

UNICEF PROGRAMME BRIEF 2025

## Better Learning and Skills

Enhancing learning and creating  
meaningful opportunities for children  
and young people

**10.4%**

of education  
infrastructure  
damaged or destroyed  
between 2022-2024

**398,000**

children (12%) remain  
reliant on online-only  
education

**1 in 4**

students expressed a  
need for psychological  
or emotional support

**2**

years of schooling  
estimated to be lost  
since 2020

**1 in 5**

young people are not  
engaged in education  
or employment. 70% of  
them are young women

## The Situation

Education and skills development in Ukraine have faced repeated disruption—first from the COVID-19 pandemic, and since 2022, the full-scale war. Displacement, school closures, damaged infrastructure, limited digital access, and prolonged stress have caused widespread learning loss and rising mental health concerns among children and young people.

In response, national authorities and partners prioritized actions to restore safe learning and educational continuity. Since January 2023, the share of schools with bomb shelters rose from 68% to 90%. In September 2023, 42% of school-aged children relied entirely on remote learning without in-person teacher support. By 2024, this dropped to 12%, with 66% attending school in person and 22% in blended formats. Still, millions of children—particularly in frontline areas—face limited access to education due to insecurity, damaged infrastructure, and insufficient school-based support.

The impact is evident across all age groups. For preschoolers, disruptions have stalled early learning and social-emotional development. Primary school children face gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy. Adolescents are entering adulthood with weakened life skills and reduced readiness for further education or work.

Distance learning, compounded by stress and trauma, has severely affected learning outcomes. The 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) showed us that 15-year-olds lost the equivalent of half a year in science, a full year in mathematics, and two years in reading compared to 2018. Girls, rural learners, and students from low-income households experienced the greatest setbacks. Ongoing learning loss since 2020 threatens long-term human capital recovery.

Youth disconnection from education and work remains a major concern. As of 2024, 21.4% of 15–29-year-olds are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), with 70% of them female. Displaced youth, those with disabilities, Roma youth, and rural populations continue to face deep structural barriers. Yet, 65.7% of young people say they want to gain skills to help rebuild the country—signalling strong potential for recovery if support is sustained.

## Key factors contributing to learning and skills loss



### School closures

With over 10% of education facilities damaged or destroyed since 2022, many children have been forced out of school or rely on remote learning. While the number of schools rebuilt, rehabilitated and equipped with shelters has increased, limited shelter capacity means not all students can attend at once. As a result, even in reopened schools, many learners still face restricted access to in-person education.



### Challenges with online learning

Many students—especially in insecure regions—still depend on remote formats. Ongoing challenges include limited devices, unstable internet, and power outages, all of which reduce student engagement and teacher interaction, particularly for younger or vulnerable children.



### Impact on education personnel

Teachers and school staff have been displaced, especially in eastern regions. In addition, budget cuts have made it harder for schools to provide learning materials. A 2022 Needs Assessment found over 80% of *hromadas* wanted more psychosocial support for teachers, but only one-third of local authorities acknowledged it as a clear need.



### Impact on mental health of learners

Students continue to face high psychological stress. The 2024 War and Education study found that 26% of students—32% of girls and 20% of boys—need moderate to strong emotional support. A 2023 UNICEF survey reported that 56% of parents in eastern regions say their children are anxious or tense.



### Disrupted Education-to-Work Transition

The war has weakened Ukraine's education-to-work pipeline. Foundational and advanced skills are eroding, especially for marginalized groups. Traditional pathways fail to prepare students for the evolving labour market, risking deeper human capital loss and slower national recovery.

## The vision

UNICEF's vision for education and skills in Ukraine is grounded in a life-course approach—supporting children and young people from early childhood through their school years and into adolescence and early adulthood. This integrated work spans both emergency response and early recovery, ensuring continuity of learning during crisis and building the long-term resilience of Ukraine's education system. All efforts are aligned with government priorities and reforms, particularly those of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), and with Ukraine's path toward EU integration.

In the context of ongoing hostilities, UNICEF prioritizes access to safe, inclusive learning environments for war-affected children. Key interventions include rehabilitating bomb shelters, repairing schools damaged by missile and drone attacks, and establishing classrooms in metro stations and underground schools. To ensure continuity of education in insecure areas, UNICEF also strengthens digital learning systems and provides integrated mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) to students, teachers, and caregivers—addressing learning loss and emotional distress, particularly for children in frontline regions.

At the same time, UNICEF supports early recovery by helping to strengthen education systems and advance reform. This includes contributing to the implementation of the New Ukrainian School Reform—a national initiative to modernize curriculum, decentralize governance, and embed a competency-based approach—and promoting alignment with the European Education Area and the EU Accession Agenda. Through support for planning, governance, and inclusive financing, UNICEF helps build a more equitable and future-ready education system.

Youth are at the centre of the vision. Through school-based and community-driven interventions, UNICEF equips adolescents with the skills needed for employment, civic participation, and leadership in Ukraine's recovery. According to the Brighter Future investment case, every 1 hryvnia invested in youth skills could return up to 4.25 hryvnias by 2030. UNICEF continues to partner with the Government at national, regional, and local levels to ensure its support reaches the most vulnerable children and youth—laying the foundation for an inclusive, resilient, and empowered generation.

## UNICEF's Programme Priorities

In 2025, UNICEF aims to support 979,500 children through formal and non-formal education—517,530 through emergency interventions and 461,970 through recovery-focused programmes.

An additional 200,000 young people will be reached with skills-building opportunities for employment and civic participation, with a focus on girls and youth in frontline and rural areas.



**979,500**  
children

**200,000**  
young people



Primary school students learning in Kharkiv's underground metro school - the only safe classroom they've ever known. They began their education during the war and have never set foot in a regular school.

## 1 EXPANDING EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMMES

UNICEF works to increase access to quality early childhood education and care (ECEC), covering both formal and alternative services, with tailored approaches for children aged 3 months to 3 years and 3 to 6 years.

- Pilot four alternative preschool models across 60 locations to reach children without access to formal kindergartens. This includes advocacy for government funding to scale up successful models.
- Improve kindergarten quality by rehabilitating learning spaces, upgrading shelters, and providing age-appropriate furniture and materials. UNICEF also supports system optimization to improve efficiency and reduce waiting lists.
- Empower parents through training and communication campaigns. This includes behaviour change strategies to increase awareness and demand for ECEC, informed by ongoing Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) and other studies.
- In emergencies, deliver the humanitarian 2x2 (two hours twice a week) programme to ensure in-person access for children aged 3–6 who have missed out on early learning with peers.
- Build teacher capacity through training on mixed-modality learning, MHPSS, inclusive pedagogy, and alternative delivery models.

## 2 FACILITATING REMEDIAL LEARNING

UNICEF supports the MoES to build and implement national remedial and catch-up learning strategies to bridge urgent learning gaps caused by the war.

- Train teachers to perform classroom diagnostics, identify learning gaps, and develop tailored learning plans.
- Support teachers with structured pedagogy, including lesson plans and learning materials that integrate MHPSS, and guidance on teaching by learning level rather than by grade.
- Offer tutorials in key subjects such as mathematics, Ukrainian, and science using both online and face-to-face modalities.
- Extend remedial learning through non-formal platforms such as youth centres and extracurricular institutions.
- Support schools to develop and implement improvement plans that promote inclusive, quality learning and enhance students' well-being.

## 3 PROMOTING CONDUCTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

UNICEF works to improve the quality of education by creating safe, inclusive, and engaging learning environments.

- Deliver school- and community-based MHPSS to children, young people, teachers, and educators.
- Supply teaching and learning materials to schools that lack essential resources, including notebooks, manuals, digital devices, and support for school feeding programmes.
- Conduct rehabilitation of educational infrastructure, including window replacements and shelter improvements, to enable safe face-to-face learning.
- Leverage support for the Safe Schools initiative, including transportation solutions to improve access for children living with disabilities and those in rural and frontline areas.

## 4 ENHANCING ACCESS TO DIGITAL/DISTANCE LEARNING

UNICEF supports digital learning by strengthening online platforms and providing offline learning solutions to ensure continuity of education for all.

- Support schools in maintaining and using digital devices provided through earlier UNICEF response.
- Assist government and partners in developing and scaling technological solutions that are inclusive and student-centred.
- Strengthen the national learning platform "All Ukrainian Schools Online" and expand digital lessons and textbooks for the platform.
- Provide offline digital learning support materials for students with limited internet access in frontline areas.
- Establish student learning support centres in school shelters, including digital access for those lacking resources at home.

## 5 STRENGTHENING YOUTH SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY

UNICEF supports the development of flexible, inclusive, and sustainable skills pathways for young people, ensuring a smooth transition from education to employment.

- Strengthen youth skills through digital literacy, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, leadership, and sustainability-oriented training.
- Expand access to structured civic engagement opportunities, including inclusive youth councils, volunteering, and leadership programmes.
- Build career navigation support systems, including mentorship, internships, and real-world learning-to-earning pathways.
- Integrate green skills training and promote youth engagement in renewable energy, sustainable entrepreneurship, and climate resilience initiatives.
- Focus on empowering marginalized groups, including young women, displaced youth, rural youth, and youth with disabilities, through gender-responsive and inclusive programming.

## 6 STRENGTHENING EDUCATION SYSTEM REFORMS AND COORDINATION

UNICEF supports education reform at both national and local levels, bridging urgent humanitarian needs and long-term sector goals.

- Co-lead the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) alongside MOES and the Embassy of Finland, coordinating national and decentralized education interventions and sector-wide recovery planning.
- Provide technical support for key reforms aligned with Ukraine's Education Strategic Sector Plan (2024–2027), including ECE, digital learning, MHPSS, and learning recovery.
- Support the implementation of the 2025 Preschool Education Law to expand access to quality early learning.
- Improve sector coordination through the Partnership Coordination Office (PCO) of the MoES and the Navigator Tool, which maps needs and interventions.
- Conduct national learning loss assessments in partnership with MOES to guide programming interventions and inform localized recovery strategies.
- Build hromada-level capacity through workshops and technical support to integrate recovery planning into local education strategies.

## Why UNICEF?



### AMPLIFYING THE VOICES OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

UNICEF plays a unique role in amplifying the voices of children and young people in Ukraine. This includes shaping agendas, building partnerships, and convening stakeholders from the private sector, government, civil society, and academia. By bridging these sectors, UNICEF creates opportunities for young people and fosters their meaningful participation in shaping their futures. It ensures their needs and aspirations stay at the centre of Ukraine's development agenda.



### EQUITY

UNICEF prioritizes the most vulnerable children and young people. With a strong focus on inclusivity and gender responsiveness, UNICEF works to ensure the active involvement of marginalized groups, including children with disabilities, children in rural areas, girls, and children on the move.



### LEADERSHIP IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

UNICEF co-chairs the Education Sector Working Group and provides technical support to the Ministry of Education and Science. Leveraging its global experience in emergencies and development, UNICEF ensures that education responses are inclusive, effective, and resilient. With strong local partnerships and subnational reach, it is well positioned to coordinate efforts and mobilize a broad coalition of partners.

As a co-lead of the Global Education Cluster (GEC), UNICEF contributes to global coordination efforts by developing tools, building evidence, strengthening capacities, and advocating for education in emergencies.



### ALIGNMENT WITH GOVERNMENT-LED PRIORITIES

UNICEF's work in learning and skills development aligns closely with the priorities of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Strong ties at both national and local levels allow UNICEF to engage in policy dialogue, advocacy, and joint interventions.



### CAPACITY FOR INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES AND NATIONAL COVERAGE

In 2024, UNICEF reached 481,484 children through formal and non-formal education programmes across Ukraine. Its technical expertise enables the integration of mental health and psychosocial support into school and community-based initiatives, helping ensure education continues during the war.



### STRONG CONNECTIONS WITH THE TEACHING COMMUNITY

Through deep experience in local education initiatives and partnerships with government and civil society, UNICEF effectively engages the teaching community. These relationships help foster environments where teachers promote child rights and inclusive education.



### EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING

UNICEF draws on multiple data sources to guide education programming and policy, including the Education Management Information System and U-Report, a tool that captures real-time input from young people.



### PARTICIPATORY PROGRAM DESIGN AND CO-CREATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

UNICEF ensures youth are active partners—not just beneficiaries—by embedding participatory approaches in all youth-focused programmes. Through platforms like the Young People Advisory Board, UPSHIFT, and U-Report, adolescents help shape policies and programmes that reflect their realities.

## FUNDING NEED FOR 2025\*

\*as of May 2025

TOTAL:  
**\$131 M**

Total Gap:  
**\$76 M**

### HUMANITARIAN ACTION FOR CHILDREN

Total funding needs:

**US\$ 76,5M**

Funded  
US\$ 26,5M



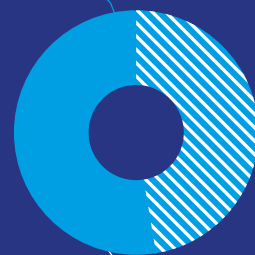
Funding Gap  
**US\$ 50M**

### NEXUS AND RECOVERY

Total funding needs:

**US\$ 54,5M**

Funded  
US\$ 28,5M



Funding Gap  
**US\$ 26M**