hospitals can lead to parties to conflict being listed in the annexes of the annual report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict.
24. Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, A/ CONF.183/9 (July 17, 1998), arts. 8(2)(b)(ix). <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/rome-statute-international-criminal-court>
25. Geneva Convention (IV) on Civilians, 1949 - Article 50, op cit.
26. Geneva Convention (IV) on Civilians, 1949 - Article 24, op cit.
27. Safe Schools Declaration, https://protectingeducation.org/wp-content/uploads/documents/documents_safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf
28. On Approval of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/npas/pro-zatverdzhennya-planu-zahodiv-shchodo-realizaciyi-deklaraciyi-pro-bezpeku-s408211>
29. On updating the Action Plan for the Safe Schools Declaration, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine <https://mon.gov.ua/news/pro-aktualizatsiyu-planu-zahodiv-shchodo-deklaratsii-pro-bezpeku-shkil>
30. On 15 March 2022, Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science developed a "Concept Plan on the Functioning to the Education System, Research and Innovation sector of Ukraine during Martial Law and Further Reconstruction Period related to Russian Aggression".
31. Ukrainian children to attend school underground, Reuters (2023) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LxD3tJdGmAM>
32. Back to School in Ukraine -- Pupils Prepare Bomb Shelters Before Lessons Restart, Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty (2023) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2ZxqHFUIBM>
33. All schools in Ukraine are required to have a certified protective shelter onsite or within 100 metres.
34. Ministry of Education and Science data, November 2023.
35. In Ukraine, the responsibility for education is shared between different levels of government, such as city councils in urban communities, with additional oversight from local education departments, while school administrations oversee running education facilities.
36. Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, UN OCHA, December 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-december-2022-enuk>
37. Changes in Children's Lives During the War, Gradus (2022) https://gradus.app/documents/211/Children_Report_Gradus_28042022.pdf
38. War in Ukraine pushes generation of children to the brink, warns UNICEF. UNICEF (2023) <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/war-ukraine-pushes-generation-children-brink-warns-unicef#:~:text=An%20estimated%201.5%20million%20children,basic%20services%20have%20been%20devastated.>
39. Ukraine Common Country Analysis 2023. UN Country Team in Ukraine / UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Ukraine (2023). https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-common-country-analysis-2023?_gl=1*11v68hc*_ga*MTU0Njg3NTU2NS4xNzA1MzE1Mzky*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTcwNTMzODUxNS41LjEuMTcwNTMzOTQwOC41MC4wLjA
40. Furthermore, the 51% of respondents expressing "neutral" attitudes may also be indicative in highlighting the relative lack of familiarity or knowledge across education modalities regarding child protection or MHPSS services. Similarly, 45% responded "Do Not Know" when asked which actor is primarily responsible for providing child protection and MHPSS services.
41. A higher proportion of those in remote learning (29%) and blended (57%) had a negative view (either weak or very weak), compared with those in in-person schooling
42. PISA 2022 Results: Factsheets Ukrainian regions (18 of 27). OECD (2023) <https://www.oecd.org/publication/pisa-2022-results/country-notes/ukrainian-regions-18-of-27-78043794/>
43. War and Education. How a Year of the Full-scale Invasion Influenced Ukrainian Schools, Cedos 2023 <https://cedos.org.ua/en/researches/war-and-education-how-a-year-of-the-full-scale-invasion-influenced-ukrainian-schools/>
44. Ukraine Humanitarian Situation Report No. 31, UNICEF, 2023 <https://www.unicef.org/media/145526/file/Ukraine%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20No.%2031%20for%2031%20August%202023%20.pdf>
45. 51% of parents and caregivers reported that they had not received humanitarian assistance in the last six months. This figure is particularly high amongst resident respondents (69%) while remaining low and similar across both IDP (22%) and returnee (29%) respondents.
46. While respondents across all residency types record an average monthly surplus, which in of itself is a positive trend amid ongoing instability, the moderately yet notably higher surplus reported by IDP households (2,200 UAH) over resident (1,900 UAH) or returnee (700 UAH) households indicates that the humanitarian assistance provided to IDPs may disproportionately advantage them over their community counterparts.
47. Ukrainian Education Ministry reports on number of schools destroyed in country by Russia, Ukrainska Pravda, July 2023 <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2023/07/26/7412943/>
48. War in Ukraine has another front line: The classroom, Politico, January 2023 <https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-war-education-classroom-front-line-russia-occupation/>
49. Ukraine: Education Sector Assessment in Conflict-Affected Areas, February 2023. REACH Initiative / UNHCR (2023) <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-education-sector-assessment-conflict-affected-areas-february-2023>
50. Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, UN OCHA, December 2022 <https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-humanitarian-needs-overview-2023-december-2022-enuk>
51. The cost of war leaves Ukraine struggling to pay its teachers, Open Democracy, April 2023 <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/ukraine-war-austerity-teachers-wages/>
52. See for example the EU's Ukraine Facility <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/ukraine-facility/> and for a broader breakdown of funding How Much U.S. Aid Is Going to Ukraine?, Council on Foreign Relations, May 2024 <https://www.cfr.org/article/how-much-us-aid-going-ukraine>
53. Ukraine Humanitarian Response Plan 2024, Financial Tracking Service, UN OCHA, accessed June 2024 <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1177/summary>
54. Ukraine: Humanitarian Situation Monitoring: Settlement Vulnerability Index: Areas Closer to the Front Line. REACH Initiative (2023) https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/ukraine-humanitarian-situation-monitoring-settlement-vulnerability-index-areas-closer-front-line-october-2023-enuk?_gl=1*14w0xz9*_ga*MTU0Njg3NTU2NS4xNzA1MzE1Mzky*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTcwNTMzODUxNS41LjEuMTcwNTMzOTM1NC4zNS4wLjA
55. Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine), Para 197, OHCHR (2017) https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Countries/UA/Crimea2014_2017_EN.pdf

“I want a peaceful sky”:

**Education and children’s wellbeing
in wartime Ukraine**