



Protecting Ukraine's families: Providing access to education and psychosocial support for children and families impacted by the ongoing conflict

Concept Note

May 5, 2023

More than a year has passed since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2023. Millions of Ukrainian children and youth have fled Ukraine, with most staying in neighboring countries. Thousands more Ukrainians have been displaced to other parts of the country, mostly western Ukraine, far from the front lines of the war.

What our Local Partners Experience: As the impact of the war drags on, and the international attention in the conflict decreases, the need for the services provided by local community-based organizations continue to increase. At GFC, we recognize that this need will likely remain for years to come. Our partners report that their organizations-small, local, and community-based -are one of few sources of support for Ukrainian families. Our partners tell us that most of them have not received emergency grant support from donors other than GFC, and if they have, that support is most often highly restricted. A [recent review](#) by Humanitarian Outcomes found that nearly \$3 billion in funds was raised to support the response to the war in Ukraine but only a small proportion has reached the grassroots organizations delivering on the ground. According to many of the community-based organizations GFC has engaged with, there is an additional concern around decreasing interest and support from donors in general, with particular concern around the lack of funding available for the more complex long-term work that is needed now and over the next several years.

GFC Response: GFC has responded to the crisis in Ukraine by providing ongoing support to over 70 community-based organizations in Ukraine and the surrounding region, providing flexible grant funding to address the immediate needs of refugee and internally displaced children and youth. From our conversations with partners and through time spent with organizations and Ukrainian refugees on our recent site visits in the region, we are now proposing a longer-term, focused program that prioritizes the small, nascent, underfunded and specialist partners **that are doing so much of the work but struggle the most to access stable and ongoing flexible funding.**

Many children and youth are traumatized by the violence and aggression they have witnessed and are in need of locally delivered services including safe shelters and community spaces, psychosocial support, and education that is accessible, appropriate, and reliable. The key target groups for this work are young people who have had their education disrupted, and children and youth that have been disproportionately



affected by the conflict, such as [children and youth living with disabilities](#), [LGBTQ+ youth](#), and [Roma children and youth](#).¹

GFC intends to reach these children and youth via a cohort of current and new partnerships with community-based organizations responding to the crisis. The grassroots organizations that will be supported for this project work closely with children and youth in a range of both formal and informal settings, including schools, community centers, and temporary shelters. For a more thorough description of our local partners and the work they're doing in response to the crisis, click here: [GFC's Ukraine response](#).

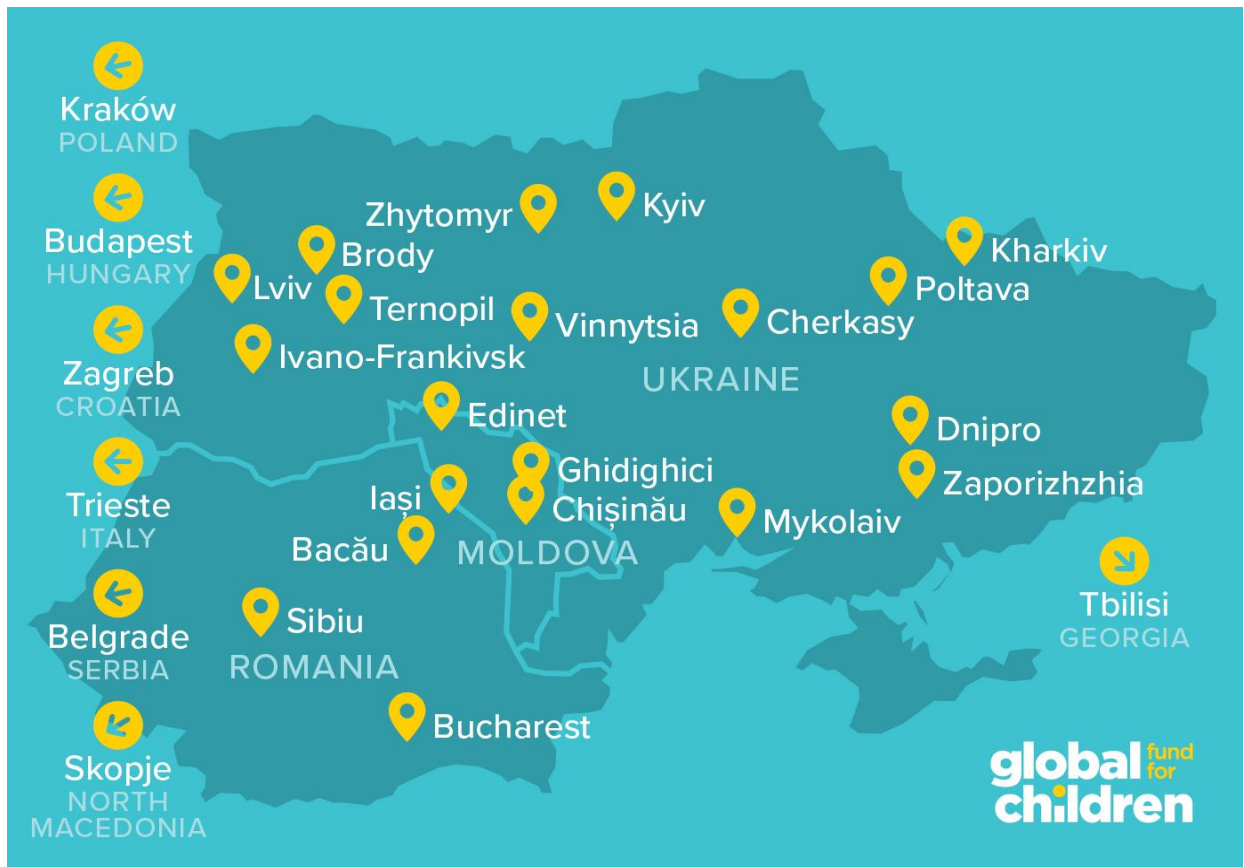


Figure 1: Map of GFC Partners in Ukraine, Croatia, Georgia, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and Serbia

Sustained Support: This project is aimed at longer-term support of grassroots partners. Over the past few months, many of our existing grantee partners have requested additional assistance and have asked “Can we count on you to help us?” Unfortunately, the answer to this question has been “We’re not sure yet.” This funding uncertainty is retraumatizing for some partners and beneficiaries and creates

¹ Hyperlinks provide more information about the work of our partners with these target groups.

anxiety in addition to the ongoing stress that they face every day. We aim to provide significant grant and capacity-building support to these grantee partners as they continue to respond to the evolving context.

At the **core** this project, GFC will provide partners with grants to support their work addressing the long-term needs of Ukrainian children and youth impacted by the war. In line with our core model, we will offer fully flexible funding, demonstrating our belief that the organizations closest to communities know how to best allocate resources on the ground. Many of our current Ukraine partners are delivering both emergency relief efforts alongside their regular activities. We expect this to continue. We will offer two primary annual grants to our partners (one per year), in addition to building a pool of emergency and opportunity grants for partners to use to respond to unexpected needs and opportunities that arise during the project. Opportunity grants are often used for capacity development projects, networking interventions, or innovation support for programming.

The second part of this project will be to offer **capacity development** and targeted technical support to our partners, enhancing their current interventions, assessing impact, and strengthening key competencies, with a focus on supporting our partners to further develop their safeguarding policies, staff wellbeing and networking and advocacy outreach.



Figure 2: Children join together for a group discussion at the Informal Education Center Diversity youth center. © Informal Education Center Diversity

As part of this support, we will link our partners to a range of resources and networks to help them cope with the extreme levels of burnout, fatigue, and emotional exhaustion, enabling them to sustain staff resilience and maintain delivery in local communities. We will also convene regular online meetings with partners to provide feedback on strategic challenges and offer support around how best to demonstrate the impact of their work on expanding access to education and improving health and wellbeing for children and youth throughout Ukraine. Where possible, we will also consider face-to-face meetings and connections. Finally, we will facilitate introductions to peer organizations and prospective donors in the region, whilst seeking to increase partner visibility among international audiences and global media.

We will also work alongside our partners to publish stories, share highlights, seeking to build their profile and raise awareness of all the work they do. This work will be led by a GFC staff member located in the region, with local language and experience to support this cohort of partners over the next two years along with additional regional support and leadership.

Intended Impact and Results: We expect the following results to be achieved as a result of this project:

1. We will reach at least 20,000 Ukrainian children and youth, increasing access to education, providing psychosocial support and legal and well-being services.
2. As a direct result of GFC's flexible funding model, our grassroots organizations will be able to both continue existing service delivery, whilst improving and further developing the support they offer to children and youth throughout Ukraine and the wider region.
3. The safeguarding policies and practice of our partner organizations will be further developed for the new contexts they are operating in, ensuring the children and youth they work with are safe and secure.
4. The staff teams of our partners, including volunteers, will benefit directly from self-care and wellbeing services, ensuring that they are able to continue delivering in local communities.
5. The profile and visibility of our partners will be significantly increased, providing them with increased access to funding opportunities and expanding their networks with prospective donors.

Scope: Since the invasion of Russia into Ukraine, GFC has received and distributed over three million dollars in fully flexible funding directly into the hands of the region's community-based organizations. This support directly reaches children, efficiently and in ways that most directly support their immediate and long-term needs. The role of local civil society in this crisis is a critical piece of the response that is keeping children and their families safe and supported. Our role as GFC is to remain alongside these organizations, providing them with the access to financial and technical resources they need to face the ongoing assault on their safety and their communities. The budget for this project is \$3.1M over two years in support of approximately 40 partners in Ukraine, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova.



Figure 3: Children playing in a safe space facilitated by Theatre of Contemporary Dialogue. © TCD

Annex A: Budget Summary