

After one long year of war in Ukraine

Children and young people need peace, protection of their rights, and a plan for the future

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The marking of 365 days of war in Ukraine must serve as a turning point for children and young people. Their lives are at risk, their rights are being undermined, and they are living in very harsh conditions, with ongoing insecurity and uncertainty about the future. Their needs must now be met.

Terre des Hommes urges the International Community to make every effort to help secure peace, to respect international obligations towards children and international humanitarian law, and to work with children and young people to create a long-term vision for support.

Protection issues and risks for children and young people affected by the war in Ukraine are considerable. The war is taking its toll on their physical, mental and emotional well-being. Children and young people living through the war and those who flee as refugees experience mental health and psychosocial issues. Children's education - which is a core part of ensuring children are protected - and social development are in jeopardy. Language barriers can hinder children's integration into host communities, including in schools, and limit access to other services such as healthcare. The living conditions of refugees are not always adequate. The distinct needs of children and young people living with disabilities, of different age ranges, or with other forms of diversity are not always being catered for and they can be at increased risk. Many children and young people, particularly adolescents, have had crucial support networks disrupted. As the war drags on for longer than expected, the willingness of host communities to support children and caregivers who fled Ukraine as refugees can wane. Not all children and young people fleeing Ukraine are treated equally and unfortunately their rights are not always respected.

Olga, 16, a refugee from Mariupol in Moldova outlines the challenges she faces to access schooling: “[The] online education that we have right now is not very efficient or of good quality. Due to the frequent interruptions caused by air strikes in Ukraine and the connection issues we face, we encounter serious problems. Unfortunately, we do not have any other choice, especially if you are in a graduation class. And going to a Moldovan school is not an option because of the language barrier and also because the diploma we can eventually get here will not be recognized in Ukraine.”

Like many young people, Ana, 17, a refugee from Odessa currently living in Bucharest experiences a sense of guilt for having escaped the war: “Usually when I see news, I feel very sad, and I feel that something is wrong because there are so many people in Ukraine living in awful conditions and I had a chance to go abroad”. Despite the significant need to address mental health issues, psychosocial support is not always available, accessible, regular or sustainable. Yet responding to this need - and the other needs of children and young people - is essential.

As the war enters its second year, a long-term vision of support that puts every child and young person at its heart is needed. Terre des Hommes urges the International Community, Ukraine and host countries to:

- Ensure children have access to strong **child protection systems and social protection** that can respond to the needs of children affected by war;
- Increase funding for and ensure children can access **education** and a safe place to learn and socialize with other children;
- Ensure children and their families have access to **mental health and psycho-social support**;
- Support the **inclusion of refugees** in national systems in host countries, support them to integrate, reinforce social cohesion with host communities and **counter any form of discrimination**;
- Ensure support is tailored in consideration of **age, gender and other forms of diversity**; and
- Establish mechanisms to ensure **child and youth participation** in the design, implementation and monitoring of support they need.

Valérie Ceccherini, Secretary General of Terre des Hommes, said: “Despite the challenges, children and young people affected by the war in Ukraine show determination and resilience. We hope they will soon find peace. Terre des Hommes will continue to accompany children and young people for as long as it is needed, supporting and empowering them to enjoy their childhood and youth, feel safe, be healthy, remain hopeful, deal with the effects of war, learn, and realize their dreams.”

[Read our full brief here.](#)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- An estimated 17.6 million people are expected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in Ukraine in 2023, of which 23% are children¹. Almost 1.5 million children are displaced internally in Ukraine² and over 3 million have found refuge in other European countries³.
- Terre des Hommes International Federation is a non-governmental organisation of 9 member organisations, working for the rights of children and equitable development with 730 projects across 67 countries. Terre des Hommes advocates for rights-based policies in all areas of children's lives.
- Terre des Hommes works with children and young people in Ukraine itself as well as people who have fled as refugees in Europe, providing direct assistance and also working in partnership with many local and international organisations. [Terre des Hommes has worked in Ukraine](#) since 2009 through partners and has been a registered organisation there since 2015. In Ukraine and other European countries, we support children and their families with basic needs, emergency assistance, child protection, psychosocial support, access to education and health and child-friendly spaces where children can be children.
- Read more from children in a Terre des Hommes (Romania) publication: <https://tdh.ro/en/letters-our-dads-ukraine> and see a video created by a young boy in Hungary about his journey (and others journey) through pain: <https://vimeo.com/776930324>
- Watch this video that describes the first emergency and welcoming model implemented by Terre des Hommes in Italy, based on the successful experience of the FARO project aiming to protect unaccompanied migrant children arriving in Italy, through qualified psychosocial and psychological assistance:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S_dok8Ob8Xw

¹ [2022 Report OHCA](#)

² [OCHA, Ukraine Situation Report, 19 December 2022](#)

³ [UNHCR Ukraine Refugee Situation](#)