



# UKRAINE CHILDREN'S ACTION PROJECT

## The Undeniable Urgency of Children...

June 2022

### **Background**

The [Ukraine Children's Action Project](#) (UCAP) was established, to assess and support the urgent needs of displaced children who have escaped from a brutal Russian invasion that began on February 24, 2022. Since that time, nearly 2/3 of Ukraine's children under age 15 have fled besieged areas in eastern regions of the nation. Many of these children have been severely traumatized and/ or have been unable to continue their education. But when the war is over, *they must be ready and able to return to Ukraine as an essential part of the nation's future.*

### **Mission:**

UCAP works with local officials and non-governmental organizations in Lviv, Ukraine and Warsaw, Poland to optimize the health, well-being and education of children who have been separated by war from their homes and communities. UCAP functions in a high-level advisory capacity, as well, by providing strategic direct grants to programs supporting these children.

### **Areas of Focus:**

- Short and medium term **psychological support** of children (and parents) who have suffered trauma associated with extreme violence and the persistent threat of violence; and.
- **Educational support** for displaced children to minimize academic disruption at any grade, helping ensure that displaced students are in nurturing, language- compatible in-person classrooms or effective remote learning systems.

- **Public outreach** is an extremely important goal for UCAP. The U.S. must not lose interest in the plight of children who have been affected by the war. By mid-June, nearly 2/3 Ukrainian children under the age of 15 (or 5.2 million kids) have had to flee, mostly with a parent, from eastern and southern Ukrainian cities. Failure to meet the needs of these traumatized children may actually affect Ukraine's future. Unfortunately, we know too well that public and political attention span is short, constantly distracted by the latest headline-grabbing news. We are determined to use our public platforms to make sure that the American public, Congress and the White House keep a close eye on the situation in Ukraine and, especially, its children - as well as the war efforts.

### ***Why mental health and education?***

- While immediate humanitarian needs continue to exist, there are many local, national and international organizations that are seeking to ensure that children are safe, sheltered, fed and provided with urgent medical care. But there are far fewer entities that are attempting to ensure, at scale, psychological stability or crucial educational connections for refugee and IDP children.
- Unresolved psychological burdens and loss of educational continuity are two of the most important factors that can undermine a traumatized child's ability to be successful academically and in life. The consequence of failing to address these concerns can impair a child's ability to develop to their full potential in a world that will be filled with challenges, known and unknown.

### ***Why Lviv, Ukraine and Warsaw, Poland as the primary venues of focus?***

- Since the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine began in late February, there has been a massive migration of civilians to areas of relative safety in western regions of the country and as refugees to Poland and other host countries. Lviv and Warsaw have each taken on a disproportionate level of responsibility for civilians escaping the devastating brutality of the attacks in the east and south of Ukraine.
- Both cities serve as role models of generosity and innovation in offering safe harbor to war refugees and displaced people.
- UCAP's co-founders have developed strong relationships with Andriy Sadovyy, Mayor of Lviv, Maksym Kozytsky, Lviv regional governor and Rafal Trzaskowski, Warsaw's mayor. UCAP will be working directly with these leaders and their key staff to ensure that UCAP's funds are to be used effectively and efficiently.
- While there are some important differences between those who seek refuge in western Ukraine versus outside the country, such as language barriers, cultural issues and perhaps long term aspirations, the need to provide psychological support and educational continuity transcends security relocation decisions.

### ***Coordination and Scale***

- In the face of large-scale humanitarian crises, urgency of need and inherent chaos are essentially inevitable. Unfortunately, there is often also serious and detrimental lack of coordination of response and relief efforts.
- One of the major recurrent problems in response to and recovery from megadisasters is the inability to provide for the full range and depth of assistance required by all people and institutions affected by the disaster at hand. It is often difficult to achieve the level of scale actually required.
- UCAP will always work with relevant agencies and programs to add our expertise to global efforts responding to the crisis.

### ***Timeliness of Interventions:***

- It is not clear exactly how rapidly one must identify and manage mental health and educational challenges for children before they reach a critical “point of no return” with respect to the ability to reverse the consequences of acute psychological trauma or falling behind educationally. And there are obviously highly influential factors such as the inherent resilience and resourcefulness of children and their primary caretakers that make a substantial difference in how children successfully manage disruption, uncertainty, and fear. *That said, UCAP’s operating presumption is that psychological support and restoring educational continuity are extremely high priority for refugee and internally displaced children.*

### ***UCAP’s Initial Agenda:***

- First: UCAP will dedicate the vast portion of raised funds to distribute among organizations capable of delivering transparent, effective programs in the areas of focus delineated above. But a major challenge that must be addressed for serious, well-meaning donors who wish to make meaningful contributions in large scale disasters or humanitarian crises is to be *reassured that downstream impacts of their contributions are having the desired effect.* And, therefore, the next goal:
- Second: UCAP will provide significant vetting of organizations that will receive funds via UCAP. This means in practice that donations will be restricted and focused to the degree desired by the donor. Inevitably, in the aftermath of a major crisis, organizations small, large and mega-sized rush in, most with good intentions, to “do something”. UCAP is creating a *Program Assessment and Monitoring Team (PAMT)*. This team will be responsible for close vetting and organizational reviews of any potential recipient of UCAP funds. The PAMT will also be responsible for tracking and monitoring of actual program impact. And along with UCAP’s sponsoring partner, the *Entertainment Industry Foundation (EIF)* UCAP will organize progress and final reports for recipient organizations.

***Why donate assistance to Ukraine’s kids through UCAP as opposed to existing or another new organization?***

- *Large-scale, mega international organizations*, including private, national or U.N. agencies, present challenges to medium or small donors who may want to know where the donations are going and have some kind of impact assessment of their gifts. Many very large international organizations have extremely large endowments and use a humanitarian crisis to attract further donations, often to hold for the next disaster. There is nothing inherently wrong with contributing unrestricted funds. But UCAP is designed for donors who want to know more precisely where their funds are going.
- *Smaller organizations* working “on the ground” in response to a major crisis may have more visible high direct impact and the ability to demonstrate with some precision how donations are being utilized, i.e., greater accountability.
- Providing humanitarian or recovery *services outside the U.S.* by local organizations, even those that are the local or national branch of a mega international organization may have additional challenges. These entities may be unfamiliar to U.S.-based donors, even though they are doing highly effective work throughout the crisis. U-CAP’s PAMT will be particularly useful in providing on the ground vetting of organizations anywhere, as well as follow-up, monitoring and reporting.

***What has the initial assessment team, Irwin and Karen Redlener, learned about immediate needs in their April and May on-site visits to officials and organizations in Kviv, Ukraine and Warsaw, Poland as well as through conversations with many young people and families themselves? Here are some concrete needs identified by IR and KR in consultation with government officials, working groups, representatives of international organizations and children:***

**Current Resources and Progress:**

**National Psychological Association – Ukraine (NPA-U)**

UCAP has been in discussion with the President and other leadership of the National Psychological Association of Ukraine (NPA-U) and determined that there is a need for materials and training for Polish and Ukrainian educators on the provision of “trauma-informed” school-based approaches to support Ukrainian students who continue to experience the stress and trauma of dislocation and uncertainty. **NPAU requested best practice resources on this topic that will be translated to Ukrainian and Polish with UCAP support.** NPAU has also launched an online Mental Health Crisis Hotline for war-affected citizens of Ukraine that will be a resource for UCAP funded programs and partners. UCAP will connect a new network of American- based Ukrainian speaking psychologists to the NPAU to expand their Hotline’s capacity.

Translation and distribution of resources: \$15,000

## **Programs in Warsaw, Poland -**

With endorsement by the Mayor of Warsaw, Rafal Trzaskowski, UCAP funded programs will serve some of the 100,000 Ukrainian refugee children who have registered to live in Warsaw with their families for the next 18 months. Currently only 20,000 of those children are enrolled in schools in Warsaw. According to the Deputy Director of Education, Marcin Litwinowicz, the current goal to support and engage children is to build capacity to provide healing 14-day summer camp experiences and develop multiple “learning hubs” for Ukrainian children. UCAPs goal is to support the expansion of these models of intervention.

- 1) Fund 14-day sleepaway summer camps for Ukrainian children that will incorporate Polish language education. The cost for 50 children is \$35,000. UCAP will work with Youth Palace, a Warsaw-based community center providing these “holiday” experiences for refugees. Our goal is to quickly raise funds so that 100 additional children can experience this “normal” childhood summer experience.

Fundraising Target: \$70,000

- 2) Support the comprehensive services of the “learning hub” model of school for Ukrainian refugees. This model includes Polish and Ukrainian curriculum – both in person and online, laptops for all, daily nutrition, and mental health services for the students. The goal for Warsaw is to develop new “learning hubs” (number TBD) by September 2022. UCAP will help fund one of these multi-service learning centers and provide technical assistance regarding the incorporation of training for educators in “trauma-informed” approaches for learning and support of students experiencing stress and trauma.

Fundraising Target: \$300,000

- 3) Support programs to screen children and address health conditions that could be barriers to learning, e.g., vision deficits, psychological concerns, asthma, etc. (modeled after Children’s Health Fund’s *Healthy and Ready to Learn program* – [www.healthyandreadytolearn.org](http://www.healthyandreadytolearn.org))

Fundraising Target: \$100,000

UCAP is working with Yulia Hudz, regional coordinator for UNICEF who serves as the Co-lead of the Education Working Group in Poland which consists of local NGOs providing education related services on the ground. Mapping is currently underway to determine the local resource capacity, geography, and activities – along with appropriate reporting indicators.

UCAP is also working with International Medical Corps and ZNP, the Polish Teachers’ Union

## **Programs in Lviv, Ukraine**

There are currently over 500 shelters for internally displaced families who have relocated from the war-torn areas of eastern and southern Ukraine to the relatively safer western region near Lviv.

With support from the Mayor of Lviv, Andriy Sadovvy and the Regional Governor, Maksym Kozytsky, UCAP will identify local opportunities to expand mental health, health and educational resources for children., advise on the development of screening for health barriers to learning and help expand the education capacity for displaced children, including outreach to help with enrollment.

1. After meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Education (pending), UCAP will identify ways to support expanded school capacity, integrated with mental health support for internally displaced students and the teachers who have also been traumatized by caring for the many distressed children and families in their care. Support of a new “learning hub” will be a top priority.

Fundraising Target: \$300,000

2. The need for utilization of “Remote Learning Systems (RLS)” to permit access to formal on-line learning will likely be greater in the LVIV region, as there are over 1,000,000 displaced students currently living in that community. UCAP will fund provision of tablets or laptops to access the on-line interactive curriculum, as well as outreach to families to ensure enrollment.

Fundraising Target: \$100,000

- 3) Lviv Mayor Sadovvy enthusiastically supports the concept of screening children to identify and address health conditions that could be barriers to learning, e.g., vision deficits, psychological concerns, asthma, etc. (modeled after Children’s Health Fund’s *Healthy and Ready to Learn program* – [www.healthandreadytolearn.org](http://www.healthandreadytolearn.org)) Training of staff and provision of translated materials will be provided

Fundraising Target: \$100,000

- 4) The City of Lviv needs to expand its rehabilitation services to meet the growing needs of Ukrainians injured in the war. There are already critically injured children admitted to this facility. UCAP is helping support the development of a state-of-the-art expanded Rehabilitation Center, “Unbroken”, to meet the growing need for such services.

Fundraising Target: \$100,000

## **Other**

UCAP will also consider assistance to organizations working directly in active conflict zones within Ukraine.

**For Additional Information: Please contact Irwin Redlener, MD – [ir2110@columbia.edu](mailto:ir2110@columbia.edu) or Karen Redlener – [kredlener@gmail.com](mailto:kredlener@gmail.com)**

### ***Relevant background of founders:***

Irwin Redlener, M.D.

- Pediatrician. public health expert, program creator, president emeritus/ co-founder Children's Health Fund, founding director Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness, lead designer and concept designer of Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center
- History of stewarding special funds (have been on the ground for of the below events):
  - Medical director and director of grants for USA for Africa, \$65 million raised by We Are the World record for famine relief in sub-Saharan Africa
  - Paul Simon/ Edie Brickell's \$1 million gift for Hurricane Harvey recovery
  - Marc Anthony \$7.5 million raised for relief and recovery post Hurricane Maria
  - Cher \$ 1million gift to assist low-income communities during height of Covid-19 pandemic

Karen Redlener. M.S.

- Co-founder & former executive director of Children's Health Fund with expertise in child health and development, as well as significant experience in program management and financial administration.
- History of program design and development
  - Expanded Lee County Cooperative Clinic
  - Rural program in health screening and child development
  - Design of mobile medical clinic homeless child health program
  - Designer of South Bronx Children's Health Project
  - Developer of CHF's Healthy and Ready to Learn Program

### ***U-CAP's Advisors***

- UCAP takes the role of organizational advisement seriously. Those who agree to participate as an advisor will be regularly looked to for advice and counsel. Simultaneously, their participation will reinforce the seriousness and credibility of UCAPS philanthropic intentions. Here are the current members of the advisory board:
  - **Harold Koplewicz, MD**, founding president, the Child Mind Institute
  - **Randi Weingarten**, president, the American Federation of Teachers,
  - **Michael Keaton**, actor
  - **Nicolle Wallace**, anchor, MSNBC's Deadline White House
  - **Rafal Trzaskowski**, Mayor of Warsaw, Poland
  - **Joan Baez**, singer, portrait artist, social activist and philanthropist
  - **Terry Press**, media consultant
  - Pending: **Timothy Snyder**, author, social commentator & professor, Yale University
  - Pending: **Andriy Sadovyy**, Mayor of Kviv, Ukraine