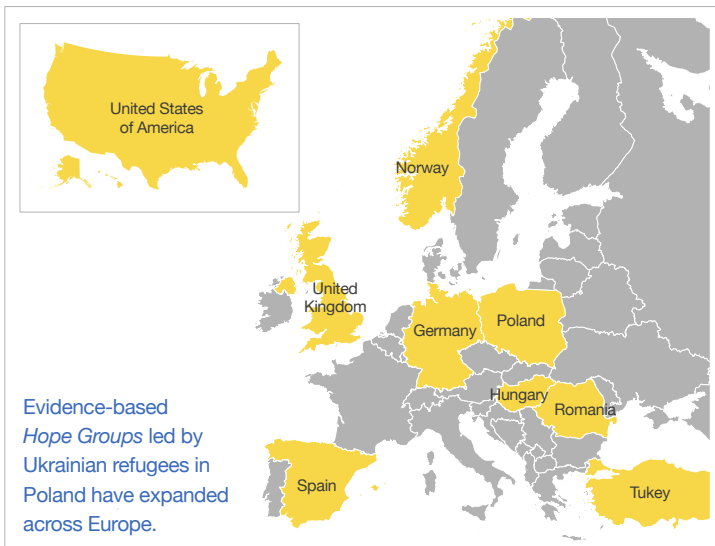




# Hope for Children Affected by the War in Ukraine<sup>1</sup> *An urgent call to instill hope in families facing crisis.*



## The extreme impacts of war affect children and adults and threaten healthy family life.

The psychosocial impacts of war lead to long-term consequences on the psyche and well-being of children – the more prolonged the conflict, the greater the threat to the stability of a nation’s social, economic, and familial fabric. Parents and caregivers play a critical role in supporting children through trauma and transition. Empowering parents to invest in their safety, health, and mental health is essential in helping them care for their children during crises. With ongoing support through **Hope Groups**, adult participants are finding practical tools for self-care, psychological healing, parenting in crises, and re-engaging in new relationships to find hope and healing from the trauma of war.

The needs are vast, as millions of Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes and be displaced to other parts of Ukraine or foreign countries. They have lost connection to familiar relationships in their communities, schools, work, family, and churches. Those who live in hot zones deal with continual air raid sirens, fleeing to bomb shelters, missile explosions, and regular exposure to violence. All people in Ukraine face ongoing electricity outages, causing many to lose heat and running water. Families are often separated, either by displacement or military service. Even those who were able to sustainably survive the first months of war now face mental exhaustion.

## Times of war mean children are in crisis.

Children are among those most vulnerable during times of crisis and war. Since the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, at least 5.2 million children have been in need of humanitarian aid.<sup>1</sup> Almost two of every three Ukrainian children have been displaced, putting them at higher risk of separation from their families, violence, abuse, sexual exploitation, and human trafficking.<sup>2</sup> As of December 9, 2022, 330 children have disappeared.<sup>3</sup>

Ukrainian children also face challenges in continuing their education. At least 3,126 educational institutions have been damaged in the war, of which 337 were destroyed completely.<sup>4</sup> Children still able to attend school, whether in person or virtually, deal with continual interruptions from air raid sirens, attacks, and power outages. Those forced to flee Ukraine often have to begin attending school in a foreign language. Seventy-five percent of Ukrainian children show symptoms of psychological traumatization.<sup>5</sup> All these vulnerabilities increase as time goes on and the war continues.

### Extreme Threats to Ukrainian Children and Families

- 2 out of 3** children displaced by fighting.<sup>6</sup>
- 3 million** children internally displaced by fighting.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.2 million** children living in refugee-hosting countries.<sup>6</sup>
- 6 out of 10** Ukrainians need psychological help.<sup>7</sup>
- 8 million** refugees from Ukraine displaced across Europe.<sup>8</sup>
- 5.9 million** Ukrainians internally displaced.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. ЮНІСЕФ: 100 днів війни в Україні призвели до того, що 5,2 ...<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases>  
<sup>2</sup> UNICEF. ЮНІСЕФ: 100 днів війни в Україні призвели до того, що 5,2 ...<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases>  
<sup>3</sup> ArmyINFORM, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, <https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/06/04/dity-beznevyjni-zhertvy-vijny/>, June 4, 2022  
<sup>4</sup> Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, January 17, 2023. [https://t.me/pgou\\_ua/8827](https://t.me/pgou_ua/8827)  
<sup>5</sup> Gradus Research, April 2022

## Support network

Parents and caregivers play a critical role in supporting children during transitions and trauma. Unfortunately, parents rarely get the support they need. Efforts to empower adults and equip them with self-care and emotional regulation skills are critical if they are to support children. Evidence also shows the critical role social engagement and support play in the process of healing from psychological trauma. Aiding Ukrainians who have been forced from their familiar social circles to re-engage in a support network is vital.

## Hope Groups and Action

*Hope Groups* support Ukrainians who have suffered the trauma of war, empowering them to care for themselves and their loved ones. *Hope Groups* use a flexible format -- small groups or one-on-one; in person or virtual; and can be used by women, men, mixed groups. In ten sessions, trained facilitators offer a safe space for: discussing evidence-based psychosocial and parenting support topics; using practical positive parenting tools to families heal from trauma; engaging in activities to strengthen family relationships, and guides for talking with children about trauma. Participants in *Hope Groups* are Ukrainians who have evacuated to other countries; are internally displaced; or have remained in or returned to their homes in Ukraine. Partners – global to grassroots -- are needed to expand reach where *Hope Groups* are already active, and into new countries not yet reached (see Table).

Country	Ukrainian Refugees	Hope Groups Active	Hope Groups Needed
Poland	1,563,386	●	
Hungary	33,603	●	
Spain	161,012	●	
UK	157,300	●	
Germany	1,021,667	●	
Norway	37,971	●	
Republic of Georgia	25,101	●	
USA	221,000	●	
Romania	106,835		●
Moldova	102,160		●
Bulgaria	50,219		●
Czech Republic	483,620		●
Slovakia	107,203		●
Turkey	46,739		●

Emerging evidence shows that *Hope Group* participants report life-changing and lasting results, including increased psychosocial support, joining a support network, decreased violence and conflict between parents and children, and turning away from alcohol abuse. Overwhelmingly, participants report moving from loneliness to engagement, and from despair to HOPE.



*Hope Groups* serve mothers like Anna, displaced from a war zone to Western Ukraine, pictured here with her 3-year-old son Max (by Ronnie Mosley, July 2022).

## Help Keep HOPE Alive

The time to act is now. Together we can keep hope alive for those most affected through immediate expansion in these areas:



**GROWTH** of *Hope Groups* for many more parents and caregivers in Ukraine and across Europe through strengthening positive parenting skills, psychosocial engagement, and prevention of violence and abuse.



**HEALING** for adolescents, many of whom are especially struggling with mental health – through teen-focused *Hope Groups*.



**TRAINING** for military chaplains and volunteers who serve the military, using adaptations of *Hope Group* strategies for responding to trauma, preventing PTSD, and supporting active engagement in their families while they serve.



“For me, everything that happened in the *Hope Groups* gave me the strength to remember the good things in my life, and to find the strength to move on.” *Hope Group* participant, Poland (Oct. 2022)

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF Ukraine. (2022, June 1). 100 днів війни в Україні призвели до того, що 5.2 мільйона дітей потребують гуманітарної допомоги. <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/press-releases/one-hundred-days-war-ukraine-have-left-52-million-children-need-humanitarian>

<sup>7</sup> UKRINFORM. (2023, January 16). Russian armed aggression affects over 1,352 children in Ukraine. <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-ato/3653340-russian-armed-aggression-affects-over-1352-children-in-ukraine.html>

<sup>8</sup> UNHCR. Operational data portal; Ukraine refugee situation. Retrieved January 26, 2023, from <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location?secret=unhcrrestricted>

<sup>9</sup> USAID. (2023, January 20). Ukraine; complex emergency. [https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/2023-01-20\\_USG\\_Ukraine\\_Complex\\_Emergency\\_Fact\\_Sheet\\_7.pdf](https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/2023-01/2023-01-20_USG_Ukraine_Complex_Emergency_Fact_Sheet_7.pdf)