

# Ukraine Conflict Analysis Brief



20 April 2022

## The Impact of the Conflict on Children

### Key Takeaways

- Airstrikes, shelling, crossfire and the targeting of civilian areas continues to result in the death and injury of children. By April 15, 50 days since the conflict began, official figures showed that 153 children had lost their lives and a further 246 were injured, with the actual number likely to be far higher. Moreover, the number of testimonies regarding protection incidents affecting children in Ukraine is increasing (allegations of rape, kidnapping, hostage taking etc.). These incidents, coupled with the overall impact of the war and of the displacement, will inevitably have a heavy negative impact on children's mental health.
- Education was disrupted for 5.7 million children in Ukraine, as schools shut down at the start of the war. While there are efforts to restart education for children including through a national online education platform, difficulties persist. In conflict-affected areas, security concerns coupled with the lack of access to electricity and internet hamper the access to education services. The capacity of schools in both IDPs hosting regions and in countries hosting refugees can be limited in terms of teachers, infrastructure, materials. Language can be an additional challenge for refugees.
- Many of the children in the conflict areas of Ukraine are facing life increasing poor living conditions characterised by damaged houses, the presence of unexploded ordinance and a lack of access to basic utilities such as clean water, electricity and heating. Millions more struggle from the impact of displacement, experiencing unfamiliar, often overcrowded conditions, having left friends and family behind.
- The conflict is having an increasing impact on the availability of health care, especially in conflict-affected areas, where many health facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and travelling to health facilities carries its own risk. Exacerbating factors such as overcrowding, a lack of WASH facilities and difficulties in obtaining enough food are impacting children of all ages, although especially concerning for the youngest and those with underlying health conditions.
- A lack of food has been flagged in conflict affected areas, but also by some IDPs and refugees leaving children tired, hungry and scared.

## Introduction

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At the time of the Russian Federation military offensive on 24 February 2022, Ukraine's population was estimated to be around 41.4 million, with 5.7 million of those of school aged children (between 3 and 17 years old) and approximately one million children aged 0 - 2 years ([OCHA 02/03/2022](#), [world population review](#) accessed 17/04/2022). All these children have been impacted either directly or indirectly by the war. This brief covers the impact of the conflict on the children of Ukraine, including those remaining in conflict affected areas, those displaced within their own country and those who have crossed borders into the five neighbouring countries of Poland, Romania, Hungary, Moldova, and Slovakia.

### **The number of children who are IDPs, refugees or who are in conflict affected areas is not fully known**

There are significant gaps in the data available, not least of which are the numbers of children displaced or in conflict affected areas. Internally, IOM has conducted two rounds of surveys to estimate the current IDP numbers which stand at around 7.14 million as of April 1, 2022. There is a government system to allow the registration of IDPs, but the sheer volume of those on the move means that most have not yet been able to register. As the surveys were carried out at macro region level it is not easy to determine how many of the displaced are no longer in conflict-affected areas. Finally the surveys do not easily provide what proportion of the displaced are children ([IOM 01/04/2022](#)). Similar challenges are faced with refugee numbers. UNHCR reports 4,869,019 refugees as of April 16, 2022. However, as countries such as Poland and Romania facilitated the movement of refugees into their territories there was no process to record the age, gender and other characteristics (such as disability) of those fleeing Ukraine. Estimates indicate that roughly 40% of refugees electing to stay in Romania are children, whilst the number is nearer 50% for those in Moldova, but overall there is very limited data on the demographic makeup of refugee influx ([NRC 14/04/2022](#), [UNHCR](#) accessed 17/04/2022, [CARE](#) 16/03/2022).

## Children face Multiple Protection Risks

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*As the war continues, the number of testimonies regarding protection incidents affecting children in Ukraine has increased. However, these cases remain anecdotal and concern mainly the populations in conflict-affected areas. Furthermore, due to the lack of access to conflict zones and the lack of protection services, information and figures are difficult to verify. In addition to casualties, allegations of rape and kidnapping of children are being reported. Sources show that children on the move are also at risk of human trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation with unaccompanied and separated children amongst the most vulnerable. These incidents coupled with the overall impact of the war and of the displacement inevitably affect children's mental health. This remains a major issue with the scale-up of an appropriate response needed in both conflict-areas and in refugee host countries.*

### **Children in Ukraine have been victims of violence generated by the war where even child hospitals have been damaged by airstrikes and shelling**

Since the start of the Russian military offensive, OHCHR reports that 153 children have been killed and a further 246 injured, although the actual figure is likely to be much higher ([OHCHR 12/04/2022](#)) As well as losing their lives to airstrikes, and shelling there are allegations of children being kidnapped, raped or taken as hostages.

Russian troops have been taking large groups of populations as hostages numerous times, including children. According to media sources, in some cases, children were reported to have been targeted as hostages for residents not to divulge enemies' coordinates. Children were also allegedly used as 'human shields' for Russian convoys ([Censor 04/04/2022](#), [The Guardian 02/04/2022](#)).

Moreover, the president of Ukraine accused Russian troops to be raping children, sometimes in front of their families as reported by victims. A Russian soldier was even arrested after filming himself abusing a baby. Investigations are undergoing for such cases of rape and sexual abuse on children in the country ([UNSC](#) 11/04/2022, [OSRSG Sexual Violence in Conflict](#) 07/04/2022, [OCHA](#) 06/04/2022).

Kidnapping of Ukrainian children is another threat exposed by Ukrainian officials. The Ukrainian president claimed that about 2,000 children were taken by Russian troops from the city of Mariupol while the Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights mentioned the possibility that this figure could reach up to 120,000 children for the whole country ( [Al Jazeera](#) 12/04/2022, [Ukraine UN](#) 11/04/2022, [Child Protection AoR](#) 01/04/2022, [The Guardian](#) 28/03/2022).

**Attacks in Mykolaiv also damaged a children's hospital, an orphanage and an oncology centre; and at least 14 people were injured.**

As of April 17, 174 confirmed attacks on health care have been documented via the [Surveillance System for Attacks on Health Care](#) (SSA), resulting in 142 deaths and 81 injuries, including children. These attacks have also damaged maternity and paediatric hospitals. These attacks have left patients in maternity wards and children's hospitals in conflict-affected areas hiding underground with little light and limited access to medicine, clean water and food. The most vulnerable and critical cases, such as babies in neonatal intensive care units or those who have their beds equipped with endotracheal tubes, monitors and machines, are not portable. Therefore, moving to a safer area such as the hospital basement is not an option, thereby, leaving them exposed to air raids ([Reuters](#) 28/02/2022, [Global News](#) 27/03/2022, [Save the Children](#) 01/03/2022).

### **Mental health care and psychosocial support are major needs for children surviving and/or fleeing conflict-related violence**

The various impacts of the war have caused a high level of stress for many children. Some have been the victims of violence, other witnesses to it. Children have lived in fear of shelling and air-raids. Many have been deprived of access to enough food, adequate water, proper sanitation, or healthcare. As well as their own stress they have witnessed the stress of their caregiver. In many cases they have fled their homes, sometimes some to be separated from their families or one or more of their parents. All these factors increase the risks for children to experience emotional harm and develop mental health issues including depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, resulting in emotional and physical symptoms. Avenues to help deal with this stress have also been closed. The breakdown of their routines and structures, the inability to go to school and spend time with their peer groups, the lack of opportunities to just play and be children in a safe place all further exacerbate the impact of the conflict on their mental health. As a result, mental health and psychosocial support stands as one of the most urgent needs for displaced children ([EuroChild](#) 11/04/2022, [The Guardian](#) 05/04/2022, [UNFPA](#) 05/04/2022, [Save the Children](#) 04/04/2022, [Al Jazeera](#) 31/03/2022).

Of particular concern are unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) who require more specific protection and care as the impact of family separation can be more severe for children who lack the benefit of their caregivers' support. Children who were previously internally displaced (before the war) and who have suffered further displacement or exposure to violence are also particularly vulnerable to psychological harm. Finally, this comes on top of the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on many children's mental health, causing depression and anxiety for some ([Child Protection AoR](#) 08/04/2022, [Child Protection AoR](#) 01/04/2022, [The Conservation](#) 20/03/2022, [OCHA](#) 09/02/2021).

## **Children on the move are at high risk being separated from their families and of human trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation with unaccompanied children being the most vulnerable**

With approximately two thirds of Ukraine's 7.5 million children displaced (either internally or as refugees) there are serious concerns of the risk of human trafficking. Children on the move face higher protection risks, and even more vulnerable, are those children who are travelling unaccompanied or who get separated from their families. UNHCR in Moldova estimates that at least two percent of refugee children entering the country are unaccompanied or separated, and if replicated in other countries would indicate that there are tens of thousands of children in this situation. Reports from Missing Children Europe are warning of child disappearance at the borders (8 cases reported by the end of March, outside of Ukraine) ([UNHCR](#) 08/04/2022, [Euro Child](#) 11/04/2022, [Missing Children Europe](#) 25/03/2022). Gender-based violence, sexual abuse and exploitation were also flagged by humanitarian actors as main threats for these children, particularly at border crossing points and in transit or collective centres. The child protection AoR reported that groups involved in human trafficking and kidnappings became more active while Polish media reported the rape of women and of children at the border ([Euro News](#) 12/04/2022, [UNSC](#) 11/04/2022, [OCHA](#) 06/04/2022, [CP AoR](#) 01/04/2022, [WHO](#) 31/03/2022, [UN Women](#) 31/03/2022, [OCHA](#) 30/03/2022, [IPS](#) 30/03/2022, [Wyborcza](#) 30/03/2022).

## **The lack of protection services is a driver of increasing protection risks**

Inside Ukraine, while some cases of sexual violence are under investigation and even sent to the International Criminal Court by the Prosecutor General, for some other survivors, telling their stories or receiving help can be more difficult. This can be explained by fear, psychological harm or by the fact that some victims can be hard to reach due to the conflict. This is aggravated by the fact that there is both a lack of protection services for children and a lack of law enforcement agencies in conflict-affected areas. According to REACH assessments in settlements in conflict-affected areas (Donetska, Kharskiva, Luhanska and Zaporizka), all assessed settlements reported having concerns regarding child welfare services disruption ([Radio Free Liberty](#) 12/04/2022, [REACH](#) 07/04/2022, [OCHA](#) 06/04/2022, [The Guardian](#) 03/04/2022, [CP AoR](#) 01/04/2022, [UN Women](#) 16/03/2022). In areas hosting IDPs, access to health and social services also declines due to the war ([UNFPA](#) 08/04/2022).

Similar issues appear in countries hosting refugees. Indeed, the language barrier and the lack of child psychologists is an additional challenge for adequate response. Furthermore, there is a lack of training for teachers to address mental health needs of refugees ([ABC News](#) 14/04/2022, [EuroChild](#) 11/04/2022).

## **Children with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of the war**

Even though there is little information on the current challenges faced by children with disabilities since the war began, this remains a population group particularly vulnerable to physical and mental harm as well as to challenges regarding access to basic services. It is estimated that about 164,000 children with disabilities lived in Ukraine, a large part residing in institutional care. This poses multiple risks, notably with the institutional staff escaping from the war and thus the risks of abandonment. While children with disabilities can have difficulties to flee, the lack of access to medicines, shelter, food and water can aggravate their health conditions in conflict-affected areas. For those who could find shelter in other cities or countries, the heightened need of stability, continuity and security must be appropriately responded to in order to avoid additional health issues (both mental and physical) ([UNICEF](#) 09/04/2022, [UN DPPA](#) 05/04/2022, [OHCHR](#) 28/03/2022, [JHA](#) 28/03/2022, [OHCHR](#) 24/03/2022, [UNHCR](#) 18/03/2022, [UNHCR](#) 07/03/2022, [Protection Cluster](#) 03/03/2022, [HOPE](#) 03/03/2022).

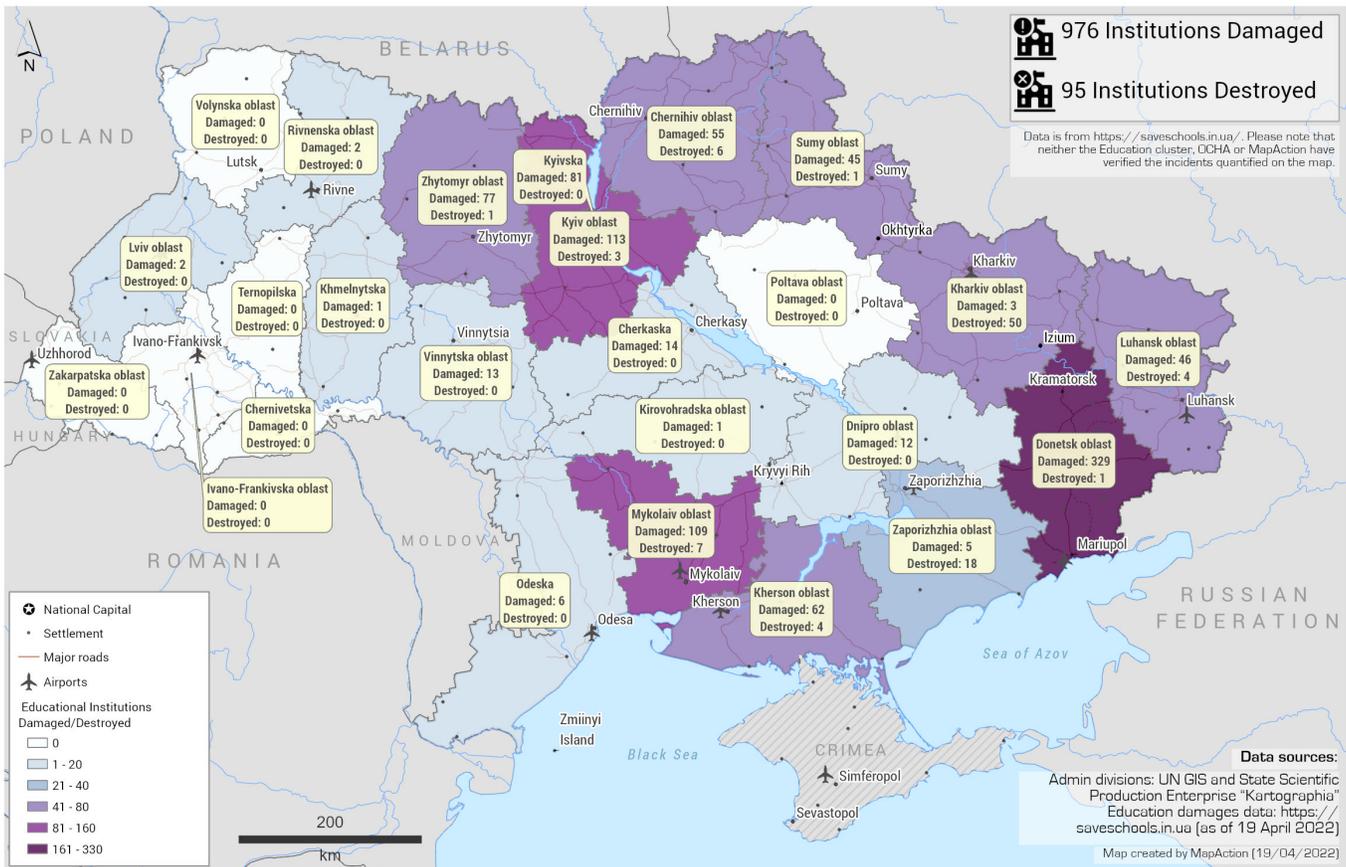
## Disruption to Education services continue with many children unable to continue their schooling

Education was disrupted for 5.7 million children in Ukraine, as schools shut down at the start of the war. While there are efforts to restart education for children including through a national online education platform, difficulties persist. IDP children still face many challenges such as lack of teachers and educational materials. The situation for refugee children is even more difficult as many fled with limited possession and education services are provided in a different language. Educational facilities in IDP hosting regions within Ukraine and refugee hosting countries may potentially be overwhelmed with large numbers of new students. Children in conflict-affected areas are facing limited access to education as a result of continuous attacks on education facilities, a lack of electricity and internet access, limited space due to repurposed facilities and risks during travelling to and from school.



Ukraine: Complex Emergency

Damage to Educational Institutions by Oblast (from [www.saveschools.in.ua](https://www.saveschools.in.ua) - as of 19 April 2022)



Note: data for this map is publicly available at [www.saveschools.in.ua](https://www.saveschools.in.ua) but has not been independently verified

### Continuous attacks on education facilities especially in Eastern Ukraine have resulted in limited availability and access to education

As a result of continuous bombings and shelling, hundreds of educational facilities have been destroyed. Save the Children estimates that on average more than 20 schools per day have been attacked since February 24. As of April 19, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine reported that 976 educational facilities have been damaged or destroyed across the country, out of which 95 have been completely destroyed ([censor 07/04/2022](#), [OCHA 06/04/2022](#), [Save Schools](#) accessed 19/04/2022).

Most of the destruction is reported in Eastern Ukraine, where fighting is most intense; putting more than 400,000 children - who were living in Eastern Ukraine before the conflict - at risk of losing education. Over 41% located in Donetsk, Kharkivska, Luhanska, and Zaporizka (south-east) oblasts, have been damaged ([Save Schools](#) accessed 15/04/2022, [OCHA](#) 14/04/2022, [Save the Children](#) 04/04/2022). The extent of the damage was also reflected in the Rapid Needs Assessment of conflict-affected areas in Eastern oblasts, where 69% of assessed settlements reported that schools or education facilities had been damaged. This was reported in Kostiantynivka, Sloviansk, and Mariupol (Donetska oblast); Chuhuiv, Iziium, Kharkiv, and Lozova (Kharkivska oblast); and Lysychansk, Rubizhne, Popasna, and Sievierodonetsk (Luhanska oblast) ([REACH](#) 06/04/2022).

**Across Ukraine, 976 Education facilities have been damaged and 95 of those have been completely destroyed.**

The lack of access to education is impacting learning and potentially endangering the future of 5.7 million school-age children and 1.5 million students in higher education. According to the RNA in eastern oblasts, Amongst the assessed settlements, 81% reported a disruption to education services for the Rapid Needs Assessment (Eastern oblasts) – this excluded Lozova, Pervomaiski, and Pokrovsk ([REACH](#) 06/04/2022). Some of the regions in Eastern Ukraine were already struggling with limited education services since hostilities broke out in 2014, disrupting education ([UNICEF](#) 11/04/2022). The lack of schools does not only mean less learning opportunities for children, but also a loss of a protective space and a sense of normality. Education also protects children from exploitation. Children outside of education are at greater risk of abuse, human trafficking, and integration into armed groups ([Geneva Solutions](#) 25/03/2022, [UNICEF](#) 18/02/2022)

### **School closures and repurposed education spaces is further limiting availability of education services**

Hundreds of schools and educational facilities across the country have been used as shelters and emergency accommodation for civilians. Other schools are being used for military purposes, or by aid workers as distribution points such as the one in Chernihiv. The education situation is exacerbated due to the nationwide school closures since late February due to the security situation ([UNICEF](#) 11/04/2022, [ABC](#) 06/04/2022, [AP News](#) 06/04/2022, [Geneva Solutions](#) 25/03/2022).

### **Online education is ongoing, but lack of teachers and educational materials are likely to exacerbate education needs**

Exams in Ukraine are cancelled for the year, but some schools have reopened though distance-learning programmes. As of March 28, primary and secondary education has resumed in 13 regions out of 24, through a remote learning modality reaching three million children. Ukraine had set up a distance-learning infrastructure in response to COVID-19 through a national platform which was launched in December 2020 called “[All-Ukrainian School Online](#)”. This is now being utilised to reach students impacted by the hostilities and unable to go to schools. Other distance-learning modalities are being established through the government and humanitarian organisations. There are also initiatives to support and provide access to education for children being reported in cities such as Lviv hosting displaced children. In the case of Lviv, the city established a network of regional interactive educational spaces. In addition to the online-learning modalities, children who are temporarily internally displaced have the opportunity to join the school at the place of temporary residence ([UNICEF](#) 02/04/2022, [Ukrinform](#) 13/04/2022, [UN Women](#) 31/03/2022, [Ukrinform](#) 28/03/2022, [Geneva Solutions](#) 25/03/2022, [UNICEF](#) 16/03/2022).

However, schools remain closed in many of the conflict-affected areas due to the ongoing security situation. Even for those children who could access online classes, many face difficulties due to the lack of computers, internet access, electricity, books and stationery, as well as the lack of surroundings conducive to hours of studying ([UNICEF](#) 02/04/2022, [UN Women](#) 31/03/2022).

Even where schools can open there are shortages of teachers and other educational personnel, as many teachers have been displaced or left Ukraine. Most teachers in the country are women, who make up the majority of the displaced population. It is estimated that around 22,000 Ukrainian teachers have left the country as a result of the conflict. Also in Eastern Ukraine 30% of education facilities reported not having enough teachers before the conflict ([interfax](#) 14/04/2022, [OCHA](#) 04/04/2022, [Save the Children](#) 04/04/2022, [Financial Assets](#) 05/04/2022, [UNICEF](#) 27/03/2022, [OCHA](#) 23/03/2022, [Al Jazeera](#) 21/03/2022).

**Hosting countries are supporting the integration of refugee children into national education systems but there are concerns that in some areas, local education services will be overwhelmed.**

**In Poland, host to over 2.5 million people fleeing the conflict, an estimated 130,000 children have already enrolled in Polish schools.**

Governments in Ukraine's neighbouring countries are supporting the integration of Ukrainian children into national education systems. Efforts in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and The Republic of Moldova are allowing tens of thousands of Ukrainian children access to education services.

In Poland, host to over 2.5 million people fleeing the conflict, an estimated 130,000 children have already enrolled in Polish schools. To support this influx, Ukrainian teachers are being hired as 'teacher's assistants' with 79 schools reported to have hired teachers who know Ukrainian or Russian, and at least basic Polish enabling them to act as interpreters. Polish language classes are also being offered to adults and students with a focus on Ukrainian teachers and educational professionals who want to work in Polish schools but do not speak Polish. Local organisations and charities are also working with the government to provide essential education supplies including school kits. Laptop computers have also been provided to enable children to access Ukrainian classes online ([Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft](#) 12/04/2022, [kurierlubelski](#) 12/04/2022, [wyborcza](#) 11/04/2022, [The First News](#) 31/03/2022, [The first news](#) 28/03/2022, [wyborcza](#) 28/03/2022).

In Romania, language classes are also available with large numbers of refugee children expected to enter the education system. The government has set up six working groups to design inclusion and protection policy measures including for the education sector ([adevarul](#) 24/03/2022, [romanioliberal](#) 23/03/2022).

By early April, Slovakia reported 6,248 Ukrainian pupils had entered into the Slovak education system; In Hungary schools are receiving approximately 350 Euro per child a month to integrate Ukrainian students with extra classes held in the afternoon ([hnonline](#) 07/04/2022, [Euronews](#) 01/04/2022, [abouthungary](#) 24/03/2022).

In Moldova (by April 12), 1,858 applications had been submitted to access education by the children of refugees from Ukraine. The percentage of children trying to enrol is probably lower than in other countries as many refugees in Moldova appear likely to move on. Education is carried out in Romanian and Russian languages, with Russian being a native tongue for many Ukrainians. UNICEF has started a national teacher training programme to help deal with the needs of refugee children addressing issues such as bullying or violence and to foster tolerance and social cohesion ([moldpres](#) 12/04/2022, [UNHCR](#) 08/04/2022, [IOM](#) 27/03/2022).

There are concerns however at the sheer volume of children entering into neighbouring countries. As many as 700,000 Ukrainian students may ultimately enrol in Polish schools, requiring a significant increase in resources, not least of which would be new teachers. Countries such as Romania and Hungary are seeing smaller numbers of refugees, but also have smaller populations so in percentage terms the caseload is relatively similar. In addition, although Ukrainian are able to enrol in host country schools, Third Country Nationals may not enjoy the same rights ([wyborcza](#) 28/03/2022, [wyborcza](#) 24/03/2022, [IRC](#) 24/03/2022).

## Children are living in damaged homes or overcrowded communal centres often with a lack of access to adequate WASH facilities

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*Many of the children in the conflict areas of Ukraine are facing life increasing poor living conditions characterised by damaged houses, the presence of unexploded ordnance and a lack of access to basic utilities such as clean water, electricity and heating. Millions more struggle from the impact of displacement, experiencing unfamiliar, often overcrowded conditions, having left friends and family behind.*

### **Shelter destruction in Eastern Ukraine is causing children to shelter in inadequate conditions, and attacks are leaving many facing health risks**

Eastern Ukraine continues to bear the brunt of the intensifying hostilities, with thousands of people cut off from gas and water supplies and residential buildings repeatedly hit by shelling ([OCHA 05/04/2022](#)). According to the REACH Rapid Needs Assessment in Eastern oblasts, 75% of assessed settlements reported damage to housing as a concern. Amongst this group, it was reported in 50% of settlements a quarter or more of dwellings were damaged since the escalation of the conflict. The settlements reporting the highest proportion of dwellings affected were Sievierdonetsk, Popasna, and Iziurm (more than 75% of dwellings) ([REACH 06/04/2022](#)). As a result, women and children in conflict-affected areas are spending a lot of time in inadequate shelter situations such as crowded basements or metro stations, increasing the risk of infections ([UNICEF 31/03/2022](#), [BBC 28/03/2022](#)).

At the same time, the continuous attacks are preventing people from safely evacuating ([OCHA 05/04/2022](#)). This means that some children are sheltering inside buildings that are under attack often without adequate access to electricity and heating. In addition, shelter cluster partners report that the distribution of shelter emergency kits and NFI kits is constrained by operational capacity and limited humanitarian access ([OCHA 14/04/2022](#)).

Western Ukraine is overwhelmed with the large number of IDPs, western oblasts are facing difficulties in identifying accommodation for those who cannot make arrangements on their own in the medium term. This population is temporarily accommodated in reception and collective centres ([OCHA 14/04/2022](#)).

### **Access to clean water particularly critical for young children and infants**

1.4 million people are without access to piped water in eastern Ukraine and a further 4.6 million people across the country are at risk of losing water supply. The intensification of fighting in the east and the widespread use of explosive weapons in populated areas threatens to further decimate the water system, which is now at risk of complete collapse. This was also reflected in the Rapid Needs Assessment in Eastern oblasts where 50% of assessment settlements reported disruption to water supply as a concern, out of which 63% reported that the supply was disrupted on at least a daily basis in the 7 days prior to data collection. This is especially concerning for children, as children who live in conflict zones are 20 times more likely to die from diarrhoeal diseases linked to unsafe water than from direct violence, as a result of war; children's bodies cannot withstand wide fluctuations in food and water intake, and so they are at high risk of dehydration. Low and poor water supply can also cause outbreaks of communicable diseases. This risk increases with limited access to healthcare and food ([UNICEF 13/04/2022](#), [MSF 11/03/2022](#)).

### **Limited data on the suitability of facilities for refugee children in collective centres**

Across the five countries covered by this study, the vast majority of refugees are staying in private accommodation, either rented, with friends/family, being hosted by locals or in hotels. However there are also tens of thousands who are housed in collective centres that are often repurposed such as churches, schools or student dormitories ([NRC 14/04/2022](#), [REACH 24/03/2022](#)).

Although there is limited data available, evidence points to a need for better sanitation and hygiene provision at border crossing and reception centres. Assessments in Poland indicate that although border crossings and reception centres have toilets there is an urgent need for larger toilets with better lighting and more thorough and frequent cleaning. In addition, there is a lack of disability-accessible toilets. More showers and bathing spaces are needed at reception centres where space is often not disaggregated by sex. There was also a lack of sanitary materials for women and girls ([UNHCR, UNICEF](#) 07/04/2022, [CARE](#) 16/03/2022).

In Hungary it was observed that where refugees are housed in makeshift shelters such as gyms and schools, sanitation facilities and cooking space are often limited for the number of people present. Data from assessments in Moldova however found that more than 80% of the refugee accommodation centres (RAC) had adequate WASH facilities, although less than a third of the centres were accessible for people with disabilities ([ACAPS](#) 01/04/2022, [REACH](#) 24/03/2022).

The provision of children friendly spaces (CFS) also differed with two thirds of RACs in Moldova having CFS on the premises or nearby, whilst these were mostly lacking at reception centres in Poland ([UNHCR, UNICEF](#) 07/04/2022, [REACH](#) 24/03/2022).

### **Children with disabilities and children in homes or orphanages are facing difficulties in evacuating from cities in conflict-affected areas and finding accessible shelters**

Many children with disabilities are reportedly unable to leave their homes due to physical and access constraints. Many shelters are also inaccessible to people with physical disabilities, and information on emergency evacuation protocols is not available in accessible formats, leaving them at risk of attacks. Even before the war, there was a lack of specialized services and stigma around disability. Many children with disabilities remain in residential institutions such as orphanages, psychiatric facilities, residential boarding schools, group homes segregated from society and where they are left without adequate support and protection. Similar situation is impacting an estimated 100,000 children who were living across 700 institutional care settings before the war; only around one-in-five are orphans, with the rest separated from their families due to poverty, drugs, alcoholism or poor health ([IDA](#) accessed 16/04/2022, [UN Women](#) 31/03/2022, [Euractiv](#) 28/03/2022, [The Conversation](#) 17/03/2022, [DRI](#) 01/03/2022).

## **Lack of food and access to healthcare likely to impact children's immediate and long-term health**

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*The conflict is having an increasing impact on the availability of health care, especially in conflict-affected areas, where many health facilities have been damaged or destroyed, and travelling to health facilities carries its own risk. Exacerbating factors such as overcrowding, a lack of WASH facilities and difficulties in obtaining enough food are impacting children of all ages, although especially concerning for the youngest and those with underlying health conditions. A lack of food has been flagged in conflict affected areas, but also by some IDPs and refugees, leaving children tired, hungry and scared. Ensuring enough support is provided to pregnant women and those with infants is also a challenge across all affected groups.*

### **Children, infants, and breastfeeding women are in need of lifesaving nutrition assistance due to limited availability and access to food, including food for infants**

According to the REACH Rapid Needs Assessment in Eastern oblasts, it was reported in 67% of settlements that food items were inaccessible in the 7 days prior to data collection. Of these, 50% reported that more than half of the population was affected by this lack of access. The settlements reporting the highest proportion of population affected by lack of access to food items were Sievierdonetsk, Popasna, and Izium (more than 75% of the population). Respondents in Mariupol and Rubizhne refused to answer this question ([REACH](#) 06/04/2022). However, other

sources have highlighted the dire food situation in the encircled city of Mariupol, where food reserves have been dwindling since the beginning of the war, this includes essential baby food for almost 3,000 new-born babies ([VOA 15/04/2022](#), [UN Women 31/03/2022](#)).

The lack of food is also captured in the UN Women Survey<sup>1</sup>, where CSOs highlighted the acute need for basic life-sustaining support, with a specific need for food, including baby food. It is clear from requests by women's CSOs, that women are highly concerned for their children. Anecdotal evidence in the women survey states "For women with children there is a challenge to meet the vital needs of the child, especially minors and newborns" ([UN Women 22/03/2022](#)).

In all emergencies, the youngest children are at the highest risk of illness and mortality. This puts infants at an estimated that over two million children under the age of five and pregnant and breastfeeding women in Ukraine at risk, many of those will be amongst the displaced. Already a high percentage of infants in Ukraine are partially or fully dependent on infant formula, with low rates of exclusive breastfeeding. This means that children, infants and breastfeeding women are in need of lifesaving nutrition assistance and it is important to ensure the availability of breastmilk substitutes ([Nutrition cluster 07/04/2022](#), [WHO 31/03/2022](#), [WHO 24/03/2022](#)).

### **Limited access to health care impacts children's immediate and long-term health**

The Ukraine's health system is overwhelmed with the health impacts of the conflict, increasing the risk to the lives and health of mothers and babies. In addition, there are many challenges to accessing health care, with active hostilities and a lack of public transport restricting movement. According to the REACH Rapid Needs Assessment in Eastern oblasts, 50% of assessed settlements reported disruption to healthcare services as a concern. Limited access to health care may increase the risk of wound infections and trauma-related deaths. Furthermore, given the previous high rates of over-the-counter antimicrobials and limited access to treatment, the potential for multidrug-resistant infections remains a big concern. Prolonged exposure to distress without adequate services to address it will impact children's immediate and long-term health and development. Children with chronic illnesses and others dependent on specialised medical services and medicines are particularly at risk ([IRC 07/04/2022](#), [REACH 06/04/2022](#), [WHO 07/04/2022](#), [USAID 07/04/2022](#), [WHO 31/03/2022](#)).

**Reports indicate that there are no fully operational hospitals in the Luhansk region. Since the beginning of the war, every medical facility in the region has been shelled.**

### **Lack of food and access to health services flagged by refugees**

The need for food, clothes and shoes along with medicines and health services were cited by over 40% of respondents to a survey of refugees in Moldova, with most of the arriving refugees having limited belongings. In Iasi and Bucharest (Romania) specific needs for children also included food and clothes/shoes ([NRC 14/04/2022](#), [WVI 06/04/2022](#), [WVI 04/04/2022](#), [IOM 27/03/2022](#)).

### **Pregnant women are facing health risks with a reported rise in premature births, increasing the need for medical supplies including oxygen**

Premature births have reportedly increased across Ukraine, with doctors in Kharkiv and Lviv observing double or triple the normal rates, accounting for 50% of all deliveries in some facilities. They cite a rise in infections, lack of medical attention, and poor nutrition as reasons for the spike. When babies are premature, they need all sorts of medical attention, including oxygen and medicines which are becoming scarce. Additionally, WHO estimates that

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<sup>1</sup> conducted online between March 4 to March 10 and received responses from 67 civil society organizations from across the country

15% of pregnancies will experience complications that require skilled medical care ([BBC](#) 28/03/2022, [Kyiv Independent](#) 28/03/2022).

The lack of access and dangerous travel cause pregnant women to be afraid to go to hospitals, and lead them to giving birth in inadequate conditions, such as giving birth in bomb shelters with a lack of medicine and equipment. The risk to mothers and babies will grow, as the health system continues to collapse ([IRC](#) 25/03/2022, [Direct Relief](#) 22/03/2022, [The Independent](#) 18/03/2022).

**Childhood vaccination coverage was already low in Ukraine before the conflict, this combined with exacerbating factors such as poor-quality drinking water, overcrowding and a lack of hygiene times are health risks for children and infants**

The disruption of immunisation campaigns including for polio and measles due to vaccine scepticism among the Ukrainian public, the martial law, mass migration and damage to basic infrastructure is increasing the risk of spread of these diseases and is exacerbated by an already low vaccination coverage against these diseases prior to the conflict. Crowded conditions are also putting children at risk. Due to low routine immunisation rates, polio returned to Ukraine in autumn of 2021 ([Oblses](#) 05/04/2022, [WHO](#) 31/03/2022, [IOM](#) 25/03/2022, [IMC](#) 24/03/2022, [The Conversation](#) 23/03/2022, [OCHA](#) 15/03/2022, [Health Cluster](#) 03/03/2022, [UNICEF](#) 13/01/2022).

## About this brief

The analysis provided is a synthesis of information collected and tagged using the [DEEP](#) platform from publicly available sources and supplemented by assessment data provided by humanitarian partners working in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. This brief was prepared on behalf of the Information Management and Analysis Cell (IMAC) in Ukraine, but the analysis provided is produced independently by Data Friendly Space (DFS). **MAPACTION** provided mapping support to this brief.

