



## **FUTURE-READY**

### **Keeping Ukraine's Children Healthy & Educated (...a program of the Ukraine Children's Action Project)**

#### The Challenge:

*Whenever children are exposed to extreme psychological trauma, accompanied by persistent learning disruption they are vulnerable to factors that can sidetrack their futures – and the future of their societies.*

- The longer *severe stress* impacts children, the more difficult it is to treat sadness and grief. And the longer it takes to regain their normal vibrancy and essential energy. Vibrancy and energy are – or should be - the classic characteristics of children anywhere on the planet. These are the tools that permit children and youth to stay optimistic, happy – and always looking to the future, ready to take their places in society as productive, resilient citizens.
- Persistent *educational disruption* is also a major challenge that presents as a powerful underminer of a child's future. If education is disrupted at critical moments of a child's education or development, it may be extremely difficult to catch-up. The fact is that trauma and loss of educational continuity can affect everything from a child's ability to succeed, to the ability of a society to excel in every measure, to its capacity to recover from a major disaster, terrorism, forced migration or war.

#### Ukraine's Children:

In the modern era, Ukraine has been under attack from Russia since 2014. But the ferocity and civilian focus of Russia's unrelenting siege of Ukraine's east and south has no recent parallel. The loss of life and injuries sustained by Ukrainians since February 24, 2022 has been staggering

And the children have taken a particularly heavy toll. Mass, traumatic evacuations from residential communities, prolonged sheltering under terrible conditions, bombardments at evacuation sites, fathers and husbands left behind and loved ones lost have been the reality of life for children since the invasion began.

This is just the beginning. For those children who find safety – usually, not always, with families- these respites are not home. And these stays are not likely to be short-term.

Ukraine has a special challenge with respect to children. With only about 7.5 million children out of nearly 42 million total population, the youth of Ukraine are particularly critical to the vibrancy of the country's future. This means that the reality of more than 5 million of Ukraine children being refugees or internally displaced is even more of an existential crisis.

How many of these children will “return home”? And if and when they do, will they be ready to take up the mantle of eventually rebuilding their country? Unfortunately the answer will be a resounding *no* if they are suffering from longstanding psychological trauma and have fallen far behind in their educations.

**Future-Ready** suggests a program specifically designed to pull children through the massive trauma of displacement, grief and disconnection.

**The point is to make sure children and youth remain mentally healthy, educated and resilient.**

Here's how to get started:

1. **Assure appropriate support for psychologically traumatized children in all classrooms** – including training teachers to identify and refer children who need special interventions.
2. **Screen every child for vision deficits** –on school entry and annually, provide corrective glasses immediately when needed
3. **Ensure that no child is suffering from hunger/ food insecurity** – making sure that meals and food supplements are available as needed every day around the calendar

Two additional considerations...

- School age children must be **in classrooms** or have access to high quality, **supervised remote learning systems** – always with Ukrainian fluent teachers and therapists, in addition to language of host the country.
- All children should be **screened and managed for chronic medical conditions**

*War and the prolonged displacement of children can be active threats to children's futures. Coping with psychological stress and not losing educational momentum are top priorities for all of Ukraine.*

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**[www.UkraineCAP.org](http://www.UkraineCAP.org)**