

BEYOND RETURN

Child and Family Wellbeing
Among Refugee and IDP
Returnees in

UKRAINE

World Vision 

© World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response



ABOUT THE STUDY

This fact sheet draws on World Vision Middle East and Eastern Europe's [World Refugee Day 2026 briefing](#), which explores the experiences of refugee and internally displaced returnee families in Ukraine. Based on qualitative research with caregivers and young people in Mykolaivska Oblast and Kyiv, it highlights the realities children and families face as they rebuild their lives amid ongoing conflict and insecurity following return.

CONTEXT



4.2 million returnees currently live in Ukraine.



3.7 million people remain internally displaced.



5.6 million Ukrainians remain outside the country.



10.8 million people require humanitarian assistance, including 2.2 million children.



Many families continue to return despite ongoing hostilities and insecurity.



KEY FINDINGS

- Family reunification, belonging and reconnecting with communities were the strongest drivers of return.
- Return often improved children's emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging.
- Children continue to face air raids, shelling, explosive hazards and insecurity.
- Most families can access schools and healthcare, but affordability remains a challenge.
- Young people highlighted friendships, education and community participation as essential to their wellbeing.
- Mental health concerns remain widespread, with anxiety, fear and sleep disruption continuing long after return.



VOICES FROM CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS

"When I returned home, I felt happy to see my friends again."

– Young person, focus group discussion

"My children are happy that they are at home."

– Woman caregiver, focus group discussion

"Safety means understanding that there is a 100% chance nothing will hit me."

– Young person, focus group discussion



RECOMMENDATIONS

Donors and Funding Institutions:

- Increase flexible, multi-year funding linking humanitarian assistance, recovery and development.
- Prioritise child-centred services and support in return locations.

European Union and European States:

- Ensure return remains safe, voluntary and dignified.
- Continue supporting displaced Ukrainians while investing in sustainable recovery.

UN Agencies and Humanitarian Actors:

- Expand child protection, education, mine action and MHPSS services.
- Ensure children's voices inform planning and response efforts.

INGOs and NGO Partners:

- Deliver integrated programmes combining education, protection, livelihoods and psychosocial support.
- Strengthen youth participation and community-based support systems.

National and Local Authorities:

- Restore and strengthen essential services, education and social protection systems.
- Address barriers affecting returnee families' access to assistance and services.

ABOUT WORLD VISION UKRAINE CRISIS RESPONSE



World Vision Ukraine Crisis Response has reached more than 2.3 million people, including over 1 million children, since 2022. Through cash assistance, education, child protection, mental health and psychosocial support, livelihoods and winterisation programming, World Vision is helping returnee, displaced and conflict-affected families meet urgent needs while supporting longer-term recovery and resilience.



Website



Facebook



YouTube



Instagram



X (Twitter)



LinkedIn