Building Safe Schools in Ukraine

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In collaboration with:

Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction & Resilience in the Education Sector

Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies

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Building a safe school despite everything

As the war enters its fifth year, the humanitarian crisis continues to rage. Children and adolescents are growing up in the shadow of unpredictable attacks, constant alarms, the destruction of vital infrastructure, repeated displacement, and the steady breakdown of essential services.

The 20 km front line is the epicentre of all the cruelty and violations, including fatalities, attacks, devastation and exodus[1]. However, the tentacles of this war are felt throughout the country. Humanitarian needs have become more serious, acute and complex. The effects are intertwined and have a multiplier effect, leaving families less able to cope. Compared to 2024, there has been a significant increase in missile and drone attacks, bringing the war to all corners of the country. Infrastructure has become a target: homes, hospitals, energy facilities, transport networks and schools.

A country exposed to multiple risks

Ukraine's current situation exposes it to multiple and elevated risks which, if they occur simultaneously, could put the population in an (even more) extreme situation.

Compiled by the Institute for Economics and Peace, the Global Peace Index, measures the relative level of peace in 163 countries and territories. It assesses 23 qualitative and quantitative indicators in three key areas: ongoing domestic and international conflicts, social security, and militarisation. According to this index, Ukraine is the world's **second most insecure and dangerous country,** after Russia, having fallen one place since 2024. This is due to defence and security spending exceeding 50% of GDP, a significant increase in other forms of internal violence (including domestic violence, which rose by 20% compared to the previous year), and the proliferation of firearms from the conflict zone.

Meanwhile, the INFORM global risk index, led by the European Commission, identifies countries at **risk of humanitarian crises and disasters** that could overwhelm national response capacity. It consists of three dimensions: hazards and exposure, vulnerability, and lack of response capacity. According to the latest data from 2025, Ukraine ranks **31st out of 192** countries analysed. In terms of natural events, the country is at high risk of **flooding** with potentially damaging and deadly river floods are expected to occur at least once in the next 10 years. Fires are the other phenomenon considered a high-level threat, as there is more than a 50% chance of weather conditions that could cause significant forest fires likely to result in both loss of life and property in any given year.

Children and adolescents are struggling with cold weather, fear, insecurity and uncertainty. Material poverty among this population has risen by 70% since the start of the war. Since the war began, one in three have had to flee their homes, and some have had to do so more than twice in search of a safer place. Bombs have killed or injured more than 3,200 children since the invasion began. Last year, the

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[1] Almost 90% of attacks and over half of all civilian casualties took place in this area in 2025. The impact on civilians increased sharply, with casualties rising by 27% between January and October compared with the same period in 2024.

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number of child casualties rose by 10% compared with 2024, marking the third consecutive year in which child casualties have risen, according to the United Nations (OHCHR, 2025).

Despite their resilience and the urgent need to normalise this ordeal in order to survive, the psycho-emotional impact is evident. The constant fear of attacks, endless confinement in basements, and isolation at home with limited social connections have left children and adolescents in an extreme situation.

> "*I can't wait to get back to my old life. I want to meet up with my friends, I want to play football in the street again... I want to leave the house, but I don't know when that will be.*" Ivan, 14, from Odessa.

In this context of extreme uncertainty and hopelessness, it is essential to commit to the stability of younger generations, both by opening up new opportunities for their future and investing in their present. Children and adolescents are calling for normality, routine, socialising, an end to fear, and at the same time, the restoration of their dreams and aspirations. All of these aspects have a common denominator: schools. While Ukraine has taken decisive steps to establish **SAFE SCHOOLS**, i.e. schools that protect, ensure educational continuity, educate and provide psychological support, not everything can be guaranteed.

In just one year of conflict, 15-year-old Ukrainian students are 2.5 years behind in reading and 1.5 years behind in mathematics compared to the OECD average. These figures may continue to rise, due to the deterioration in mental health that hinders concentration and study skills. Lack of motivation, constant unease, irritability, and feelings of isolation are emotions widely identified among students.

Guaranteeing the right to education is an investment with a multiplier effect. It paves the way for the comprehensive development of children and adolescents, fostering resilience, developing social skills and enhance capacities for both the present and the future. A country that will need to put all its energy into reconstruction and rehabilitation will urgently need generations that are prepared for this challenge.

This report identifies areas in which the international community, and more specifically the European Union and Spain as a member state, can provide support to strengthen the education system and promote **SAFE SCHOOLS**. The upcoming Conference for the Reconstruction of Ukraine, to be held this summer in Poland, will be a key milestone in placing the urgent need to invest in schools that protect and guarantee safety firmly on the agenda.

What is a Safe School?

The definition of a Safe School is set out in the Comprehensive Framework for School Safety 2022–2030 promoted by the Global Alliance for Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience in the Education Sector (GADRRRES) in 2013 with the support of UNESCO, UNICEF and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

More than 80 countries have already joined, although **Ukraine is not** among them despite its exposure to the risk of violence. The aim is to ensure educational continuity and wellbeing at

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school through preparedness, mitigation, response and reconstruction in the face of any risk, including war. It is divided into the following pillars:

1. School safety governance and policy: Promotes the integration of risk management into national education policies. This includes laws, budgets, intersectoral coordination (education, health, civil protection) and community participation in planning.

2. Safe school infrastructure: Ensures that school buildings are resistant to human threats, such as bombings and attacks. This involves careful design, construction, maintenance, and site selection, as well as regular structural risk assessments.

3. School safety and educational continuity. Involves emergency planning and preparedness within the educational environment so that each educational community is ready to respond and minimise damage. This includes evacuation plans, drills, and measures to ensure educational continuity.

4. Education for risk reduction and resilience. Integrates environmental, climate, and preventive citizenship education into the school curriculum. Promotes values, knowledge, and skills to act responsibly in the face of risks, promote peace, and strengthen community resilience from early childhood through to higher education.

Methodology

Several sources were used to prepare this report, allowing for cross-referencing of information and verification of the analysis.

Primary sources included interviews with secondary school students, teachers from state schools, teachers of catch-up classes, families, and psychologists. In addition, meetings were held with key figures from local and international organisations, United Nations agencies, and the education authorities. These interviews took place in the Odesa region in February 2026.

This information and the range of perspectives gathered were then compared with secondary sources, as referenced in the bibliography.

War: a turning point in the rights of children and adolescents

No one is safe

Before the outbreak of the full-scale war in 2022, **Ukraine** had been making steady progress in the protection and promotion of children's rights. Since ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991, the country had achieved significant gains. Clear progress had been recorded across 15 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, poverty levels were dropping, life expectancy was rising, infant mortality rates were falling, and access to quality education was expanding. Ukraine's classification in the high category of the Human Development Index confirmed these advances and reflected a substantial improvement in the living conditions of children and adolescents.

Today, however, the picture is drastically different. The war has **killed or injured more than 3,200 children and adolescents,** has had a devastating impact on all areas of children's lives, and has catastrophically reversed much of the progress made over decades, putting the future of an entire generation at risk (OHCHR, 2025).

To escape the violence and destruction, almost a third of the country's children have been forced to flee abroad, while several million have been displaced within Ukraine. An estimated 4.6 million children have suffered disruption to their education.

This mass displacement, coupled with a **35% decline in the birth rate,** has triggered a profound demographic crisis, the consequences of which will be felt in the medium term (Institute of Demography and Quality of Life Problems; Ukrainian Centre for Social Reforms, 2023).

The impact of war: broken families

In 2021, prior to the war, the population under the age of 18 stood at approximately seven million, accounting for 18 per cent of the total population.

More than one third of children and adolescents, around 2,589,900 in total, remain displaced. This includes over 791,000 internally displaced within Ukraine and nearly 1,798,900 living as refugees outside the country (UNICEF, 2026).

Among those displaced, one in three adolescents aged 15 to 19 reported being forced to flee at least twice. The most frequently cited reason was the search for safety (UNICEF, 2026).

In 22 per cent of refugee households with children, one parent remained in Ukraine, meaning that hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian children have been separated from one of their parents, most often the father. In addition, 3% of refugee households have a child separated from both parents. A similar situation is observed among internally displaced families.

"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."
Natalia from Izmail, 12 years old.

The widespread use of explosive weapons

The widespread use of explosive weapons with wide-area effects in populated areas has resulted in the death and injury of children and adolescents, and has damaged or destroyed homes, schools, medical facilities and electricity infrastructure.

Ongoing hostilities have disrupted essential services for children and have driven displacement, undermining the enjoyment of their rights to health, housing, education, family life and an adequate standard of living, among others. In addition, Ukraine now has one of the highest levels of explosive remnants of war and landmines worldwide, which is likely to continue causing casualties among children in particular for many years to come.

In 2025, the number of child casualties increased by 10 per cent compared with 2024, marking the third consecutive year in which the number of child casualties verified by the United Nations has risen.

In particular, the use of explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas, such as Kyiv, has led to a 160 per cent increase in child casualties in 2025 compared with 2024. These attacks, together with fighting along the front lines, are exacerbating the risks faced by children and adolescents (OHCHR, 2025).

Life at a standstill

Faced with Russia's invasion, millions of Ukrainians chose to leave the country in search of safety. Europe was the main destination. Currently, 1,798,900 children and adolescents are living as refugees, accounting for 30 per cent of the total refugee population of more than five million Ukrainians displaced across the continent. Almost half of these children and adolescents are concentrated in three countries: Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic.

The more than four million people living within the European Union depend on temporary protection to live, work and access education, healthcare and housing. With the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) set to expire in March 2027, their future remains uncertain, which causes fear and anxiety about whether, when and how they will be able to return home.

Although, at present, the balance between departures from and returns to Ukraine is currently clearly positive[2], an increasing number of families are nevertheless deciding **to return to the country**, despite ongoing insecurity. Refugees' plans to return change over time and producing reliable forecasts in the current context of uncertainty remains difficult.

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[2] As of December 2025, the number of people crossing borders from Ukraine to neighbouring countries was 1.12 million, while the number returning to the country was 1.08 million (UNHCR, 2026).

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While some families are returning, a growing number of people increasingly envisage their future and that of their children in their host countries rather than in Ukraine. Recent surveys suggest that this applies to around two thirds of people, while only about one fifth express a desire to return, with the remainder unsure how to answer.

Ukraine has recently intensified its efforts to encourage the return of as many refugees as possible. The newly established Ministry of Unity aims to contribute to this goal. However, both senior Ukrainian officials and independent experts agree that large-scale return will only be feasible if three basic conditions are met: work, housing and security. Education, on the other hand, is widely regarded as a barrier to return. Students re-entering the Ukrainian education system after spending several years abroad may encounter difficulties related to language, curriculum differences and psychosocial adjustment (UNHCR, 2026).

Unstoppable child poverty

The war has had a devastating impact on the living conditions of the Ukrainian population, especially households with children and adolescents. Indicators show a dramatic increase in poverty and material deprivation since 2021, reversing the progress made before the outbreak of the conflict.

The loss of property and livelihoods as a result of the war has pushed hundreds of thousands of families into extreme hardship. Securing employment comparable to previous jobs may take many months, while the reconstruction of destroyed businesses is likely to take years. This situation is further compounded by rising housing costs, driven by the destruction of at least 10 per cent of the housing stock, which is placing growing pressure on families now required to spend more than half of their income on housing (IOM, 2025).

As a result, **material poverty has increased by 70 per cent since 2021.** Lack of access to basic goods and services such as food and shelter has risen sharply, now affecting 3.5 million children and adolescents (UNICEF, 2025). This represents a highly concerning trend, particularly given that the figure has quadrupled over the past four years.

Material deprivation is a clear indicator of multidimensional poverty, as it prevents individuals from achieving a basic standard of living and has far-reaching impacts on their long-term development, education, health and future opportunities.

Having children: a significant risk factor

In households with children, the poverty rate was 15% higher than in households without children (38.4% compared to 33.4%) (Cherenko, 2024).

According to the criterion of income below the legal minimum subsistence level**, extreme poverty affects 11.8%** of households with children, compared to 6.6% of households without children, i.e. **1.8 times more.**

The arrival of a child in a household significantly increases the risk of poverty, and this risk rises sharply with each additional child. **In families with four children, extreme poverty already exceeds 80%,** which is an alarming figure that highlights the deterioration in the wellbeing of children in Ukraine.

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The composition of the population living in poverty has also changed significantly.

- The proportion of households with large families has more than doubled, from 4% in 2021 to 9% in 2023.
- Single-parent households increased by 39%, from 3.1% in 2021 to 4.3% in 2023 within the economically disadvantaged population as a whole.

The chain of vulnerability

Children and adolescents living in Ukraine have experienced 1,465 days of exposure to violence. This violence manifests itself in many different ways, and children can be direct or indirect witnesses.

Gender-based sexual violence, which has historically been a social problem, has skyrocketed with the war. In the frontline regions, the number of reports has doubled.

Children and adolescents are taking on more of the responsibilities usually reserved for adults within the home, which increases their security and protection risks. In some cases, they must devote so much time to these tasks that it interferes with their education and homework. As will be seen in the next section, the amount of time they must spend on homework has increased, which puts even more pressure on them.

Meanwhile, the risk of becoming a **victim of landmines and other explosive devices is increasing,** given the large quantity of such devices, particularly along the front line. Around a quarter of Ukraine's territory is contaminated by landmines, cluster munitions and unexploded ordnance, which poses a constant threat to children every day. It is expected that mine clearance activities will take at least 10 years.

With the pressures of the conflict, parents are increasingly resorting to negative coping mechanisms, such as alcohol and drug abuse, aggressive behaviour and domestic violence. Meanwhile, Ukraine's **official child protection system is overwhelmed** by the scale of the crisis, as many professionals have been displaced.

Although there are no precise figures, it is known that at the start of the invasion, **unaccompanied children** crossed borders and were separated from their families. These children are at high risk of various forms of violence and exploitation, such as being forced to beg. If they are not registered with child protection services in the host country, they risk losing their identity and nationality. This makes it virtually impossible for them to be reunited with their families.

Even before the war, Ukraine had the highest number of **institutionalised children** in Europe. It is estimated that there are more than 90,000 children in institutions, almost half of whom have disabilities. They face enormous risks, including being injured during attacks, abduction, abuse and illegal trafficking.

The paralysing socio-emotional impact

The war in Ukraine has led to a profound and sustained deterioration in the emotional wellbeing of children and adolescents. Experiences linked to the conflict (such as bombing, displacement, family

separation and daily uncertainty) directly affect their mental health and their ability to learn, relate to others and develop fully.

The data shows that **62.2% of students acknowledge that the war totally or partially affects their wellbeing in class,** primarily due to fear, anxiety, internal restlessness, and difficulty concentrating. Many students describe feeling sad, irritable and emotionally exhausted.

Among the most frequent manifestations identified by **Educo's programmes** are:

- Depressed mood and persistent feelings of discouragement.
- Difficulty concentrating and organising thoughts.
- Increased anxiety and irritability.
- Feeling of emptiness or permanent restlessness.
- Lack of motivation to do schoolwork.
- Fear of the future and constant fear of attacks and air raid sirens.
- Difficulty adapting to new living and learning conditions.
- Lack of communication and social skills.
- Feeling of isolation and insecurity.

> *"Before the war, I wanted to be a ship captain, but now I don't know... I've lost the desire." Pavlo, 17, from Izmail*

These experiences are intensified among internally displaced children and adolescents, who express concern for family members who remain in affected areas, sadness at being separated from friends, and loss of essential role models and routines. Feelings of uprootedness and loneliness also arise, especially among those who have been forced to move several times or live a long way away from their community of origin (Educo; Meshko et al., 2023).

Differences between boys and girls

Comparative studies show that, during the war, levels of stress, emotional anxiety and mental tension increased during the war, especially among **girls aged 10 to 13**. The proportion of those experiencing **high stress levels grew by 40%**. (Meshko et al., 2023). They report feeling emotions such as worry, fear and insecurity more intensely.

Recent developments in childhood stress

At the end of 2024, 27% of children showed significant levels of stress. A year later, this figure had risen to 37%, revealing a progressive deterioration in emotional wellbeing over time (Rating Group, 2025). As well as the everyday stresses of childhood and adolescence, such as stressful exams, there are multiple additional factors, such as bombings and sirens. **War has become part of daily life and people have normalised it as a survival instinct.**

"I thought we were fine until I realised that we weren't. We went on holiday abroad and after a few days, while we were in the supermarket, something fell and the noise it made caused my 10-year-old son to have a panic attack. Maybe we're not okay,"
Mother from Odessa.

A relevant finding is the correlation between the emotional state of parents and children: one in five children exhibits the same predominant emotion as their parent, with anxiety being the most common. This suggests that parental stress is transmitted and amplified in the family environment, also affecting children's emotional development (Rating Group, 2025).

Resources to mitigate the socio-emotional impact

Despite the magnitude of the needs, the country has **an insufficient number of psychologists and psychiatrists specialising in childhood**, which limits the capacity to respond to a problem that affects hundreds of thousands of children (OHCHR, 2025).

The first barrier is detection. Given the lack of professionals, many cases go unnoticed and without proper treatment, complications can increase and lead to serious mental health problems.

Stigma does not help either (Gaschet et al., 2025). The stigma surrounding mental health remains a significant barrier to healthcare in Ukraine, rooted in long-standing cultural and historical attitudes.

Educational centres have only one psychologist, regardless of the number of students. These professionals act as the first point of contact. Their role is to assess the child's wellbeing, inform families and, where necessary, provide professional support or refer the family to an inclusive resource centre.

While it is true that school psychologists are under enormous pressure, often experiencing burnout, and that their roles have expanded considerably due to the war, they are not always able to perform their duties effectively. Students and family members told us that they do not always consider them trustworthy and that they are not adequately prepared to provide the professional response required.

"Before I came here (to the Odessa region), the bombs, the attacks, the alarms... everything prevented me from living a normal life. I couldn't concentrate at school, I didn't sleep well, I was tired the next day, and it was the same thing all over again, day after day... I could ask for help, but I don't think I need it anymore." Marta, 16, displaced from Kharkiv.

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Education in a state of emergency

The war caused severe and long-lasting damage to the Ukrainian education system, directly impacting the right of millions of children and young people to receive safe, continuous and high-quality education. The impact is felt at all levels, from early childhood to secondary education, and seriously compromises the cognitive, emotional and social development of the younger generations.

Tremendous efforts to guarantee education

Despite the numerous daily challenges faced by students amid constant alarms, attacks and disruptions, **4.6 million continue to attend classes every day**. Several approaches are in place to ensure educational continuity.

Approximately half of these students have started the 2025/2026 academic year attending classes in person. To do so, two conditions must be met: adequate safety measures must be in place (including safe access to school), and school facilities must be equipped with a shelter.

Where these conditions cannot be guaranteed, alternative arrangements are implemented. Just over one million pupils continue their education online**,** particularly those living in areas most directly affected by the attacks. The remaining pupils follow a hybrid model, combining face-to-face and virtual learning. When school shelters lack the capacity to accommodate all students simultaneously, schools organise rotating shifts, allowing some pupils to attend in person while others follow classes from home, alternating on a regular basis.

A special case is that of displaced students who still prefer online learning in case they have to continue their displacement[3] and in order to remain in contact with their friends and teachers. Those living in collective shelters, around 120,000, also continue their classes in this way.

For students living in the occupied territories, more than one million in total, there is the option to continue studying under the Ukrainian curriculum online in the afternoons, after completing classes in the Russian school system. Staying connected to the system they know, as well as their classmates and teachers, compensates for the extra effort required by this workload.

Students living outside Ukraine also have the option of continuing their education through the online format, maintaining the routine they were familiar with prior to displacement, although many have chosen to enrol in schools in their host countries. Preserving their ties to Ukraine and ensuring access to the Ukrainian education system in the event of a possible return are among the main reasons for choosing this option.

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[3] A recent survey conducted by UNICEF revealed that, among those displaced, one in three adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 said they had moved at least twice. Safety was cited as the most common reason for fleeing.

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"Despite everything we've been through, I didn't want my daughter to stop studying. She's had to do it remotely, many days without an internet connection... But she keeps at it." Mother of a 15-year-old displaced girl.

Studying online without a device

Many families have had to leave their belongings behind in their homes because they have had to leave quickly to escape the threat of violence. This includes electronic devices. Some did not have time to fetch them, some lost them due to active hostilities and some claim that Russian forces stole them from occupied areas. In other cases, there is only one device per family, which has to be shared amongst family members. Younger siblings are less likely to use it than older ones.

Several initiatives have been launched over the years by the Ministry of Science and Education and other organisations to distribute laptops to teachers and students. However, according to the latest figures, only 44% of the needs reported by schools have been met (OHCHR, 2025).

The (new) normal: shelters

Shelters have become a regular feature in the lives of children and adolescents in Ukraine. From east to west, north to south, classes are interrupted at least once during the school day, forcing everyone to go to the shelter or interrupting online classes. Day after day. Any day when this is not the case is exceptional.

School days defined by air raid sirens

Since the invasion began, the highest number of air raid sirens have sounded between 9 a.m. and 2 p.m., coinciding with school hours.

Half of the country's provinces have been under air raid alerts for more than 4,000 hours, which means about **three hours a day for the last four years.**

In frontline regions — Donetsk, Kharkiv, Sumy and Dnipro — alerts have exceeded 10,000 hours, equivalent to **fourteen months.** [4]

Hours, months, years spent in shelters, waiting to be able to return to school.

The siren sounds, everyone grabs their coats and snacks (if they have any), lines up, and descends in an orderly fashion.

In some shelters, classes can continue, but in the vast majority, they cannot. So, all that remains is to wait, playing, talking, or getting bored, until the alarm sounds again, announcing that the danger has passed and classes can resume.

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[4] Data as of 15 February 2026. Alarm data can be found here: Statistics of air alarms in Ukraine - The whole country

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"At first, I was really scared by the sirens, and I wanted to go home. Over time, I've got used to it. It's cold in our shelter, and we have to wear our coats, but we don't have a bad time." Yure de Izmail, 15 years old.

Thanks to sustained efforts, **80% of schools now have shelters**. However, many remain poorly adapted or inadequately equipped, with problems related to ventilation, air conditioning and the lack of bathrooms (World Bank; Government of Ukraine; European Union; United Nations, 2024). According to a report by the Ukrainian organisation Rokada, more than half of these shelters are insufficiently prepared and lack adequate space, resulting in overcrowding (Rokada, 2024). Only **31% can be used for teaching**, meaning that each time an alarm sounds, classes cannot continue.

For students studying online, the situation is not very different. Classes are also interrupted, electricity supply may be cut, and lessons may not resume until the following day. For these students, alarms are not without paralysing effects.

"When the alarm sounds, I stop the class. My parents told me to go to the safest place, the bathroom. They are not at home and worry a lot about me, but I have got used to it," says Dmytro, 16, who studies online from his home in Kharkiv.

All academic content that cannot be taught due to air-raid sirens must be covered upon returning to school through the digital platforms provided for this purpose. This represents an additional burden on days already disrupted by sirens.

> **Factors preventing the construction of new shelters in schools**
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> - Lack of technical conditions to equip basements as shelters.
> - Lack of a basement or it was not provided for in the building design documentation.
> - Absence of geographical conditions of the terrain.
> - Limited financial resources in the regions for the installation of adequate protective structures. Building a shelter costs around €1.3 million.[5]
> - Total or partial destruction of educational institutions.
> - Potentially possible or ongoing hostilities in the region.
> - Buildings being reconstructed or renovated.

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[5] See Education Ombudsman in Ukraine: Mould and lack of toilets: the education ombudsman spoke about parents' complaints regarding shelters | UNN

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Learning losses

It is reasonable to assume that, under these circumstances, despite efforts to ensure continuity of education, academic outcomes have been seriously affected. The cumulative disruptions, first caused by COVID-19 and subsequently by the war, have led to a significant decline in learning levels:

- According to the OECD's PISA 2022 report, 15-year-old students scored lower in mathematics, reading and science than in the previous report in 2018.[6]
- In just one year of war, the academic losses were evident: 2.5 years in reading and 1.5 years in mathematics compared to the OECD average.
- Girls, students from economically disadvantaged families and those living in rural areas recorded the most pronounced declines (Olena Zelenska Foundation; UNICEF: KSE, 2024).

Distance learning presents a series of additional challenges to the situation, from the perspective of both educators and parents. Issues such as irregular attendance, unsystematic explanations of new content, and lack of technological resources are among the contributing factors. In response to this gap, they highlight remedial classes and additional measures to compensate for these educational shortcomings (Buchanan et al., 2023). The absence of face-to-face interaction is also identified as a factor that can hinder social and emotional development, thereby impeding the learning process. These challenges are particularly pronounced among primary school children who have not yet experienced in-person learning.

Difficulties are also evident for those transitioning from online to in-person education. In these students, educational gaps, low motivation and academic performance, and loss of communication skills are observed, due to the lack of interaction with peers (Education Cluster Ukraine, 2022).

The variety of cases shows that the different schooling modalities are exposing students to complex scenarios in which learning and socio-emotional wellbeing are interconnected, with negative implications for academic outcomes. These educational losses will severely affect the future opportunities of children and adolescents, as well as the country's capacity for social and economic recovery.

Attacks on schools

Ongoing hostilities have severely affected students' ability to access and benefit from education. Since the start of the invasion, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education has documented at least **4,456 attacks** that have destroyed or damaged around 20% of educational facilities (including schools, universities, early childhood centres and orphanages)[7] . Out of these attacks:

- 4,048 have been damaged and 408 have been completely destroyed
- 71% belong to territories under Ukrainian control

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[6] The comparison between the 2018 and 2022 data should be treated with some caution, given that the exclusion rate was 36.1% because the survey could not be completed in all regions due to the war. If it had been possible to conduct the survey in the most affected regions, the results may have been even lower. See the PISA results in Ukraine in 2018 and 2022, https://testportal.gov.ua/en/pisa-in-ukraine/
[7] See Education Emergency

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- 24% are in occupied territories
- 5% are in disputed areas (OHCHR, 2025).

Only three provinces (frontline areas: Donetsk, Kharkiv and Kharkiv city) account for 73% of all destroyed schools, while damaged schools are spread across the country, although they are mainly concentrated in the east and north.

According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education Against Attacks (GCPEA), Ukraine was already among the countries most affected by attacks on educational facilities in the early stages of the war, alongside countries such as the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Pakistan (Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, 2024).

When facilities are completely destroyed or damaged, students can be relocated to other schools in the area that have not been affected. Transport in these cases is provided by the education authorities. In such situations, schedules may be reduced or run in shifts to accommodate the new students. In most cases, lessons are resumed online.

It will be several months before students can return to their original schools. Minor damage, such as broken windows, may take up to two months to repair. In cases where rehabilitation is more complex, it can take almost an entire school year.

Attacks on energy infrastructure have been equally devastating: power cuts often limit access to online classes, leaving many children and adolescents disconnected from their teachers and classmates. Some families have only one mobile phone for several children, drastically reducing the time and quality of learning.

These are part of a chain of disruptions in the lives of children and adolescents.

Attacks against international humanitarian law

Attacks against schools, students, teachers and educational staff constitute violations of international law, human rights, international humanitarian law and, in certain cases, international crimes.

International humanitarian law (IHL). IHL protects the civilian population and civilian property during armed conflicts. Schools are considered civilian objects, unless they are used for military purposes.

Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC). According to Article 8, the Statute classifies attacks against civilian property, including educational infrastructure, as war crimes when there is no military justification.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). Recognises the right to education and obliges States to progressively ensure its fulfilment without discrimination.

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Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Explicitly protects children's right to education and requires States to take all possible measures to ensure this right is fulfilled, even in times of conflict.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Attacks on schools may involve additional violations: the right to life, prohibition of cruel treatment, and the right to freedom of expression and association.

Convention against Torture and International Convention for the Protection against Enforced Disappearances. Attacks on students and educational staff may constitute violations of these standards when they involve torture, inhuman treatment or disappearances.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Proclaims that everyone has the right to education. Although not legally binding, it inspires the entire current human rights system.

UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960). Establishes specific obligations to ensure that education is accessible and non-discriminatory. If an attack prevents equitable access to education, it constitutes a violation.

Military use of schools

At the start of the invasion, several sources reported the military use of schools by Ukrainian forces.[8] Specifically, Ukrainian forces used schools to house soldiers and set up checkpoints and military equipment near school buildings. Armed members of the Territorial Defence Force also used them to ensure the safety of civilians sheltering in schools, which may increase the risk of attack. (Buchanan et al., 2023; Global Coalition to Protect Education Under Attack, 2024; OHCHR, 2022).

Since 2019, Ukraine has been a signatory to the Safe Schools Declaration, an international initiative endorsed by more than 120 countries. Signatories commit to taking concrete measures to protect students, teachers and schools during armed conflict and to ensure the continuity of education, including refraining from using schools for military purposes.

One of the commitments made by governments when signing the declaration is to implement the ["Guidelines for Protecting Schools and Universities from Military Use during Armed Conflict."](#) These guidelines are based on existing obligations under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. They state: 'Parties to an armed conflict are urged not to use schools and universities for any purpose that supports the military effort. While it is recognised that certain uses would not be contrary to the law of armed conflict, all parties should endeavour to avoid compromising the safety and education of students.'

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[8] In this case, reference is made only to the use of schools by Ukrainian forces, although various sources confirm the continued military use by Russian forces throughout these years (OHCHR, Human Rights Watch, among others).

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> ## The complementary relationship between the Safe Schools Declaration and the Comprehensive Framework for School Safety
>
> The Comprehensive School Safety Framework, mentioned in the first section, focuses on how to strengthen the education system to prevent, withstand, and recover from crises. The Safe Schools Declaration provides the political and legal commitment, explaining why and for what purpose States should protect education from attacks.
>
> Meanwhile, the framework led by GADRRRES takes a broader view, addressing all types of risks, whether external or internal, such as online violence, extreme heat, nuclear threats, accidents in schoolyards, or peer and gang violence. In contrast, the Safe Schools Declaration allows States to document violations of international law in cases of attacks on schools during armed conflict or situations of violence.
>
> In the case of Ukraine, a signatory to the Declaration but not to the Framework, it is essential that both initiatives are integrated to ensure complementarities are promoted and gaps are addressed.
>
> It will also be important to follow the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies developed by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). These comprise 19 standards designed to improve the quality of education preparedness, response, and recovery; increase access to safe and relevant learning opportunities; and ensure accountability of those providing educational services. All of these standards align with the two initiatives described above.

Early childhood: a severely weakened system

The conflict has disproportionately affected early childhood education services. Thousands of kindergartens have been damaged or destroyed, leading to a **25% drop in preschool enrolment.** In some particularly hard-hit provinces, **up to 78% of 4- and 5-year-olds are currently out of the education system.**

The impact of not having access to early childhood education has short- and long-term effects, especially for those on the front lines. For them, four years of war and COVID-19 have prevented them from receiving face-to-face education. This prolonged absence has led to increased stress, reduced social-emotional skills and decreased self-esteem in 83% of the children affected.

On average, in OECD countries, students who had attended preschool for one year or more performed better in mathematics at age 15 than students who had never attended or had attended for less than one year, even after taking socio-economic factors into account (OECD, 2023).

For all these reasons, the Ukrainian authorities have undertaken major reforms. The new Pre-school Education Act, in force since January 2025, lays the foundations for rebuilding a more inclusive and equitable system that is aligned with European Union standards.

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Lev lived with his family in Donetsk, an area now under occupation. He had to flee with his older sister and mother from one day to the next. He was two years old at the time. He had not yet started to speak. Four years later, he still does not speak. "Many children have been left speechless by the trauma of war. Little by little, they start to speak again, but we don't succeed in all cases, as is the case with Lev," Social worker in Odessa.

Disproportionate impact

The right to education for children with disabilities and special needs has been disproportionately affected (Care, 2024). During power cuts, many are unable to use electronic devices that are key to their learning. Air raid sirens, noisy generators and unstable environments exacerbate sensory and adaptation difficulties.

Going down to the shelter is not always possible, as not all shelters are adapted, nor is it possible to quickly find a safe place inside the house when the siren sounds.

Lack of physical accessibility is also critical: families whose children have reduced mobility cannot move around during power cuts, as lifts stop working.

All of this forces them to attend online classes, disrupting their routine and preventing them from developing their social skills, which are essential for these students. These issues make the psycho-emotional impact exponentially more challenging.

The specific classes and resources they used to have, due to the war, and especially on the front lines, have disappeared. Many experts have left these areas, and support is extremely scarce (Education Cannot Wait, 2024).

Fleeing the country is not a feasible option for families either; from transport to adapting to new contexts, with different languages and different schools, this scenario is out of the question.

The biggest challenge: education on the front line

The violence, attacks and displacement experienced on the front line and along Ukraine's border with Russia has exposed around two million children and adolescents to persistent violence, exploitation, physical risks and psychological distress, as well as a deterioration in their living conditions.

In this context, access to education is extremely limited, especially for the 850,000 students living closest to the frontline. This is where the war's most severe impacts are concentrated. Schools lie in ruins, air raid alarms sound constantly, shelters are lacking, and essential equipment is scarce. These challenges are compounded by attacks, damage, destruction, evacuations, power outages, and disruptions to internet connectivity.

In these areas, education is primarily delivered remotely, preventing students from accessing services such as mental health and psychosocial support, extracurricular activities, or spaces for leisure and sport.

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The level of insecurity is such that students rarely go out to socialise and spend most of their time at home.

> *"First it was the pandemic, and now it's the war. I'm 17 years old and I've spent most of my school years studying at home. I hardly see anyone, I don't do rhythmic gymnastics anymore... sometimes I can't take it anymore." Mariia from Kharkiv.*

Little is known about the impact on learning. The OECD's 2022 PISA report, which was unable to cover these provinces due to lack of access, estimated a decline of 2.5 in mathematics in the rest of the country, which suggests that **educational losses in this territory could be significantly higher.**

When students are asked what their most urgent needs are, psycho-emotional support ranks first, followed by improved security in and around schools, including shelters (OCHA, 2026b).

For those in the occupied territories, the situation is even more critical. Since the 2022–2023 academic year, the occupying authorities have replaced the Ukrainian curriculum with the Russian one, violating the right to cultural identity and language. Textbooks have been introduced in which Ukraine is no longer presented as an independent country, and compulsory lessons on "spiritual and patriotic values" have been implemented.

There are reports that books and resources in Ukrainian have been removed from libraries and schools, while internet providers are blocking Ukrainian government educational websites.

Many choose to keep their children in the Ukrainian curriculum by having them study online, but this option is becoming increasingly difficult due to website blocks, mobile phone registration requirements, and threats of losing parental rights.

According to the United Nations Human Rights Office, these programmes violate children's rights to education free from propaganda as well as the development of their cultural identity and to not be subjected to political or ideological pressure (OHCHR, 2022, 2025).

Teachers' conditions

Teachers have also experienced significant stress and a deterioration in their psycho-emotional wellbeing, especially those who are on the front line or who are or have been in the occupied territories.

They are not immune to attacks either and recognise that this is a factor that causes them stress and, in some cases, trauma. Many refer to feelings such as depression and a constant sense of loss.

In addition, teachers across the country point to the difficulties they face during air strikes and power cuts, as well as managing the workload of absent colleagues, which increases stress and reduces the quality of the education they provide (OHCHR, 2022, 2025).

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Funding for education

National funding

Since the war, public spending on education has fallen from 17% of total expenditure in 2021 to 6% in 2026, largely driven by increased investment in defence and security, which stands at 59%. Despite this decline, education remains one of the government's main investments, being the third most funded sector after debt repayment and social benefits.

With a budget of $6.2 billion for 2026, it has increased from $4.2 billion in 2023. One of the main allocations is for raising teachers' salaries, addressing a long-standing demand. There are also budget items linked to the effects of the war, such as the reconstruction of school infrastructure and shelters.

However, this upward trend could change if the conflict continues and defence spending rises further, alongside debt repayments, which under the signed agreements are expected to continue until 2061 (UNICEF, 2026).

International cooperation funds

The impact of United Nations reform on Ukraine

The so-called "Humanitarian Reset" launched in March 2025 by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator emerged as an urgent response to an unprecedented financial collapse in the international aid system and as an attempt to reform the central structures of the system itself.

This new response model is reflected in each country and, in the case of Ukraine, has meant that of the 10.8 million people with humanitarian needs, only 3.6 million, those classified as priority, will receive assistance, **a cut of 76%.**

The appeal under this reprioritisation amounts to $2.1 billion, which will be allocated to four objectives: 1. Supporting the most vulnerable people who remain close to the front line (up to 50 km from the border, with those within 20 km considered the most vulnerable); 2. Responding to vulnerable people who have recently been displaced and evacuated from their places of origin to safer reception areas, including through transit centres and collective sites; 3. Providing emergency response following attacks. 4. Supporting vulnerable internally displaced persons and highly vulnerable groups at risk of not being covered by social protection networks (OCHA, 2026b).

Frontline response will account for 55% of funds.

These cuts will also affect the broader **human rights** agenda, **including the rights of children and adolescents**. Concerns have already been raised about the reduction in resources for the United Nations Human Rights Office, a key body responsible for monitoring, among other things, the six grave violations against children and adolescents, including attacks on schools. Without adequate resources, it will not be possible to collect and systematise information or, where

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> appropriate, pursue accountability for these grave violations, which could otherwise go unpunished.[9]

Since the beginning of the war, education has been a sector widely funded by the international community, covering on average more than 75% of the needs identified in the country, and reaching almost all of them in 2024 (see Figure 1).

In contrast, 2025 2025 marked a turning point in this upward trend, with only 68% of needs met and the lowest expenditure recorded since 2022. Although it is still too early to predict developments in 2026, the emerging trend of funding cuts, particularly for education in emergencies, could become entrenched (Educo, 2025).

At this point, it is important to analyse which educational aspects will be covered by the United Nations Response Plan for 2026, in light of the significant needs identified in the previous sections of the report. The first notable point is that reprioritisation has meant cutting the number of students and teachers identified as having urgent educational needs from 850,000 to 350,000, **a reduction of 59%.** To cover these new needs, a budget of $46 million has been calculated, which will be distributed among the four objectives that guide the plan (see previous table), with objective 1 (frontline response) receiving the most funding, a total of 60% (OCHA, 2026b).

This cut is not a response to reduced needs, but rather to an analysis that focuses more on vulnerability and a recognition that there are long-term needs (such as guaranteeing the right to education for those who are not on the front line) that must be met by the government.

Recognising that the funding cut has forced difficult decisions, prioritising those in situations of extreme vulnerability, the design of the plan may overlook urgent educational needs in other parts of the country or outside the established objectives. It will be essential for coordination mechanisms, such as the Education Cluster, to ensure that the overall educational situation and needs are monitored beyond the immediate response areas and that innovative solutions are sought to address these needs and secure funding for them.

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[9] See
https://alliancecpha.org/sites/default/files/technical/attachments/Briefing%20on%20the%20Impact%20of%20Humanitarian%20Reform%20%20on%20the%20CAAC%20Agenda_English.pdf

Figure 1. Educational Needs versus Expenditure, 2022-2026

Source: OCHA (United Nations)

Donors

In line with its commitment and support for the education sector[10] , the **European Union is the main donor** and has been taking on an increasingly large share of total contributions. Specifically, its share rose from 12% at the start of the war to 63% in 2025. In total, the EU has disbursed $135 million over the past five years. While its leadership is important and deserves recognition, there is an urgent need to encourage greater participation from other donors to ensure diversification of funding sources and avoid heavy dependency on the EU.

In this regard, donors such as Germany, France, Japan and Norway, which have contributed consistently over the years, should be encouraged to maintain and increase their support. The sharp decline in US funding has had limited impact on this sector, as substantial contributions were made only in 2022.

Spain began contributing to education in 2023. Although it is a marginal donor in terms of total disbursements, providing 3% of funds, it has contributed a total of $5.5 million—a figure that, while modest in absolute terms, is significant relative to the volumes handled by Spanish humanitarian cooperation (Educo, 2025).

The European Union humanitarian response

Since the beginning of the invasion, the European Union's commitment to the humanitarian response in Ukraine has been constant and a priority, with Ukraine being one of the three main

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[10] See the 2018 European Commission's Communication on Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises
http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/news/Communication_on_Education_in_Emergencies_and_Protracted_Crises.pdf

crises receiving European funds[11] in the last five years. During this period, it has disbursed €1.3 million (see Table 2 for more details), including €3.4 million from Member States.

This aid has been aimed at covering basic needs such as protection, healthcare, including psychosocial and mental health support, emergency and winter-adapted shelters, food and water, essential household items and education.

The EU's humanitarian offices in Ukraine play a key role in facilitating humanitarian coordination and information sharing between various organisations, including donors, authorities and humanitarian partners. Thanks to their presence on the ground in Kyiv and Dnipro, EU humanitarian experts are also carrying out missions in almost all affected regions of Ukraine to assess needs and monitor the actions funded by the EU.

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[11] Along with Yemen, Turkey and the Occupied Palestinian Territory moving to different positions over these past five years.

Figure 2. EU humanitarian Aid to Ukraine 2022-2026 (millions of euros)
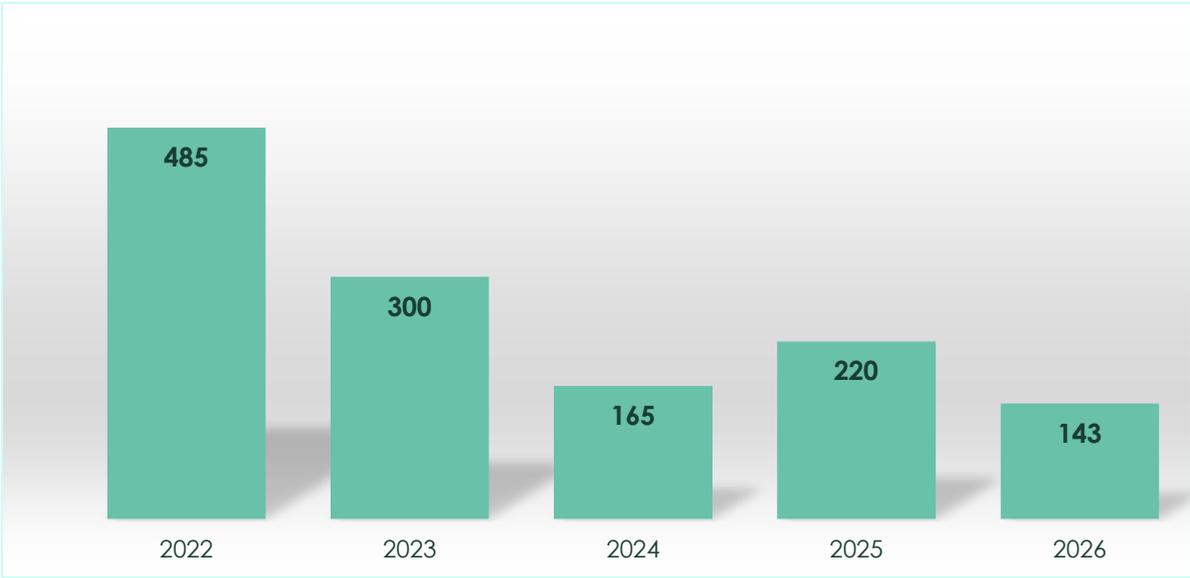
Source: European Commission, 2026

Noteworthy educational initiatives

The European Union's commitment to education

In parallel with the Response Plan, the European Commission has launched other initiatives with the aim of meeting some of the most urgent educational needs. These include funding for the **School Repairs in Ukraine** project**,** led by DG ECHO. This programme has been implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and will enable some 2,000 children from communities in Kyiv and Chernihiv to return to school, where they will be able to attend classes in safe and comfortable conditions. So far, 44 schools in Kyiv, Kharkiv and Chernihiv have been restored, and more than 70 additional schools are expected to be renovated by the end of 2025.

In addition, they have coordinated the donation of **380 school buses** for students who must attend new schools while theirs are being repaired. The Commission has purchased 100 school buses, worth approximately €14 million, while authorities, cities, regions and transport organisations from 11 EU countries have donated 271 school buses through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

 At the same time, the Commission has delivered **1.5 million textbooks** to students in Ukraine. With the same objective, but targeting those studying online, the Commission, in partnership with the Ukrainian Ministry of Digital Transformation and DIGITALEUROPE, a European organisation representing the digital technology sector, has launched the **Laptops for Ukraine** initiative**.** The aim is to collect and distribute laptops, smartphones and tablets to meet basic educational needs, including those of schools.

In April 2023, Ukraine joined the **EU Civil Protection Mechanism** as a participating state. Created in 2001, the Mechanism aims to strengthen cooperation between EU Member States and the ten

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participating states in the field of civil protection, in order to improve disaster prevention, preparedness and response, in line with the principles of the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.

LEARN

The **Lifting Education Access and Resilience in Times of Need (LEARN)** programme is an education initiative with a budget of $415 million. It will improve safety conditions in schools, provide free transport, implement educational reforms for grades 1–12, supply textbooks, train teachers, and strengthen education management.

LEARN equips Ukrainian schools with the tools they need to maintain high standards of teaching and create safe spaces for children amid the ongoing war. By the end of 2025, the programme aimed to reach one million teachers, school staff and students.

The money for this plan comes from $235 million from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), $150 million from the International Development Association (IDA) and $30 million from the Ukraine Relief, Recovery, Reconstruction and Reform Trust Fund.

UNESCO and public-private partnerships

At the start of the invasion, the Ministry of Education and Science called on UNESCO, which managed to mobilise 25 members of the Global Education Coalition. Since then, a public-private programme has been developed to train teachers in technology to improve their skills. To date, one in four teachers in Ukraine has completed the training.

Recognising the importance of supporting teachers, a community of practice has been created where teachers can share techniques, receive psychological support and network. These are crucial elements in caring for those who care for others.

In addition, this initiative has distributed more than 50,000 devices to teachers in the country and more than 8,500 devices to Ukrainian children who are unable to attend face-to-face classes.

At a time of drastic financial cuts in cooperation, programmes of this type that seek to combine public and private funds through innovation are essential. Crucially, they have analysed and monitored the impact of their intervention in order to learn for future similar contexts. In this regard, it is key to include the students' perspective on the impact of this initiative, as they are the ultimate beneficiaries of this programme.

Education Cannot Wait

With a budget of $18 million for the period 2024–2026, Education Cannot Wait, in line with the objectives of the Ministry of Education and Science, has identified three goals: 1) infrastructure components; 2) activities to ensure the continuity of education; and 3) extracurricular educational services aimed at learning recovery and supporting the wellbeing of children.

The response focuses on the 10 regions most affected by the war, where the greatest needs are concentrated. Within this area, the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of students and teachers,

those with limited access to learning and teaching experiences and therefore requiring the most urgent and diversified support, will be prioritised.

In this regard, particular attention is given to students with special needs or disabilities, recognising the overlapping risks they face. This identification process also includes children and adolescents at greater risk of dropping out of school (Education Cannot Wait, 2024).

Working towards safe schools

Despite the sirens, attacks, disruptions and obstacles, education does not stop. It has become a sign of resilience in a country that, entering its fifth year of war, is pessimistic about the end of the violence. Despite all this, schools remain an absolute priority for students, families and the government. They represent the present but also the future; they represent normality, socialisation and learning; they are the closest thing to the world they knew before 2022 (San Pedro, 2022). But above all, there is a clear recognition that education is an indispensable right. That is why, in the face of destruction, rebuilding takes place; in the face of a lack of technological skills, training is provided; in the face of a lack of devices, they are distributed; in the face of poor academic performance, catch-up classes are given; in the face of enormous psycho-emotional needs, new resources are sought. Resilience prevails in the face of horror.

> *"According to the PISA assessment, Ukrainian students score higher than the OECD average in emotional resilience. And in the midst of this war, Ukrainian students, on average, feel safer in their schools than American students in theirs. I find that admirable."* Headmaster in Odessa.

This commitment to education is entirely justified. In the current context, where poverty has reached levels not seen in decades, the population is sharply declining, countless people have been injured or disabled, vulnerabilities are multiple and interconnected, mental health has deteriorated severely, and academic losses are unpredictable, the present and future of the country depend on well-educated and prepared generations.

The international community as a whole, and in particular the European Union and its member states, including Spain, must support Ukraine's efforts to strengthen the education system and ensure access to quality education.

At Educo, we propose that this support be provided from the perspective of **SAFE SCHOOLS**. While the greatest current threat in Ukraine is violence and attacks, it is also important to recognise other climatic risks, particularly floods and fires, for which the country must be prepared. Guaranteeing the right to education in Ukraine therefore requires a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple risks and includes: resilient and adapted infrastructure (pillar 1) for both schools and shelters; school safety (pillar 2), supported by risk analysis of threats such as violence or flooding, to ensure continuity of education; and education (pillar 3), covering issues such as peaceful conflict resolution and psycho-emotional wellbeing.

To achieve this, policies, regulations and resources will need to be developed to standardise Safe Schools and adapt them to the diverse realities of the Ukrainian context. The central axis of this approach is the protection of children's and adolescents' rights, promoting their active participation, wellbeing and positive treatment across all three pillars.

Finally, this framework should be guided by the principles of social inclusion and gender equality, and aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals, the Safe Schools Declaration, and the INEE Minimum Standards (see Diagram 1).
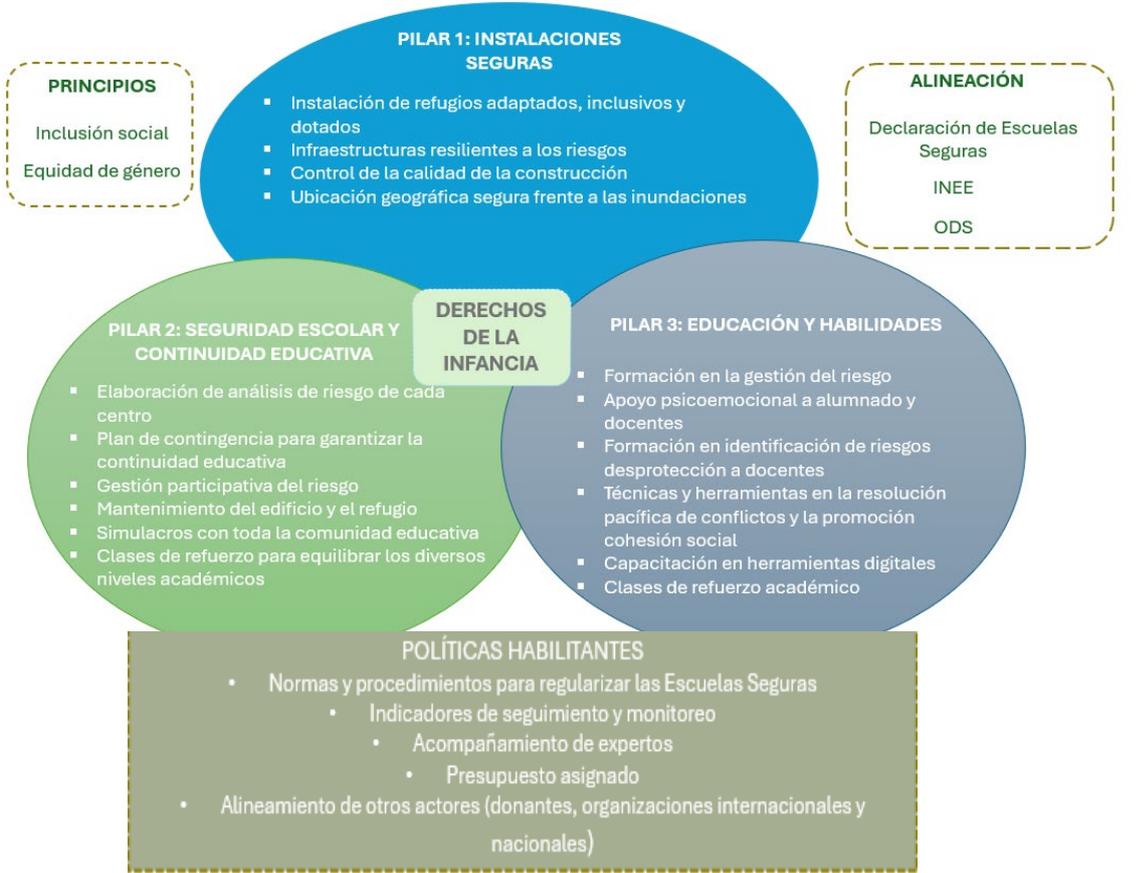
Safe Schools will have to be spaces that protect, promote positive treatment and student wellbeing. Taking into account the multiple and overlapping levels of vulnerability that have been highlighted throughout this report, the framework will have to identify them in its risk analysis and provide adapted and inclusive solutions.

This framework should be defined using a Triple Nexus approach, recognising that actions taken in emergency contexts must also have a long-term vision, establishing sustainable measures and structural responses while promoting social cohesion and peace.

Accordingly, the Framework is based on the concept of risk management rather than crisis management. In other words, it seeks to implement preventive and risk mitigation measures, recognising that these are more cost-effective, provide better protection, and help break the cycle of vulnerable schools (Idris, 2018).

In the coming months, there will be several opportunities for the European Union and its Member States to put the SAFE SCHOOLS approach on the political and humanitarian agenda. The third Ukraine Reconstruction Conference, scheduled for mid-2026 in Poland, peace negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, the disbursement of humanitarian aid by the European Union, and bilateral relations between Ukraine and the EU (and its member states) are all examples of such opportunities.

Diagram 1. Proposed Safe School Framework in Ukraine

PRINCIPIOS

Inclusión social

Equidad de género

PILAR 1: INSTALACIONES SEGURAS
- Instalación de refugios adaptados, inclusivos y dotados
- Infraestructuras resilientes a los riesgos
- Control de la calidad de la construcción
- Ubicación geográfica segura frente a las inundaciones

ALINEACIÓN

Declaración de Escuelas Seguras

INEE

ODS

DERECHOS DE LA INFANCIA

PILAR 2: SEGURIDAD ESCOLAR Y CONTINUIDAD EDUCATIVA
- Elaboración de análisis de riesgo de cada centro
- Plan de contingencia para garantizar la continuidad educativa
- Gestión participativa del riesgo
- Mantenimiento del edificio y el refugio
- Simulacros con toda la comunidad educativa
- Clases de refuerzo para equilibrar los diversos niveles académicos

PILAR 3: EDUCACIÓN Y HABILIDADES
- Formación en la gestión del riesgo
- Apoyo psicoemocional a alumnado y docentes
- Formación en identificación de riesgos desprotección a docentes
- Técnicas y herramientas en la resolución pacífica de conflictos y la promoción cohesión social
- Capacitación en herramientas digitales
- Clases de refuerzo académico

POLÍTICAS HABILITANTES
- Normas y procedimientos para regularizar las Escuelas Seguras
- Indicadores de seguimiento y monitoreo
- Acompañamiento de expertos
- Presupuesto asignado
- Alineamiento de otros actores (donantes, organizaciones internacionales y nacionales)

Source: Educo based on the GADRRRES Comprehensive School Safety Framework

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Recommendations

To the European Union and its institutions

- **Promote adherence to the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.** Through the EU's humanitarian diplomacy mechanisms, encourage the Ukrainian government to join the Framework and become part of the GADRRRES initiative.
- **Adopt, support and share the Comprehensive Framework for Safe Schools.** Recognise the importance of this comprehensive approach and use it as a roadmap in its educational cooperation strategy, as well as encouraging other Member States to do the same.
- **Ensure there is a common objective for all actors.** Share and align visions with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Technology and the United Nations system so that the Safe Schools approach becomes a common strategy that permeates all interventions.
- **Align emergency education funding with the Safe Schools Framework**. By maintaining leadership in education sector funding, ensure that these funds are aligned with the Framework.
- **Ensure that the Framework responds to the significant gaps that exist:**
  - Promote educational equity by reducing the academic differences that are emerging between those who are studying in person and those who are studying remotely, as well as between those who are on the front lines and those in other parts of the country.
  - Invest in early childhood by building shelters that meet all quality standards, promoting access for the most vulnerable families and accompanying this with work-life balance policies.
  - Promote specific initiatives for students with disabilities and special needs by adapting both infrastructure and educational resources.
- **Prioritise mental health and psycho-emotional support programmes for the educational community.** The impact of four years of war is taking its toll on student, teacher and family wellbeing, limiting their development and their ability to socialise, communicate and learn. Therefore, the Framework must:
  - Provide all educational centres with trained psychologists and resources to respond to the high number of needs.
  - Increase the number of these professionals in those centres where there is a greater risk due to their location in the frontline zone, the number of cases referred and the number of students from vulnerable groups.
  - Offer free individual consultation services to vulnerable families where necessary, as well as to teachers who require them.
  - Develop information and training campaigns for families to provide them with resources to manage their children's mental health.
  - Offer ongoing training to teachers with resources and methodologies to use with students, and, as far as possible, make this training face-to-face.

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- **Offer technical support to the Ministry of Education and Technology for the implementation of the Safe Schools Framework**. Through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, offer training so that they can implement the Framework, adding to the support offered by GADRRRES to the countries forming the Framework.
- **Support the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, which Ukraine is a signatory of.** Provide assistance for the systematic collection of data, the non-military use of schools and the other commitments included in the Declaration.
- **Monitor possible violations of the rights of children and adolescents.** Given the high risk of a reduction in key protection staff to report possible violations, the EU must seek mechanisms to equip organisations to perform this crucial function.
- **Put localisation at the heart of the response.** Ukrainian organisations are primarily the ones on the front line, they are the ones that best understand the needs and they are the ones that will remain in the long term, which is why, in line with the Global Humanitarian Summit's commitment to allocate 25% of funds through local organisations, it is essential to reduce the barriers that hinder the financing of these organisations and encourage their participation in planning, decision-making and accountability.
- **Seek innovative sources of funding.** Recognising that we are facing an unprecedented global funding crisis, it will be key to seek innovative and impactful partnerships that can respond to enormous humanitarian needs, including educational ones.
- **Prepare for an adequate and secure transition from temporary protection.** Facilitate access to secure residence permits and provide long-term solutions that allow refugees to rebuild their lives. Special attention should be paid to people in vulnerable situations who cannot access work or study permits, ensuring that they receive adequate residence status to prevent them from falling into irregularity or destitution. At the same time, continuous access to healthcare, mental health and psychosocial support, housing, education and social services must be guaranteed, both during the transition and after people receive their new status.

To Member States, including Spain

- **Adhere to the Comprehensive School Safety Framework.** While only three European countries have already done so (Croatia, Italy and Finland), the addition of other Member States could generate political momentum for this agenda.
- **Promote Ukraine's adherence to the Comprehensive Framework for School Safety.** Through bilateral humanitarian diplomacy mechanisms, encourage the Ukrainian government to join the Framework and become part of the GADRRRES initiative.
- **Adopt, support and disseminate the Safe Schools Framework.** Recognise the importance of this comprehensive approach and use it as a roadmap in your educational cooperation strategy, as well as encouraging other Member States to do the same.
- **Promote the Framework as a common goal for all actors.** Through the cooperation agencies of European countries, share and align visions with the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Technology and with the United Nations system so that the Safe Schools approach becomes a common strategy that permeates all interventions.

- **Increase funding for education in emergencies and align it with the Safe Schools Framework.** Achieve 10% of humanitarian funding for the education sector and align it with the interventions identified for the implementation of the Framework.
- **Ensure that the Framework responds to the significant gaps that exist:**
  - Promote educational equity by reducing the academic differences that are emerging between those who are studying in person and those who are studying remotely, as well as those who are on the front line compared to students in other areas.
  - Invest in early childhood by building shelters that meet all quality standards, promoting access to them among the most vulnerable families and accompanying this with work-life balance policies.
  - Promote specific initiatives for students with disabilities and special needs by adapting both infrastructure and educational resources.
- **Prioritise mental health and psycho-emotional support programmes for the educational community.** The impact of four years of war is taking its toll on the wellbeing of students, teachers and families, stunting their development and their ability to socialise, communicate and learn. Therefore, the Framework must:
  - Provide all educational centres with trained psychologists and resources to respond to the immense needs.
  - Increase the number of these professionals in those centres where there is a greater risk due to their location in the frontline zone, the number of cases referred and the number of students from vulnerable groups.
  - Offering free individual consultation services to vulnerable families where necessary, as well as to teachers who require them.
  - Develop information and training campaigns for families to provide them with resources to manage their children's mental health.
  - Offer continuous training to teachers with resources and methodologies to use with students, and, as far as possible, make this training face-to-face.
- **Support the implementation of the Safe Schools Declaration, which Ukraine is a signatory of.** Provide assistance for the systematic collection of data, the non-military use of schools and the other commitments included in the Declaration.
- **Monitor possible violations of the rights of children and adolescents.** Given the high risk of a reduction in key protection personnel to report possible violations, the EU must seek mechanisms to equip organisations to perform this crucial function.
- **Put localisation at the heart of the response.** Ukrainian organisations are fundamentally on the front line, they are the ones who best understand the needs and who will remain in the long term, which is why, in line with the Global Humanitarian Summit's commitment to allocate 25% of funds through local organisations, it is essential to reduce the barriers that hinder the financing of these organisations and encourage their participation in planning, decision-making and accountability.
- **Seek innovative sources of funding.** Recognising that we are facing an unprecedented global funding crisis, it will be key to seek innovative and impactful partnerships that can respond to enormous humanitarian needs, including educational ones.
- **Prepare for an adequate and secure transition from temporary protection.** Facilitate access to secure residence permits and provide long-term solutions that allow refugees to

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rebuild their lives. Special attention should be paid to people in vulnerable situations who cannot access work or study permits, ensuring that they receive adequate residence status to prevent them from falling into irregularity or destitution. At the same time, continuous access to healthcare, mental health and psychosocial support, housing, education and social services must be guaranteed, both during the transition and after people receive their new status.

The work of the Child Fund Alliance: there is no learning without emotional wellbeing

Evidence, literature and Educo's own experience confirm that without a certain level of emotional wellbeing, there can be no effective learning (Meshko et al., 2023).

For this reason, at **Educo**, our interventions aim to address these two dimensions, creating a vicious cycle. Since the beginning of the war, we have responded to refugees in Moldova and displaced persons in Ukraine, reaching more than 240,000 children and adolescents together with our partner organisations such as Smart Osvita and RAC.

This has been implemented through two programmes:

1. Educational continuity, which involves providing remedial classes to close learning gaps, enabling online distance learning for safe and uninterrupted education, and offering psycho-emotional support for teachers managing stress and anxiety in crisis environments. The programme also includes podcasts of lessons so that students can follow classes remotely.
2. Psycho-emotional support, which is delivered through multipurpose centres offering structured MHPSS activities, group sessions in socio-emotional learning, recreational activities, summer camps, and educational games in shelters. The programme also includes awareness-raising workshops on issues such as child trafficking, gender-based violence, and other protection concerns.

Alongside these actions, we carry out advocacy, communication and dissemination work to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents, especially the right to education, recognising the challenges that still exist in guaranteeing this right.

In addition, **ChildFund Germany** and **WeWorld**, who are members of the Child Fund Alliance network (part of Joining Forces), are contributing to this response using a Triple Nexus approach. This combines secure service delivery points with mobile outreach activities, the structured integration of psychosocial and mental health support into educational programmes, and support for the national care reform process in Kyiv, together with close coordination with local child care systems, including family-type homes and institutional care networks, to ensure continuity of care and protective environments in an unstable and constantly evolving context. To this end, the following interventions have been carried out:
- Distribution of vouchers and cash directly to vulnerable families with children, giving priority to the most affected areas: 15,000 beneficiaries, of whom 8,600 are children.

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- Child-friendly spaces and safe learning environments: In Kharkiv, these serve as stable reference points for children living in a protracted crisis. They offer structured and routine educational support, creative and therapeutic activities, and ongoing emotional support.

-Expanded mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services: mobile teams and a call centre for carers provide psychosocial support directly in communities, focusing on coping strategies, emotional regulation and strengthening the capacity of carers.

-Support for families with increased vulnerability in terms of housing and the restoration of water, heating and essential services contributes to safety, dignity, hygiene and stability in the environment, which are essential for children.

-WASH and safe living conditions: Rehabilitation of facilities, promotion of hygiene, preparation for winter and restoration of essential services. More than 150 homes and 13 health centres have been rehabilitated.

-Risk education in a changing threat environment: Mine risk education is adapted to the daily reality of children in areas with damaged infrastructure and changing exposure risks.

- Psychosocial support and specialised training for teachers, enabling them to teach effectively and strengthening their ability to manage challenges in the classroom.

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