Ukraine

Flash Update #1

24 February 2026

Four Years of War: The ongoing Impact on children and the adapted response of CFA members.

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This Flash Update was prepared by WeWorld, CFD and EDUCO. It provides an overview of the humanitarian impact of four years of full-scale war in Ukraine, with a specific focus on children, and outlines how WeWorld, CFD and EDUCO have adapted their response to address the prolonged and cumulative effects of conflict on children and caregivers.

TESTIMONIES

Illia is nine years old. Displaced from the Kharkiv region after his home was destroyed by shelling, he now lives with a constant sense of fear. Sleep rarely comes easily. He relives the moment his family fled, over and over again. In his drawings, he expresses what he cannot yet fully put into words: a dark shape that “swallows” everything he loves.

Through MHPSS sessions, both he and his mother began to acknowledge not only fear, but grief — a turning point that opened space for emotional healing. Support now focuses on creating small “islands of safety” through play, art, and consistent care.

Natalia, 12, shares a different but equally painful reality.

“My father is at the front. We suffer a lot because some years he only comes for our birthdays, and other years not even that. That’s why I like coming to this centre. I see more children and I can talk to the psychologist. It gives me a lot of peace of mind.”

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SITUATION UPDATE

Since the escalation of the war in February 2022, Ukraine's humanitarian crisis has evolved from an emergency shock into a protracted protection and well-being crisis, especially for children. After four years of war, repeated displacement, loss, disruption of services, and chronic exposure to violence have deeply affected children's development, mental health, education, and sense of safety. An estimated 12.7 million people remain in need, including millions of children who have grown up almost entirely under wartime conditions.

Children have experienced multiple displacements, prolonged periods of remote or interrupted schooling, family separation, and continuous exposure to air-raid alerts, shelling, and destruction. Damage to more than 2,800 schools since 2022 has forced many children into unstable learning arrangements, undermining educational continuity and peer support. More than 4.7 million children in Ukraine face difficulties accessing education services. Educational disruption is no longer temporary: many children are now facing their fourth consecutive school year affected by the war, increasing the risks of learning loss, dropout, and social isolation.

At the same time, cumulative stress is manifesting as psychosocial distress. Caregivers and teachers report rising levels of anxiety, sleep disorders, concentration difficulties, and behavioral changes among children. For children in frontline and newly affected areas, insecurity, damaged infrastructure, and limited access to safe services further heighten protection risks. The war's impact on children is therefore not only immediate but also developmental and long-term.

KEY DATA

4300 VOUCHERS
distributed to families with children in frontline and IDP-hosting regions, reaching 15,500 beneficiaries (8,600 children)

2400 BENEFICIARIES
supported through MHPSS and cash assistance in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv regions, including 190 families assisted in Kherson following the Kakhovka HPP explosion and 1,400 individuals receiving winter and essential humanitarian support

27 CHILDREN'S CAMP SHIFTS ORGANISED
reaching 2,400 beneficiaries (1,570 children)

5 CHILD-FRIENDLY SPACES
and mobile teams operating in frontline-affected areas, engaging 2,000 children in PSS and recreational activities and providing MHPSS support to 500 schools

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3,000 CHILDREN
supported through remedial education and catch-up classes, and 16,000 children reached through distance learning programmes

19 FAMILY HOUSE-TYPE FACILITIES
and 2 institutes supported to strengthen alternative care and child protection services

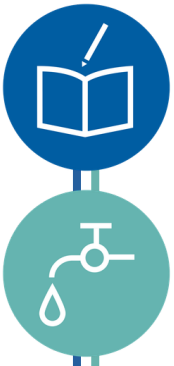
150+ HOUSES REHABILITATED
13 HEALTH FACILITIES REHABILITATED,
150+ HYGIENE KITS DISTRIBUTED TO VULNERABLE HOUSEHOLDS

MEMBERS' INTERVENTION

After four years of conflict, the members of ChildFund Alliance have progressively shifted from short-term emergency assistance to a sustained, child-centred, multi-sectoral response addressing the long-term psychosocial, educational, protection, and living-condition impacts of war on children and caregivers. Their interventions prioritise children's rights, with particular emphasis on well-being, protection, and access to quality education, ensuring that displaced and conflict-affected children not only continue learning but also receive the emotional and psychosocial support essential for their development and resilience.

The operational model combines safe service delivery points with mobile outreach, structured MHPSS integration within education programming, and support to the national Care Reform process in Kyiv, alongside close coordination with local child-care systems — including family-type homes and institutional care networks — to guarantee continuity of care and protective environments in an unstable and evolving context. Key components include:

- **Unified cash and voucher assistance:** Distribution of vouchers and direct cash to vulnerable families with children, prioritising frontline areas.
- **Child-Friendly Spaces and safe learning environments:** In Kharkiv, Child-Friendly Spaces operate as stable reference points for children living in prolonged crisis. They provide routine, structured learning support, creative and therapeutic activities, and ongoing emotional support.
- **Multipurpose centres:** In the Odessa region, multipurpose centres provide PSS and recreational activities that promote children's emotional well-being, social interaction, and resilience.



- **Children's camps and psychosocial recovery:** Organisation of camps in safe areas for children and caregivers from frontline and occupied regions, providing structured MHPSS support, counseling, socialisation opportunities, and strengthened family resilience.

- **Expanded MHPSS services:** Mobile teams and a caregiver call centre provide psychosocial support directly within communities, focusing on coping strategies, emotional regulation, and strengthening caregivers' capacity.

- **Support to families with heightened vulnerabilities:** Shelter support and restoration of water, heating, and essential services contribute to safety, dignity, hygiene, and stable environments essential for children.

- **WASH and safe living conditions:** Rehabilitation of facilities, hygiene promotion, winterisation, and essential service restoration.

- **Risk education in a changing threat environment:** Mine Risk Education is adapted to children's daily realities in areas with damaged infrastructure and shifting exposure risks

- **Education support in a disrupted system:** Learning and wellbeing activities mitigate learning loss, support concentration and motivation, and help children remain engaged with education.

- **Remedial Education:** Structured catch-up classes are designed to address learning loss resulting from conflict and displacement by reinforcing foundational competencies in core subjects.

- **Online Education and Digital Learning:** These digital tools provide flexible opportunities to reinforce core subjects, support independent study, and maintain engagement with educational content in a safe and adaptable format.

- **Teacher Training:** psychosocial support and specialised training to teachers, enabling them to deliver lessons effectively in contexts where both students and educators experience stress and anxiety and strengthens teachers' capacity to manage classroom challenges.

- **WASH support for dignity, health, and school participation:** Rehabilitation of water and sanitation facilities in child-centred spaces is combined with hygiene promotion and targeted menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) support for adolescent girls, reducing stigma, improving wellbeing, and supporting consistent school attendance.

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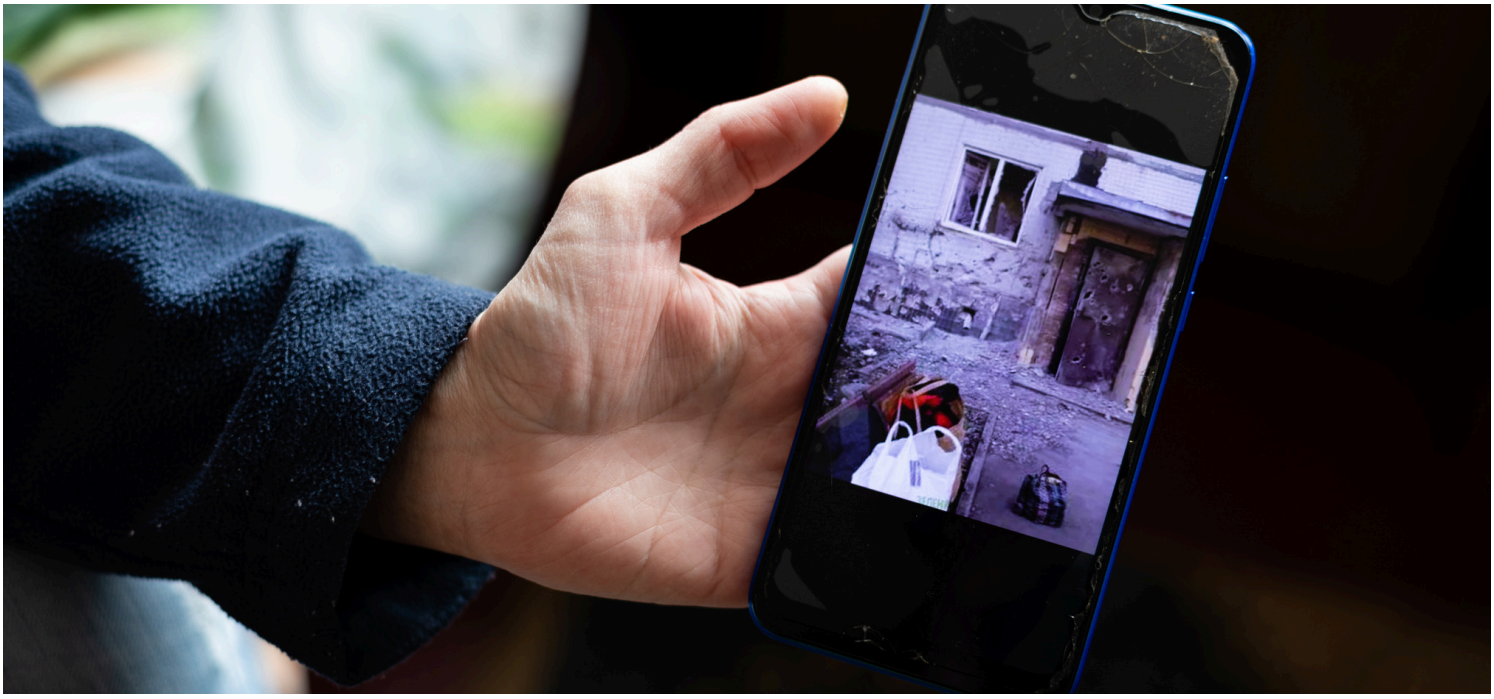

PROPOSED WAY FORWARD

- Scale up sustained MHPSS and education services for children, adolescents, caregivers, and frontline professionals. The action aims to deploy 3 mobile teams to reach 2300 children/adolescents, and 12 frontline staff. WeWorld has secured funding for 1 mobile team; additional resources are required to cover 2 mobile teams.

- Strengthen safe, inclusive community spaces for learning, social interaction, and protection by establishing/rehabilitating 5 Child & Youth Friendly Spaces benefiting 5000 children and adolescents, including those with disabilities. Funding is confirmed for 2 spaces; support is sought for 3 additional locations.

- Increase integrated education–protection programming to reduce learning loss and support school retention through remedial learning, PSS in schools, and teacher support in 15 schools, reaching 3500 students and 60 teachers. 2 schools are currently funded; resources are needed to expand to 13 more.

- Expand support to families caring for highly vulnerable children, including children with disabilities and conflict-affected trauma, through case management and tailored assistance to 50 households (approx. 100 caregivers and 750 children). Activities for 19 households are funded; assistance for 31 more is pending resources.

- Continue improving safe living conditions as a foundation for child health and wellbeing through house rehabilitation support for 100 households, benefiting 230 children. Current funding covers 45 houses; 55 additional locations remain unfunded.

- Further adapt risk education and community engagement in line with evolving conflict dynamics, delivering EORE and safety messaging sessions to 20,800 children and adults across 2 regions. 10,800 children and adults are covered under existing grants; expansion to 10,000 more requires funding.

- Support energy-secure environments for children through installation of 5 solar systems, provision of 3 generators, benefiting 10 facilities (schools, centres), ensuring heating, lighting, connectivity for learning, and continuity of WASH and protection services during outages. 0 installations are funded; 10 remain a funding gap.

- Distribution of vouchers in front-line territories to cover the basic needs of affected families with children. 15500 children and adults are covered under existing grants; expansion to 17000 more requires funding

- Cash assistance to provide life-saving assistance support to the civilian population remaining in the area from 0 to 50 km along the front line. 2400 beneficiaries are covered under existing grants; expansion to 3000 more requires funding

- Organization of children's camps to improve the psychosocial well-being of children from the frontline and occupied territories. 27 children's camp are covered under existing grants; expansion to 25 more requires funding

- Scale up teachers training in trauma-informed and psychosocial practices to support students affected by conflict and enhance teacher well-being benefiting 260 teachers, Educo secured funding for 6 trainings covering 100 techers, 8 trainigs for 160 teachers are unfunded

- Expand recreational and psychosocial support activities for children (9–17 years old) to promote well-being, social cohesion, and a sense of normalcy. A total of 72 events (two per week, 1.5+ hours each) aim to engage 1,300 children. Current funding covers part of the schedule; support is sought for full implementation.

USEFUL LINKS

UNICEF – More than a third of Ukraine's children remain displaced four years into war

UNICEF – 70 per cent of children in Ukraine lack access to basic goods and services

UN OCHA – Humanitarian updates on Ukraine

UNICEF – Call for action on returns of evacuated children

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