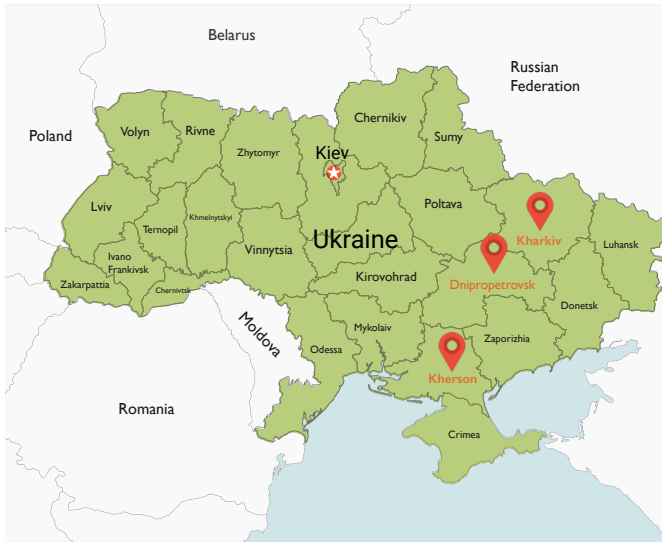


Child Protection Multisectoral Needs Assessment - Ukraine 2023



Background

Since the start of the conflict in Ukraine on 24th February 2022¹, Ukraine has experienced widespread destruction, leading to the internal displacement of 6.3 million people and more than 14.33 million Ukrainian refugees who have fled across borders, with 17.6 million in need of humanitarian assistance. Ukraine is also experiencing an acute child protection crisis. It is estimated that at least 1,000 children have been killed since the second phase of the conflict began, with a further 3.4 million in need of immediate and multi-faceted child protection interventions, including, but not limited to, psychosocial support services (PSS), case management, family tracing and reunification, and alternative care arrangements, access to clean drinking water and food security, alongside further essential emergency winterization programming to off-set the risk of extreme exposure to freezing temperatures².

With almost two-thirds of children being forced to leave their homes, the child protection risks are huge, and yet access to beneficiaries is a considerable challenge for organisations across vast swathes of Eastern Ukraine, compounded by energy black-outs which regularly disrupt CP activities from taking place.

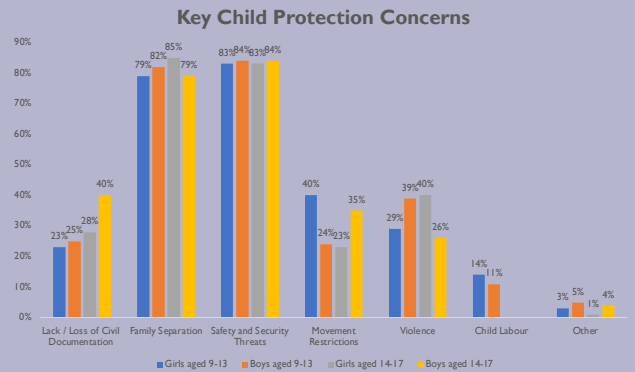
Accordingly, World Vision conducted a Child Protection Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment of key humanitarian needs in Dnipro, Kharkiv and Kherson Oblasts to identify ‘the most critical humanitarian needs and risks and the priority sectors for intervention.

Methodology

The needs assessment was carried out in three Oblasts: Dnipro, Kharkiv and Kherson. The methodological design followed a mixed-methods approach and utilised both quantitative and qualitative methods, including a desk review of secondary data and analysis as well as primary data collection, which included household (HH) surveys with children, key informant interviews (KIIs) with stakeholders and Focus Groups Discussions (FGDs) with caregivers and adults. In total, 455 respondents participated in the surveys, with a minimum of 150 respondents per Oblast. Additionally, 32 KIIs with relevant stakeholders and experts were conducted, alongside 12 FGDs. The data collection inside Ukraine was implemented through WV’s local partner Arms of Mercy (AOM), took place between 26 December 2022 and 2 January 2023. The assessment was carried out by Scruples Research Initiative.

Key Findings

Child Protection and MHPSS

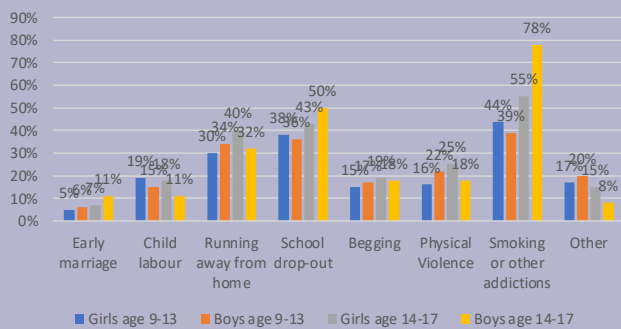


The wider protective environment for children has been greatly eroded by the conflict, with family separation being reported as one of the most critical child protection risks by 85% of girls and 79% of boys aged between 14-17, and was also recognized by girls (78%) and boys (82%) aged between 9-13. Second and related, safety and security concerns were the next most significant child protection risk, as reflected by approximately 83% of girls and boys aged between 9-13 and 14-17.

“Children have lost their sense of security. I noticed that my children are always in a tense state. Especially when there is a siren, they immediately look for information on the phone, what is flying, [they are] always alert and listen[ing].”

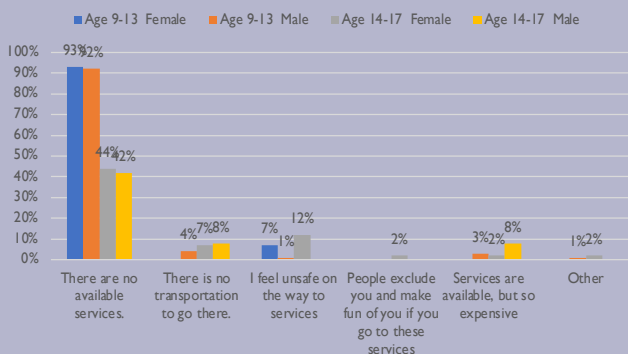
1 UNOCHA (Nov 2022). Ukraine Situation Report.
2 HNO Ukraine 2022.

Negative Coping Mechanisms



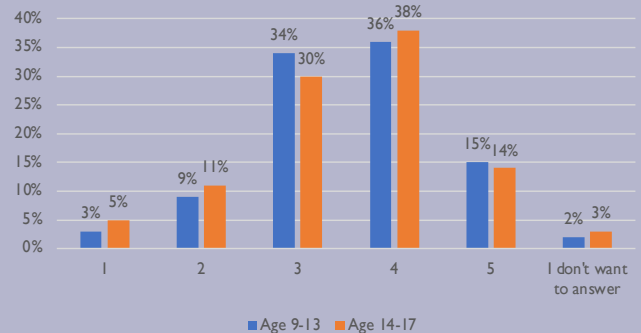
Negative coping mechanisms that children adopted were identified mainly as smoking or other addictions, followed by school dropouts. 54% of girls and 77% of boys aged between 14-17 reported that smoking and other addictions were the most crucial negative coping mechanism among children in their age groups. Moreover, addiction has appeared as the most common coping mechanism among girls and boys aged between 9-13 by 43% of girls and 39% of boys.

Reasons for not Accessing Services



The unavailability of services was identified as a major challenge. Indeed, 44% of girls and 41% of boys aged between 14-17 stated that the unavailability of services was the main reason for such limited access, which the children aged 9-13 agreed with. According to the age group of 9-13, girls and boys reported unavailability of services as the most important reason, with 93% and 92%, respectively. Furthermore, high costs were not recognized as a limiting factor in accessing the services. Both girls (97%) and boys (92%) aged 14-17 reported that no facilities provide these services, even if financial means are in place. Besides, transportation was found to be available to 92% of girls and boys aged 14-17. While none of the boys between 14-17 felt unsafe on the way to services, 12% of girls within the same age group reported feeling unsafe. Fear of stigma or exclusion was not found to be as serious an obstacle, as was stated by 2% of girls (14-17) and 1% of boys (14-17).

Perception of Safety in Accessing CP Services



Girls aged 14-17 feel significantly more unsafe than boys their age which can impact the well-being of adolescent girls and result in mental health-related difficulties such as anxiety, stress, and depression. When we examine the age group 9-13, almost half of the girls and boys don't feel safe due to war conditions. Although boys aged 14-17 show the least number of children feeling "somehow unsafe/unsafe/very unsafe," 38% remains a considerable statistic that requires serious attention.

Regarding the available national child protection mechanisms, most caregivers were identified as having insufficient knowledge about the services provided in both Kharkiv and Kherson. Only the participants of FGDs in Dnipro reported an awareness of support through school or the social services hotline. However, most caregivers, including in Dnipro, were only aware of the existence of social support by the state without any in-depth knowledge of existing services and activities.

"We know that we have a social protection mechanism. However, we don't know how this system works at the end."

"Due to the shelling, children associated different sounds with some of their fears." Study participants agreed on the invasion's negative impacts on children's well-being, such as increased stress, anxiety, and trauma. Moreover, online/distance learning was found to be a crucial factor affecting peer-to-peer communication skills of children and overall social life. In addition, during the FGDs, caregivers revealed that most of their children suffer from severe stress, anxiety, mood swings, sleeping disorders, and fear that resulted in aggression, decreased self-confidence and self-expression skills, self-isolation, and antisocial behaviour since the invasion began.

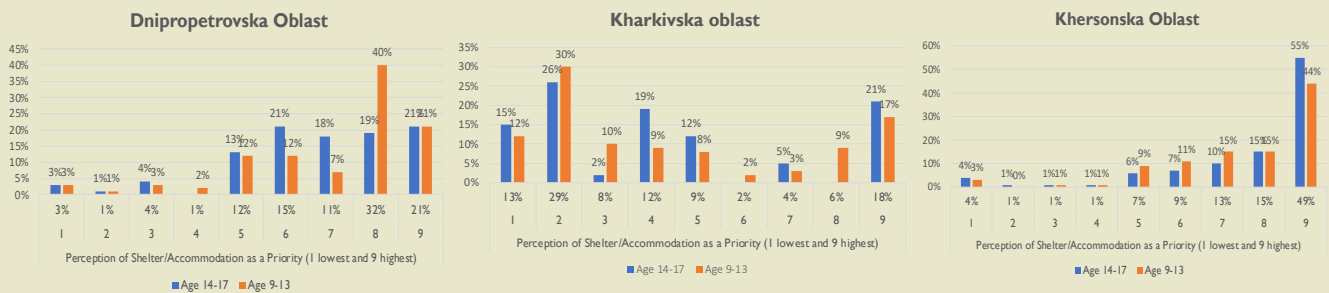
"My child used to be stable and confident. Since the war, she started to feel more anxious and panicked which deteriorated her mental state greatly."

CHILD PROTECTION MULTISECTORAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT - UKRAINE 2023

Key Recommendations

- Through Cash for Protection (CFP) activities children and families can be supported to address the various needs of children, such as with food, non-food, and hygiene items.
- Locate centres in safe and secure areas through a child-friendly approach. Consider the provision of transportation services or cash assistance for transportation through safe and secure roads.
- Establish a community-based child protection mechanism to feed into child protection programming by engaging with children at the decision-making level and adopt programming based on the response and recommendations made by children.
- Establish protection & outreach channels to conduct awareness-raising and information dissemination activities for caregivers regarding national protection mechanisms, available child protection or other humanitarian services, and activities for children.
- Provide mental health services, including individual and group counselling and awareness-raising sessions such as psychoeducation and stress management.
- Include addiction components in individual and/or group counselling activities and design structured recreational ones to increase awareness of addiction under MHPSS service.

Shelter and WASH

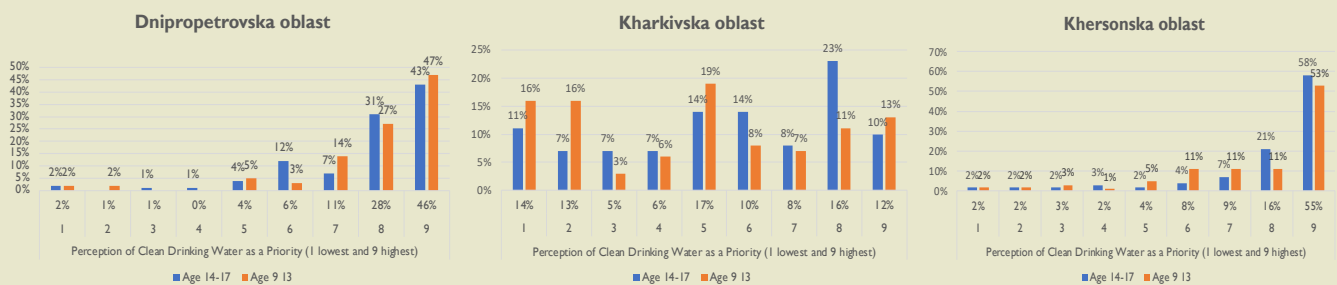


“Today, the vast majority of children in our city live in comfortable conditions, our city is provided with water, heat, and light; each neighbourhood is equipped with a heating station, hot meals, and bomb shelters are equipped.”

Most study participants highlighted a low quality of life in reference to their living conditions. However, the emphasis was less material damage to their buildings, but rather the functionality (lack of electricity meaning no light, no heating, no ability to cook, no hot water, etc). The situation of IDPs,

cited by one informant in Dnipro, was also highlighted as being particularly challenging:

“There are families of internally displaced persons (two families from my class) at whom the conditions for living and studying are not at the proper level. The child has no furniture: a table, etc. There is not enough housing for internally displaced persons.”



The main risk cited by adult respondents in relation to a deficit of hygiene products came from one FGD in Kherson, where concern was expressed by a caregiver as to how sanitation intersects with child protection in terms of underlying psycho-social effects:

“Due to the fact that some children do not have elementary means of hygiene, they may feel that they are not like everyone else, and this causes them stress and low self-esteem. Yes, and this is a very common problem nowadays. Teenagers very

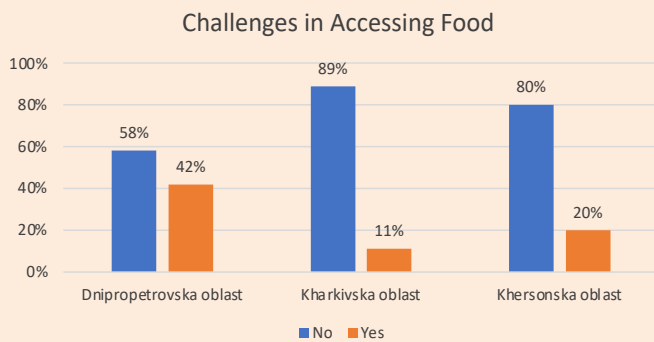
often oppress and humiliate children with such problems.”

24.1% of surveyed respondents aged 9-13 ranked these as their highest priority, while 23% of respondents ranked it as the lowest priority. When reflecting on their ranking, several surveyed respondents who claimed these were very important priorities framed their answers through the lens of affordability, rather than wider unavailability, reflecting their desires for cash injections as opposed to installations of latrines.

Key Recommendations

- Provide e-vouchers and digital payments so families can pay their bills and procure gas, fuel and clothing.
- Provide static generators to increase both access to electricity as well as the number of communal heating points.
- Tailor HH-level shelter and WASH approaches to the specific type of building and location as potential child protection issues can be positively impacted by nuanced shelter support, as shelter offers an opportunity to address or mitigate any risks that may be caused by living and sleeping in constrained spaces, lack of privacy or separation (doors, locks).

Food Security



22% of surveyed child respondents across all ages ranked food as a very important priority, giving it the highest ranking while over a fifth (23.5%) ranked it as one of the most important priorities. Yet there are clear gaps in access, as both demonstrated by primary and secondary data, including one quarter of respondents (25%) who face challenges accessing the food they most need.

“Regarding food security, it is difficult to draw conclusions, but not all children have a complete diet, because the financial situation does not allow for providing everyone with the necessities. Fruits are quite an expensive pleasure. The same about dairy products.”

For many of those without regular access to food, both primary and secondary data confirm that the reasons behind this often stem more from affordability issues rather than merely the availability of produce, though this still plays a significant role, particularly in hard-to-reach areas. As stated by two informants in Dnipro:

“The main need is financial support because now some goods have been brought to the store, but it is not possible to buy everything.”

Key Recommendations

- Include food security in cash assistance for protection activities to enable the purchase of both essential foods but also products with higher nutritional value.
- Establish a system to identify, refer and treat malnourished children and pregnant or lactating women.

Education

Due to the forced displacement of IDPs and Refugees, a significant number of children and teachers either changed locations within the country or sought refuge in another. This in turn created challenges for children to access education safely and easily as before, as verified by this study, including one KII in Kherson:

“I see a problem in education because schools are closed, and online education does not work in many cities. Children stay at home and do not go far.”

Throughout the study, children revealed that either their schools were closed, no lessons were provided currently, or they were not contacted. While it is possible for children to study from educational literature at home, KIIs and FGDs both reveal the level of concerns about the quality of education, namely how enclosed environments are impacting children’s access to *“live communication”*, and *“fully-fledged development”* and the need to be taught in-person, especially given digital modalities aren’t feasible for most families, or don’t provide *“quality knowledge”*. As explained by one informant in Dnipro:

“Due to the war, general secondary and preschool education institutions do not work in face-to-face mode, and families do not have funds for equipment to provide online education.”

Key Recommendations

- Advocate to the Government of Ukraine (GoU) in order to increase the quality of the national online school curriculum through raising the number of online modules/courses.
- Design and implement teacher capacity-building activities focusing on three topics: *“communications with children”*, *“managing bullying cases in classrooms”*, *“psychological support to children including psychological first aid.”*