

unicef   
for every child



UNICEF UKRAINE PROGRAMME BRIEF 2024

# A Family for Every Child

## Better Care for Children in Ukraine



FUNDING NEED FOR 2024-2026

# US\$ 100 MILLION

To guide and support the decentralized Better Care reform at community level, aligned to the vision of the five-year national strategy for Better Care, \$100 million are needed to deliver the first phase of the decentralized reform in 10 pathfinder oblasts of Ukraine over the course of 3 years

**10 pilot oblasts, as of 31 January 2024:**  
Kharkiv, Volyn, Dnipro, Zakarpattia, Kyiv, Lviv, Zhytomyr, Poltava, Kirovograd, Chernivtsi

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## The vision

The current humanitarian crisis in Ukraine is severe and will have long-term, inter-generational consequences if the needs of its most vulnerable are not addressed. This includes specific focus on Ukraine's most vulnerable children; those who have been displaced, separated from family, and orphaned as a result of the war.

Moreover, shortly after the full scale invasion, Ukraine applied for membership of the European Union (EU). In its Opinion on Ukraine's application for EU membership, the European Commission stipulated that 'Ukraine has one of the highest rates of child institutionalisation in the world (ca. 1.5% of all children), which is a serious concern and needs to be tackled as a matter of urgency.' The EU has pledged its support to Ukraine as it mobilizes to implement this urgent reform, and UNICEF shares and supports the Government of Ukraine's vision of humanitarian recovery wherein every child grows up in a safe and nurturing family. This includes ensuring that the most vulnerable have their right to housing, family-care, protection, health, and inclusive education — **a Ukraine that prioritizes safe and nurturing family care for all children.**

## Challenges in Ukraine's Care System for Children

### INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF CHILDREN

One of the major challenges in Ukraine is the high number of children entering institutions, particularly those who have been evacuated abroad, returned, or displaced within the country. Existing laws and policies may not adequately address the needs of these children, leading to their institutionalization and separation from families.

### LIMITED ALTERNATIVE FAMILY CARE OPTIONS

The availability and accessibility of alternative family care, such as foster care, family-type care, and domestic adoption, remain limited in Ukraine. This poses a challenge for children who do not have safe options within their biological or extended families.

### RISKS OF FAMILY SEPARATION

The ongoing war in Ukraine has resulted in children rapidly returning to parents/guardians from institutions and families who are caring for children who lost one or both caregivers during the conflict. These families face numerous challenges in meeting the needs of these children and preventing further separation.

*Diana and Ilona from Kharkiv lost their parents because of shelling. Diana decided to adopt her sister, so she doesn't go to orphanage.*



# Better Care for Better Ukraine



**FAMILY STRENGTHENING  
& PREVENTING  
OF SEPARATION**



**TRANSFORMING  
INSTITUTIONAL  
CARE**



**FAMILY-BASED  
ALTERNATIVE CARE**

## Solutions for Better Care in Ukraine

### STRENGTHENING PREVENTIVE MEASURES

To address the institutionalization of children, it is essential to review and revise relevant laws and policies, establish a moratorium on new institutions, and redirect private funding towards supporting families. Gatekeeping procedures at the local level can be implemented to identify and address the issues that place children at risk of separation.

### ENHANCING ALTERNATIVE FAMILY CARE OPTIONS

To expand the availability and quality of alternative family care, comprehensive measures should be taken. This includes providing training and support for families receiving children, revising regulations to reduce barriers to accessing social supports, and ensuring the presence of qualified social workers who can offer ongoing monitoring and assistance.

### SUPPORTING AT-RISK FAMILIES

Families at risk of separation require targeted support. This can be achieved through the provision of social protection measures, such as cash support, psychosocial assistance, and ensuring access to safe housing and basic needs through other social services.

### STRENGTHENING THE CARE SYSTEM

It is crucial to invest in the care system's capacity by significantly increasing the number of social work professionals and providing them with necessary infrastructure, equipment, training, and supervision. Restoring staffing levels of the Regional Division of the State Social Services and strengthening local government capacity for delivering social services are also vital steps.

### INTEGRATION OF SERVICES AND STANDARDIZED PROCEDURES

Establishing integrated social protection services and implementing a unified registration system and case management procedures tailored to the unique needs of children will improve coordination and ensure a comprehensive approach to care.

### MOBILIZING FINANCING

Increasing financing for safe housing, safe care, and bright futures is essential. This can be achieved by directing public and private funding towards family and community-based care. Additionally, exploring multilateral, donor, and EU financing opportunities will provide the necessary resources to support better care for children in Ukraine.

*It is crucial to invest in the care system's capacity by significantly increasing the number of social work professionals and providing them with necessary infrastructure, equipment, training, and supervision.*



*Liudmyla and Oleksii sheltered two children who were left without parental care.*

## UNICEF strategies to achieve Better Care



**Guide and support government-led reform at national and sub-national levels.** The Government of Ukraine has since established under the cabinet of ministers a dedicated Better Care reform office, designed to coordinate the reform together with the line ministries and regional governments, including developing a new five-year strategy for the Better Care reform. UNICEF is entrusted to guide and support this reform office, with technical, financial and partnership support. To ensure a comprehensive and whole-of-government approach to this reform, UNICEF continues to play a role in brokering new partnerships and coordinating investments in the reform together with the Government of Ukraine.



**Pilot and demonstrate the reform at community level.** UNICEF continues to leverage previous oblast efforts and plans of 'de-institutionalization' to implement a comprehensive care reform approach, based on international best-practices, customized for Ukraine's unique context. Since the launch of the national strategy of the Better Care reform, ten oblasts have joined as pathfinder oblasts to bridge policy and practice. UNICEF supports and guides subnational authorities to implement the Better Care decentralized demonstration package, which includes interventions to strengthen families through increasing the supply and demand for quality integrated social services, increase the availability of alternative care families to ensure family-based options for children in need of care, and transform institutions towards community-based services, through technical, financial and partnership approaches. These demonstration oblasts will yield a Ukraine-tested, evidence-based, costed approach positioned to be scaled and sustained across all of Ukraine.



**Support pathways for safe and family-based return and re-integration of ukrainian children evacuated abroad.** As many ukrainian children evacuated remain in institutional formats of care while abroad, UNICEF continues work at national and sub-national levels to address the need for safe and best interest assessed pathways for return and reintegration of children into family-based care in Ukraine.



**Advocacy/public information campaign.** Addressing social norms that do not support family-based care for children with disabilities; rallying public support for care; positioning social workers as a valued profession and community service; and promote "what is social service" for the general public; addressing complex factors that contribute to the "economy" of institutional care.



**Support the Government in its review of the roles, functions, and financing** of all levels of Ukraine's administration to ensure that its workforce, services, and programmes are adequately resourced.



**Support the establishment of monitoring frameworks** and mechanisms, and monitoring progress through management information systems.

*By addressing these challenges and implementing these solutions, we can work towards a future where every child in Ukraine has access to safe housing, proper care, and a promising future.*

**Together, we can create a care system that prioritizes the well-being and development of all children in Ukraine.**