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Ajutăm copiii refugiați
să găsească România.



UKRAINE CRISIS RESPONSE

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- LOCATION** Ukraine, Moldova and Romania
 - PROGRAMME NAME** Ukraine Crisis Response 2022 – 2025
 - GOAL** Lifesaving relief assistance through multipurpose cash, food, non-food items, protection, mental health, and educational services; Working with partners to build capacity for community development - creating greater impact for the longer term.

In February 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine caused one of the worst post-World War II disasters in Europe. By the end of 2023, 10,000 civilians had lost their lives and 18,000 were injured. Over five million people – mainly women and children – were displaced within Ukraine and a further 5.8 million fled abroad. Continued violence and attacks on schools disrupted education, causing high levels of stress and trauma.

In response to the crisis, the global World Vision Partnership has reached over 1.4 million people – half of whom are children. In Ukraine, Romania and Moldova last year our World Vision UK response ensured that over 300,000 people had access to life-saving and essential services.

The conflict in Ukraine has had an even wider impact as an estimated 6.2 million people sought refuge outside the country. The majority of those who fled are staying in Poland, Hungary, Moldova and other countries in the region and beyond. Within Ukraine itself an estimated 5.1 million people are displaced. Continued attacks on schools mean children in Ukraine are struggling to access quality education, while rockets and bombardments on civilian infrastructure have left people traumatised. At the start of the conflict women and children left the country, while men remained behind to join the army and fight in the conflict. All these factors individually are sufficient to cause stress and trauma, both physical and psycho-social, while

together these factors provide a sense of hopelessness, despair and higher levels of stress and trauma, especially for children.

World Vision has responded to these traumatic needs of women and children in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania with three objectives:

- 1 Deliver life-saving in-kind and cash assistance to meet basic food, shelter and WASH needs.
- 2 Support affected women and children with protection, mental health and psycho-social support.
- 3 Contribute to the provision of inclusive, equitable and quality education for children.

Ukraine

With frequent attacks on education infrastructure in Ukraine, the Ministry of Education adopted different approaches: face-to-face education where deemed safe; online, and blended and home-based education as options.

World Vision has supported education in Ukraine through both informal and formal education support. For example, over the summer of 2023 more than 10,000 children accessed recreational and educational facilities at summer camps – and, most importantly, psycho-social support.

Group-based activities in clubs provided children with life-saving knowledge, such as security behaviour protocols and how to deal with risks posed by mines. These clubs further provide a platform for children to make new friends and temporarily forget the stresses at home. As one child put it:

“I really like coming here. It's about meeting people. I made a friend here and we are good friends. We like going shopping together.”

One of the club's coordinators noted that children are quiet at first but slowly open up as the sessions progress.

In formal education, World Vision secured access through the development of an app and website, covering key maths skills grade 1-4, using animated videos and games. Despite frequent power outages, over 28,000 children accessed this resource. Laptops have been distributed to teachers, allowing them to be up-to-date on the Ukrainian curriculum. They have also been trained on psychological first aid, education in a crisis context and delivering social-emotional learning, ultimately benefitting nearly 100,000 students who are taught by these teachers.

Ukraine was overnight plunged into a crisis and responders had very little experience with humanitarian responses and preparedness. World Vision trained staff of 17 different implementing partners in psychological first aid, safeguarding, accountability to affected people, data protection, donor reporting, procurement and minimum standards in the humanitarian sector. This has resulted in more local organisations having essential skills in providing localised and relevant assistance to people in need.

OPPOSITE (TOP): “This is a picture of me, Svitlana, and our school's big, tall building. Look, the clouds have ‘friendship’ written on them,” Solomia 6 happily exclaimed. ©2023 World Vision

OPPOSITE (BOTTOM): Svitlana and her pupils, Yurii 6, Solomia 6, Eric 3, Vasylysa 6, Danylo 5 and Kirill 7. “I want the children who will enter the first grade to feel more confident, to know what awaits them at school, so that they are not afraid of anything,” shares Svitlana Kardash, who opened a children's centre in Ukraine in 2022. ©2023 World Vision



Romania

Over 100,000 Ukrainians fled to Romania and settled in different cities across the country. World Vision works directly in Romania, alongside partners, and in Bucharest donates items to the food bank - more than 60,000 refugees have used this service. World Vision also started a social store in Constanta, a city hosting about 20% of the Ukrainian refugees in Romania, where refugees can access food.

Access to education for Ukrainian children is also one of our main activities in Romania as pupils have to learn Romanian to follow the curriculum. To facilitate this World Vision supports after school clubs - called Happy Bubbles - where children access extra language classes, in both Romanian and English. These classes are taught interactively. Rather than following a classroom-based approach, children master new languages through exercises and activities. For example, children learned a poem in Romanian for the occasion of Mother's day, which not only helped children understand a new language but focused the mind on something positive. Other activities include games, crafts and sports. Laptops in the Happy Bubbles also

provide entertainment and assist teens in their education, while adults use the same laptops in the evenings to communicate with home and look for jobs. Happy Bubbles provide holistic services, where children have a space to breathe, develop themselves and new skills - as well as providing a safe space to adults and an opportunity to connect with loved ones.

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"I like this hub. I have many friends here. And I also like to do needlework. I weave bracelets, and recently we made a kite," (Emilia, 7 pictured below with her friend)

BELOW: Emilia and her friend create multi-coloured elastic bracelets at World Vision's Happy Bubble in Bucharest, Romania, during their break between online classes. ©2023 World Vision

OPPOSITE: Hannah, who with her daughter fled Ukraine, now in Romania confirming her receipt of food and hygiene items. "We have received high-quality food items," shares Hannah. She adds, "We are so grateful for World Vision's assistance." ©2023 World Vision



Moldova

Over 400,000 Ukrainian refugees have moved through Moldova since the start of the conflict, with more than 100,000 Ukrainians now having refugee status in Moldova. The population remains highly mobile with a lot of cross-border movement. Moldova itself faces pockets of insecurity and a struggling economy.

World Vision works with two partners in Moldova, implementing two cash activities - one for volunteers, both Ukrainians and Moldovans, to support activities in Refugee Accommodation Centres, and an unconditional cash programme to help vulnerable Moldovans and Ukrainian refugees get ready for winter. With the economic impact of the conflict in Ukraine, the amount of cash was doubled over the winter as the initial amount of \$US 35 did not cover the price hikes in food and non-food items. Besides cash, vulnerable families also received blankets and winter boots.

The response in Moldova includes psycho-social and informal education. Children can access psycho-social support through group sessions in centres, while adults, mainly women, access both individual and group sessions

to process trauma. Centres further provide extra-curricular activities and a course in Romanian to children.

In Romania and Moldova, World Vision has put in place community meetings with both Ukrainian refugees and host communities to maintain and increase social cohesion.

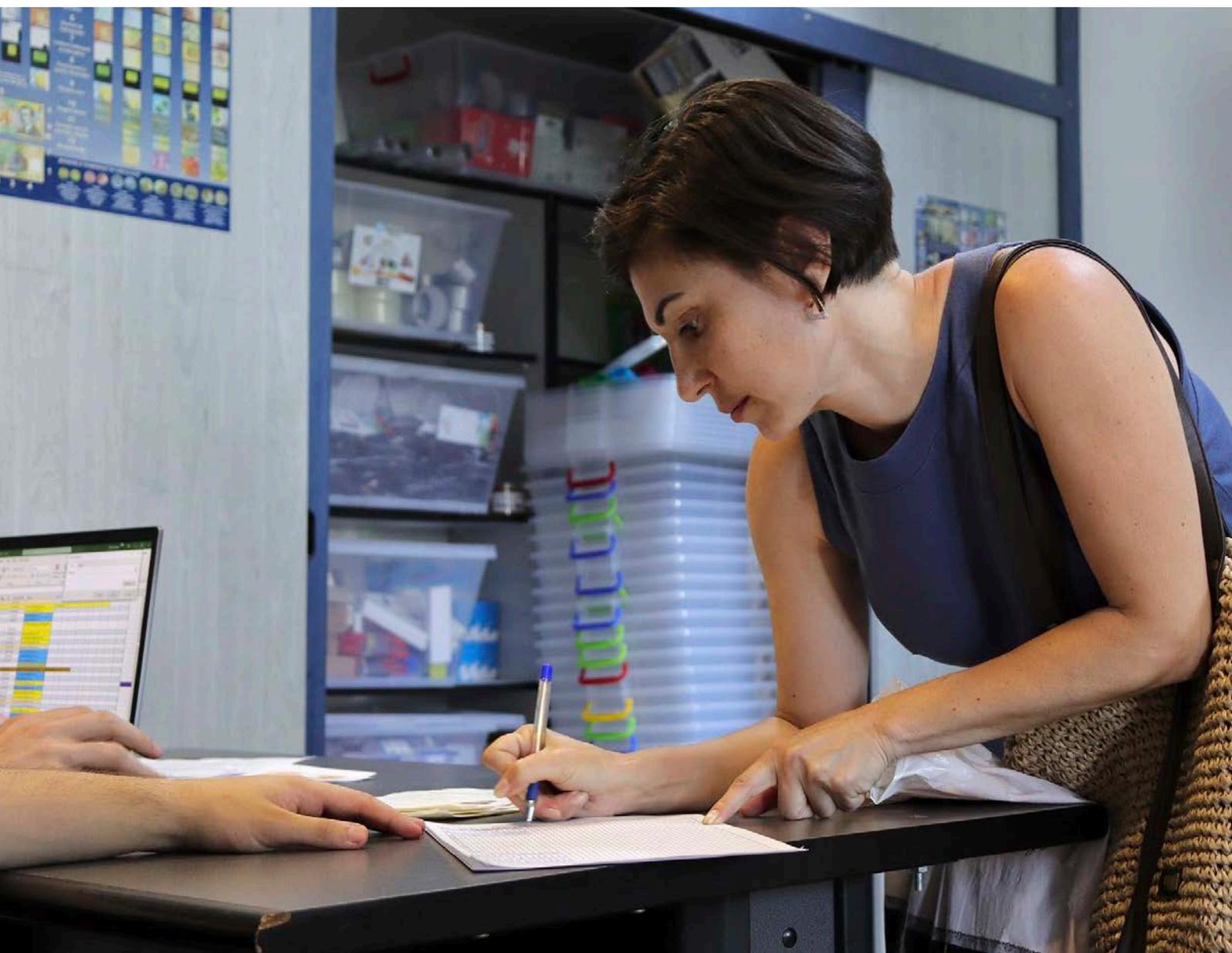
Ukraine: two-year anniversary

Two years since the conflict in Ukraine began, World Vision has supported over 1.6 million people to date, almost half of whom are children.



World Vision and partners continue to support children and their families in Ukraine, Romania, Moldova and Georgia. And we will stay for as long as we're needed. **Scan the QR code to find out more.**

www.worldvision.org.uk/about/blogs/ukraine-conflict-two-year-anniversary/



Accountability to those we serve

Being accountable to the people we are seeking to help means ensuring that they have ways to give us feedback on our assistance and that we need to act on it. It is a humanitarian standard¹ and important to us. With more access to advanced mobile technology in the three countries, compared to other emergencies, World Vision has been flexible and responded to queries and suggestions more quickly. With QR-codes, affected people can access information and communicate with World Vision and its partners at a time convenient to them. This system has helped in assessments and understanding needs of people on the move. The QR-codes are in addition to more established ways of community consultation.

One of the adjustments made is the creation of a pre-school preparatory programme for refugee children, in response to the limited places available in state-run kindergartens.



ABOVE: Three-year-old Lada and her family attend a food distribution event organised by Food Bank one of World Vision's local partners in Moldova. ©2023 World Vision

¹[The Standard | CHS 2024 \(corehumanitarianstandard.org\)](https://www.the-standard.org.uk/news/2024/01/24/core-humanitarian-standard/)

Lessons learned

- With the unpredictability of the conflict in Ukraine and the highly mobile population moving between the three countries, combined with global and local economic developments, it remains important to do **continuous assessments** and understand the evolving needs of the population. The initial response to the crisis was provision of basic needs through food and shelter; the response has now progressed to address needs of established people and access to basic services, like education and mental health support and access to jobs. With the prediction that the conflict in Ukraine will be protracted, programming is likely to focus on supporting refugees to access the job market further and provide support for them to start livelihood activities.
- It is encouraging to hear that the **provision of after school activities**, where children can access psycho-social support as well as recreational activities - allowing them to interact with other children - results in a change. Children silenced by trauma develop skills and are able to integrate into the local community, enabling them to continue their development. Providing mental health services and psycho-social support to caretakers at the same time allows for trauma to be processed outside the home setting and therefore might contribute to a more peaceful home setting.
- **Involving everyone:** A holistic investment in education, where children are supported with formal and informal education, helps children to better integrate into their new environment and allows them to thrive. With the provision of extra-curricular activities and access to internet in connectivity centres, children have a place where, after school, they can unwind and develop their interests. Connectivity centres provide adults with a chance to access the local labour market as well as stay in contact with loved ones. This would be something to consider replicating in other emergency responses where children and adults are on the move.

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At World Vision, our focus is on helping the most vulnerable children, in the most dangerous places, overcome poverty and injustice. Inspired by our Christian faith, we've worked together with communities, partners, local leaders and governments, for over 70 years, so that children – of all faiths and none – are empowered to experience fullness of life.

World Vision UK is a registered charity no. 285908, a company limited by guarantee and registered in England no.1675552. Registered office as above.

COVER PHOTO: Emilia 7 attends a Happy Bubble in Romania where she is able to learn and play: "I am very pleased with her connection with the teachers. She loves them very much and does not want to go home in the evening. For me, this is a very good indicator of the successful operation of this hub," says Anastasiia, her teacher. ©2023 Laurentia Jora/World Vision

