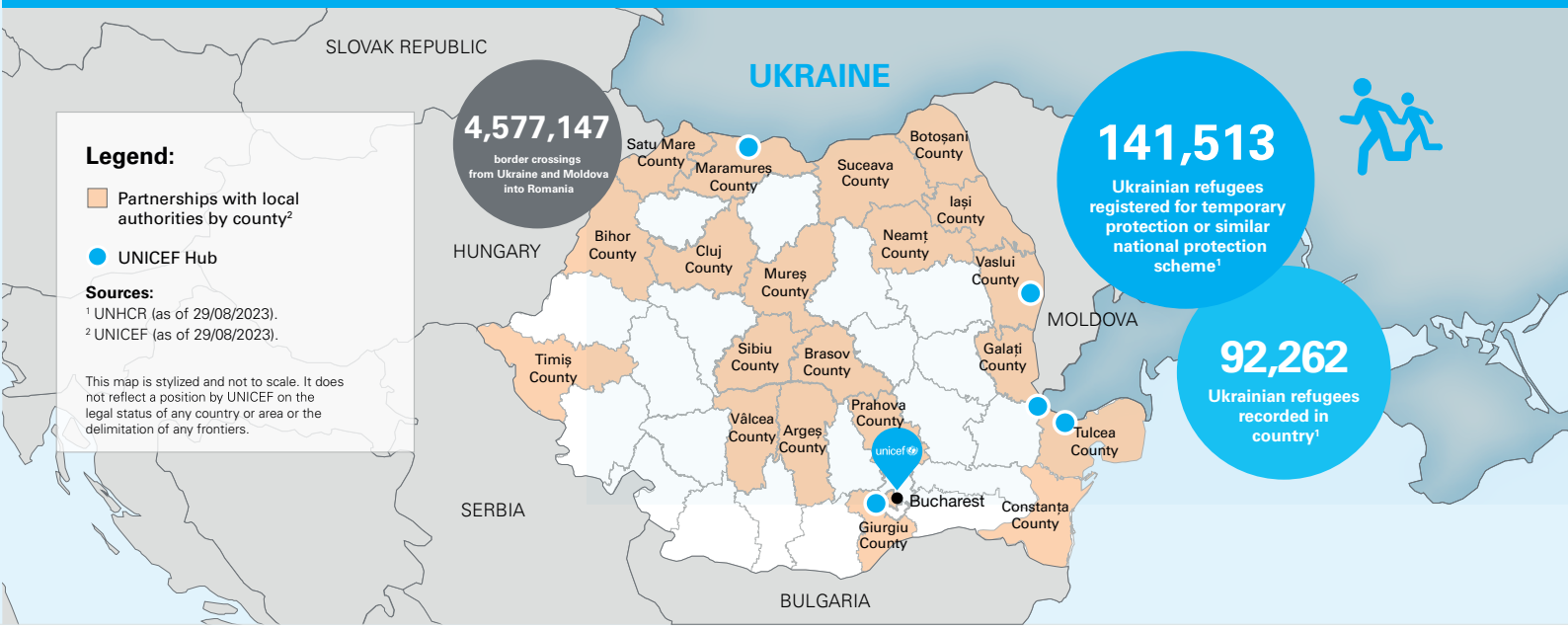
Romania

FACTSHEET AUGUST 2023

Humanitarian Response for Children and Refugee Families Outside of Ukraine

unicef for every child



UNICEF Refugee response programme results (2022 – to date)

Since the onset of the war in Ukraine, UNICEF has been working closely with national, regional and local authorities to expand services in child protection, education, health and nutrition, WASH, and social protection. UNICEF integrates into its work the principles of social cohesion, accountability to affected populations, and gender equality in addition to non-discrimination and inclusion of persons with disabilities.

Health

23,362

Children and women received primary health care services through UNICEF supported mechanisms

Education

27,662

Children accessed formal or non-formal education, including early learning

27,663

Children received individual learning materials

Social and Behavior Change

2,217,681

People reached through messaging on prevention and access to services

WASH

38,635

People accessing a sufficient quantity of potable water for domestic needs

21,985

People reached with critical WASH supplies

Child Protection

25,703

Children and caregivers accessed mental health and psychosocial support

181,080

People had access to safe spaces, protection and support hubs

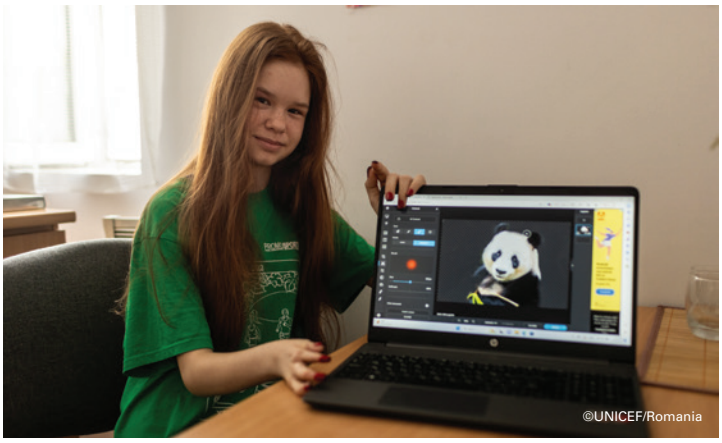
Acronyms: WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Sources: UNICEF (as of 29/08/2023, all time data)

In the spotlight

As the new schoolyear is on the doorstep – UNICEF and partners are working tirelessly to support and sustain the critical efforts to provide uninterrupted access to education to children and adolescents from Ukraine. From very low figures initially – the enrolment of Ukraine children and adolescents in the education system of Romania multiplied following a reform of the governmental cash assistance programme for Ukraine refugees ('50/20') in May 2023 that made school enrolment a condition for the assistance receipt. Supported by UNICEF and partners, children from Ukraine like Lisa can now return to school and reclaim some of their childhood and adolescence.

Overall, 63 learning hubs operate with the support of UNICEF – including 28 play, learning and parenting hubs, 24 education hubs, and 11 youth hubs – extending access to non-formal learning opportunities to over 10 thousand additional children from Ukraine.

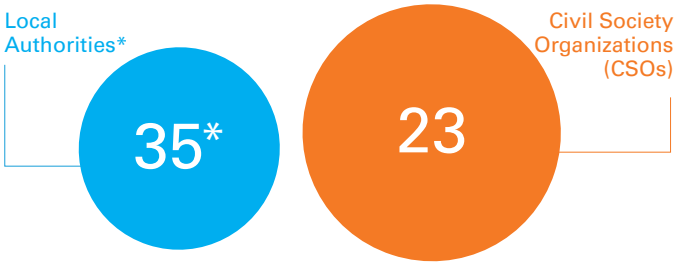


Lisa (12) is happy with her new laptop which she can use to continue her online classes. In collaboration with HP and the Global Business Coalition for Education, UNICEF and partners delivered nearly 3,000 laptops across Romania alongside textbooks and learning materials, multilingual conversation guides and stationary supplies.

UNICEF supported the Ministry of Education to implement Romanian language classes and scale up learning services and facilitation in Ukrainian language

https://www.unicef.org/romania/stories/breaking-barriers-lisas-educational-pursuit-refugee

Delivering through partnerships



* This includes partnerships with municipalities and local and central government.
Source: UNICEF (as of 29/08/2023)

UNICEF's partnerships with the Government of Romania, national and local authorities, UNHCR and other United Nations agencies, local and international NGOs, donors, and supra-national entities (cross-border initiatives, European Union support) have been vital to the provision of services and support to people fleeing the war in Ukraine.

Coordinated efforts of all partners enabled uninterrupted day-to-day running of an extensive network of all-encompassing services including direct assistance, protection, and referral to legal aid, medical assistance, and mental health and psychosocial support. An estimated 350 thousand people have had access to services in Blue Dots, safe spaces and service hubs. Blue Dots were established by UNICEF with UNHCR and other partners to provide safe spaces and essential services to Ukraine refugees - initally along the borders and later also in urban areas inside the country. Blue Dots integrate a minimum set of protection and other social services and referrals for children, families and all other vulnerable populations. Over 180 thousand people benefited from at least one service in UNICEF-supported safe spaces, protection, education and health hubs.

Stories from our work

Kira from Ukraine (16) and her friend from Romania Stela (15) at the UNICEF-supported youth hub in Cluj-Napoca.

On an individual level, human connections made through the response give it a special dimension. On a wider, systemic level – creating links and building trust between Ukraine refugees and the society and institutions of Romania is growing in importance by the day. Throughout Romania, 11 UNICEF-supported youth hubs create opportunities for social cohesion by bringing together adolescents from both Ukraine and Romania.

As a specific, often overlooked, population, adolescents have been one of the key beneficiary groups of the UNICEF response. In close collaboration with partners, UNICEF tailors and implements activities such as sports for development to engage adolescents, support their development and participation, help them build new networks and overcome social isolation and loneliness, and respond to their mental health and psycho-social needs.

Main donors for response

Top public donors*	Top-5 National Committee donors**
United States	Danish Committee for UNICEF
Japan	Swiss Committee for UNICEF
Austria	German Committee for UNICEF
Republic of Korea	Austrian Comittee for UNICEF
Switzerland	Belgian Committee for UNICEF

*Includes only the response for Romania of updated Humanitarian Action for Children Appeal (HAC) Appeal
**Includes the response under Pillar 1 (Inside Ukraine) and Pillar 2 (Refugee Receiving Countries).
Sources: UNICEF (as of 27/06/2023)

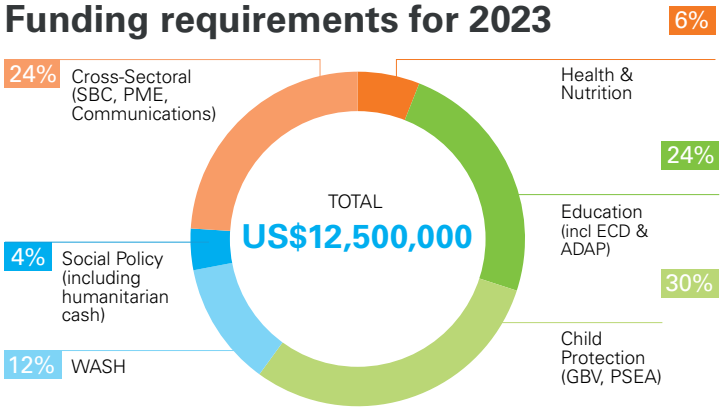
Looking ahead

Volodymyr (15) – known to his friends as Vova – is participating in Romanian language classes in a classroom at the UNICEF-supported 'Lacul Tei' refugee transit centre in Bucharest, Romania. Vova fled the war from his home in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, and lives together with his mother in the transit refugee centre where he studies online and takes part in activities offered by local NGOs.

Ukraine refugee response in Romania has transitioned from a primarily emergency one to a wider framework for the protection of all vulnerable populations through integrated service models run by the local communities and authorities. Lessons learnt, experience and knowledge built as part of the response to Ukraine refugee crisis transcend the boundaries of Romania and can be a starting point for cross-border system strengthening as part of long-term emergency preparedness and response. At the same time, all phases of the response remain critical to the ongoing efforts to respond to the changing needs of the refugee populations.
Cross-cutting, transversal, approaches (gender, adolescents, etc) remain integral to the UNICEF response.

For additional information on **UNICEF's 2023 Humanitarian response for children outside of Ukraine** please visit UNICEF Ukraine 2023 Humanitarian Action for Children.

Funding requirements for 2023



Acronyms: ECD: Early Childhood Development, ADAP: Adolescent Development And Participation, GBV: Gender-based violence, PSEA: Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, SBC: Social and Behavior Change, PME: Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. **Source:** UNICEF

500 days of the response: from immediate needs to inclusion

The 24 February 2022 full-scale military invasion launched by Russian Federation against Ukraine caused the largest displacement within Europe since the Second World War and inflicted irreparable harm and suffering on millions of people and children forced to flee their homes and seek refuge all over Europe from air raids, atrocities, and war traumas. As a neighbouring country of Ukraine, Romania has had a dual role of both a transit and a destination country for Ukraine refugees. Among them are highly vulnerable individuals and groups in need of different types of services, protection, and support.

Ukraine refugee crisis response in Romania is organized under the auspices of several regional and supra-national response frameworks – starting with the EU Temporary Protection Directive. As part of the UNICEF Humanitarian Appeal for Children (HAC) for Ukraine, the UNICEF response in Romania is aligned with the UNHCR-led Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) and the National Response Plan of the Government of Romania.

Delivery through the national systems is a core aspect – and concurrently a lens and a cornerstone of the vision, conceptualization, and evolution – of the UNICEF response. UNICEF has been actively supporting the government and national systems of Romania in responding to the needs of Ukraine refugees and ensuring their access to guaranteed rights and protection.

In response to Ukraine refugee crisis, UNICEF swiftly adjusted its programming and engaged in the response at its onset. As a UN agency with a longstanding presence in Romania since the 1990s with a specific mandate and unrivalled expertise related to the protection and promotion of the best interest and rights of the child, UNICEF has had a critical role in responding to, although not limited to, the needs of child and adolescent refugees from Ukraine. UNICEF and partners established the first Blue Dot for refugees in Ukraine's neighbouring countries in Sighet, Romania on 1 March 2022.

Fedir (1) and his brother Platon (6 months) are playing and having fun at a child friendly space supported by UNICEF in the Blue Dot hub in Galați. In October 2022, Fedir and his mother Sasha (24) fled Zaporizhzhia and found refuge in Romania.

In conceptualizing and delivering the Ukraine refugee crisis response in Romania UNICEF has been following – within wider response frameworks – the journeys and needs of Ukraine refugees. At the onset of the refugee crisis, UNICEF quickly proved an indispensable actor able to mobilize, convene, and guide partners to sustain and adjust the response to the ever-evolving needs of children and families in their journey from war to safety, and from immediate needs to social inclusion.

Transition from Blue Dots to the 'Blue Grid' approach involving a progressive handover of key response activities to the local authorities remained the focus of UNICEF work with municipalities and county councils. UNICEF field presence has become one of the most valuable aspects of our engagement in Ukraine refugee response as it created opportunities to mobilize local networks and work directly with decentralized authorities and other local actors.

Throughout Ukraine refugee crisis, UNICEF has been working around the clock with governmental, non-governmental and other partners to sustain the response despite a multitude of **challenges** great and small – from the weather elements in the mountainous areas of Romania through the insufficient number of frontline workers and volunteers to respond to the critical needs of refugees at the borders to the elephantine task of registering incoming refugees and ensuring monitoring and protection of populations at risk.

By **joining forces with the local actors**, an outstanding potential has been unfolded to – through Ukraine refugee response – continue addressing deep systemic issues of wider social inclusion, provision of community-based services, and social cohesion. Efforts to ensure the **sustainability of response** with all its value and potential created in terms of knowledge, networks, human capacity, mechanisms, and processes are integral to the UNICEF vision and ongoing journey in and beyond Romania.

Response highlights by sector

Child Protection is at the core of the UNICEF response – from protection standard-setting to providing extensive support to the Government. UNICEF is particularly invested in identifying and protecting unaccompanied and separated children as one of the most vulnerable populations fleeing the war in Ukraine. The UNICEF-supported digital tool PRIMERO has helped the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption in identifying and providing individual case management to Ukraine children at risk. PRIMERO registered a total of 30,000 children since the onset of Ukraine refugee crisis.

Children and other populations at risk are particularly vulnerable and therefore at the core of the UNICEF response. **Prevention of and response to gender-based violence, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and anti-trafficking** are integral to Protection. Core protection standards are embedded into all aspects of the UNICEF response. Internalization of the core standards of protection by the partners is a critically important part of the UNICEF response. In 2023, over 80 individuals received training on PSEA including training of staff to appropriately handle and refer SEA allegations in accordance with established procedures.

Education remains one of the most critical and challenging areas of the response. Prior to Ukraine refugee crisis, COVID-19 demonstrated the importance of uninterrupted access to education – particularly to structurally disadvantaged communities and regions. As learning gaps caused by crises are extremely challenging to bridge, addressing and overcoming structural barriers to the education of children and adolescents from Ukraine has been at the core of the UNICEF education response.

Systemic barriers in education are increasingly prominent in the context of reforms of the governmental cash assistance programme for Ukraine refugees ('50/20') that now makes school enrolment a condition for the assistance receipt. UNICEF remains an essential partner to the Government of Romania in identifying and delivering solutions to support all education pathways of Ukraine children and adolescents.

As part of the education response, 63 education hubs, 28 play, learning and parenting hubs, and 11 youth hubs have been established to provide safe learning spaces to over 10,000 children and adolescents from Ukraine, incldiung delivery of 3,000 laptops and over 10,000 textbooks and learning materials, multilingual conversation guides and stationary supplies.

Health has also been characterized by delivery of the response through the national systems. As education and protection, health is a pillar of the response through which UNICEF strives to create a wider integration and inclusion net to progressively absorb Ukraine refugees and all other vulnerable populations. Access to primary healthcare, including referrals and immunization, have been the main areas of the UNICEF health response. Approximately 9,000 pieces of medical supplies have been delivered to healthcare institutions and partners engaged in the response since its onset.

UNICEF and partners supported Ukraine refugees in accessing healthcare system in the context of language and other systemic barriers in Romania. Communication and trust building between Ukraine refugees in a state of shock and fear after fleeing war zones and the receiving communities including service providers overwhelmed by the scale and effect of Ukraine refugee crisis has generally been one of the most powerful and meaningful aspects of the response.

As part of the health response – the 'Caring for Mothers' network, launched in 2022 by the Association of Independent Midwives' with the support of UNICEF, improved the capacities of 250 medical staff in primary care and maternity wards to better communicate with vulnerable patients such as Ukraine refugees.

As Ukraine refugee crisis began in wintertime, UNICEF actively sought effective solutions to operationalize the response in low, often sub-zero, temperatures and provide the necessary assistance to Ukraine refugees. As one of the areas of response, UNICEF engaged in covering the **basic needs** of refugees by, for instance, purchasing and delivering nearly 28,000 sets of winter clothes and blankets. Ensuring access to **water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)** to Ukraine refugee populations was another aspect of the UNICEF response. Through the WASH component, inter alia, toilets for people with disabilities were installed at the RomExpo site in the capital Bucharest.

Accountability to the affected populations (AAP) is integral to the UNICEF response. In line with our vision, UNICEF works on strengthening shock responsiveness of the national **social protection** system and building its capacity to include all vulnerable populations. In the light of recent reforms of the governmental cash assistance programme for Ukraine refugees ('50/20'), UNICEF sought feedback from the affected populations on the potential impact of reforms on their lives in Romania and shared the findings with the Government and other actors. In conceptualizing and delivering the response, UNICEF strives to integrate rights-based approaches inclusive of the needs of vulnerable populations and integrate human rights protection and gender considerations into the response and wider work of partners.

Stories from our work

Children arriving from Ukraine often carry a heavy burden of anxiety linked to the war. Many have experienced the loss of loved ones and bear the scars of trauma. Communication struggles and longing for their homeland also exacerbate the challenges faced by young refugees from Ukraine.

Visual cards are essential to Iryna's work with children from Ukraine at the UNICEF-supported hub in Timișoara.

Trough mental health and psycho-social support activities, UNICEF and partners help Ukraine refugees cope with war traumas, loss, and anxiety. Iryna is a Ukrainian psychologist working with young refugees at the Youth Hub in Timișoara. "Here, at the youth hub, we are doing our best to support them, to make them feel included, and reach another level of communication," says Iryna.

Advocacy and other 'behind the scenes' aspects of the response such as **co-ordination**, creation and maintenance of **partnerships**, quiet but impactful **empowerment and capacity building** of partners and beneficiaries through day-to-day communication, awareness raising, knowledge transfer and exchange, data and response monitoring-related work – have made the response even more valuable, meaningful and effective.

Ukraine refugee response integrates different efforts, resources, and areas of the UNICEF and other partners' programming and expertise. Synergy, co-ordination and co-operation are key as no stakeholder is an island. Refugees' needs are complex and require a multitude of perspectives, approaches and efforts.

Reaching and engaging both refugee and host communities in **social and behavioural change**-related communication and activities is part of the inclusion and social cohesion efforts. As Ukraine refugee crisis brought many challenges to both ordinary people and systems and institutions, it is important to also recognize the value of communication, solidarity and trust building. That is in fact the very fabric of response.

By way of conclusion

Mariana with her daughters Daniela (1) and Lucica (3) at the UNICEF-supported transit centre in Lacul Tei, Bucharest.

While looking ahead how to best apply the legacy of response, it is important to remember that Ukraine refugee crisis is not over and thousands of people and children – each with their own vulnerabilities, needs, and coming from different backgrounds – still require support and assistance. Amid high uncertainty surrounding the war in Ukraine, sustaining the response is of critical importance.

Concurrently, integration and social inclusion of Ukraine refugees are growing in importance by the day. **Social cohesion** as a goal in itself and a tool towards progressive integration of Ukraine refugees in the host country is increasingly necessary. In that sense, continued co-operation and institutional capacity building efforts are needed to integrate the lessons learnt and value created of the response into pre-existing efforts of supporting and strengthening the **national systems** to (re-)include and ensure access to fundamental rights and protection to all vulnerable populations.

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