

Youth Empowerment



Empowering young people is built into the foundations of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). When empowered, young people can contribute to improve the quality of life for themselves and their communities, and contribute to creating more inclusive societies. This is why UNHCR in Ukraine organizes “Youth Empowerment Seminars” to build on the skill sets of IDP and refugee youth so that they can be active participants in their local communities across Ukraine, thus contributing to a more cohesive society. During the last two years, the events gathered some 100 participants. Photo: Anton Fedorov/UNHCR

Overview

UNHCR Ukraine is inspired and guided by the [UN Youth Strategy 2030](#). Launched by the United Nations in 2018, it seeks to strengthen and increase commitments to meet young people’s needs, help them realize their rights, and recognize their positive contributions as agents of change. UNHCR acknowledges the tremendous potential of youth in Ukraine among the population that it provides protection and humanitarian support for. As a result of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, the country became the ninth largest situation of internal displacement in the world in terms of the number of **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)**. Thanks to its extensive presence in both government and non-government controlled areas and as part of its protection mandate, UNHCR also assists **conflict-affected persons**. Ukraine also hosts **refugees, asylum-seekers**, persons with complementary protection and persons at risk of **statelessness**. **Children and youth** from these different groups are often marginalized and require dedicated protection interventions and activities to empower them.



KEY POPULATION FIGURES (AS OF 30 JUNE 2019)

1,5 M

IDPs in Ukraine
children and youth constitutes a **major part** of them (**children account for 14%**)

Source: Ministry of Social Policy

35,650

Stateless persons and persons at risk of statelessness, including children and youth born in NGCA of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and young members of Roma community

2,627

Refugees and persons granted complementary protection in Ukraine, among them – **852 children and youth**. Some **3.5%** are **unaccompanied or separated children**

UNHCR in Ukraine

UNHCR has been working in Ukraine since 1994. In 2018, UNHCR started the implementation of its [multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategy](#), which serves as a 'roadmap' for UNHCR Ukraine for the period of 2018-2022. It reflects the principles of the [UN Youth Strategy](#) and includes protection and long-term solutions for multiple populations of concern: [refugees](#) and asylum-seekers; [IDPs](#) and persons at risk of displacement; [stateless](#) persons and persons at risk of statelessness.

Challenges

Legislative changes adopted in 2017 guarantee that children of asylum seekers do not face difficulties in obtaining graduation certificates due to their status. However, challenges with accessing primary and secondary education, which is mandatory in Ukraine, are often reported by families to UNHCR. Also, young people belonging to minority groups in Ukraine face [discrimination](#) and often [exclusion](#) when they try to participate in society, access education and find a job. Stereotypes about minority groups and lack of dialogue between displaced persons and their host communities only perpetuates obstacles for youth to meaningfully participate in their communities. The lack of awareness by Ukrainian society at large of challenges facing IDPs, stateless and refugee youth contributes to impeding their ability to fully integrate into society. Furthermore, many of the children and youth who are not documented properly and, therefore, are deprived of access to [fundamental human rights](#), as [right to education](#), [right to work](#), access to [medicine](#), [social benefits](#), and [freedom](#) of movement, among others. UNHCR is advocating for their protection and implementing activities that contribute to their [empowerment](#) and promotes their [inclusion](#) into their communities.

UNHCR's Activities

1. Individual Protection Assistance

UNHCR provides the following individual support to its persons of concern:

Cash Support UNHCR provides a one-time cash assistance for displaced persons who are at heightened protection risk.	Legal Assistance UNHCR and its partners provides primary and secondary legal assistance to the most vulnerable.	Access to Employment UNHCR supports refugees in finding a job by vocational training and matching with employment opportunities.
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2. Education

UNHCR provides the following support to its persons of concern in the field of education:

- [Advocates for Interventions](#) in cases when access to school education is not granted. So far in 2019, UNHCR has advocated in favour of 94 students.
- [Provides Ukrainian language training](#) to refugees and asylum-seekers in Kyiv, Odesa, Kharkiv and Zakarpattia.
- [Provides cash support](#) for school-age children assisted by UNHCR with cash for school uniforms and stationary. So far in 2019, 118 households have been supported.
- [Facilitates diploma nostrification](#) of foreign diplomas so that they are fully recognized in Ukraine. So far in 2019, 23 persons were assisted with diploma nostrification.
- [Cooperates with evening schools](#) for persons over 16 who cannot be enrolled in regular studies.
- [Provides life-skills trainings and internship programs](#) to refugee youth.

DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative)

Higher education nurtures a generation of future change-makers that can take the lead in identifying solutions to refugee situations. Higher education is a priority for UNHCR outlined in the Education Strategy 2012-2016. UNHCR's higher education scholarship programme, DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative), plays an integral role in enabling refugees worldwide to access higher education. The DAFI programme enables young refugees to unlock their potential by addressing key barriers to higher education. Undergraduate refugee students are provided with scholarships that cover a wide range of costs, from tuition fees and study materials, to food, transport, accommodation and other allowances.



[See UNHCR's Global Site for more information on DAFI](#)



In Ukraine, **five refugee students** from Kyiv, Cherkasy, Odesa, and Chervonograd (Lviv region) were granted the scholarship in 2018 and received higher education in dental treatment, computer engineering, management, applied mechanics, and underground mining development. These students are actively participating in their community and have been giving back to their host population. Karima (name changed for protection reasons), an Afghan refugee, regularly volunteers to raise awareness of dental hygiene. She has recently been awarded a diploma for active participation in an international scientific conference.

UNHCR is very grateful for the German Government's DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship as it paves the way for durable solutions

3. Community-Based Protection

In 2018, there were 16 projects implemented by refugee communities. UNHCR supported IDP and refugee communities with trainings to strengthen their leadership and management skills, raise mine risks awareness, develop knowledge about SGBV response, and their skills in first aid, professional orientation and employment. One of these projects, a young leader from Odesa registered the first refugee youth NGO in Ukraine, called "United Youth".

DID YOU KNOW

UNHCR implements **Peaceful Coexistence Projects (PCPs)**, which are small to medium-scale infrastructure repairs proposed by the communities of persons of concern together with the local community as well as **Community Support Initiatives (CSI)**. CSI activities are designed to mobilize and empower communities, building on their education, skills, and their capacities in order to strengthen their abilities to organize emergency response and self-advocate with local and national authorities. UNHCR implemented 42 CSIs near the 'contact line' in 2019.

Peaceful Coexistence Projects by UNHCR for children and youth



4. Community mobilization and active citizenship

Community mobilization is a key component of the community-based approach of UNHCR, which supports communities to be aware of their rights and strengthen their own capacity to find solutions to the protection risks they face. Community mobilization also means investing in the resilience of persons of concern and involving them in determining and meeting their own needs. In Ukraine, the following community mobilization interventions have been organized:

- Two European Youth Initiative Fund projects won grants and are being implemented in Donetsk (inter-generational volunteering of young and elderly people) and Sviatohirsk (creation of an IT Hub for young people).
- 109 displaced communities in 19 oblasts in central and western Ukraine have been supported by UNHCR and its partner NGOs. As a result, 30 communities working with youth and children received funds from local authorities to organize different activities for children and youth.
- Members of the Roma community in Zolotonosha was mobilized to attract resources and organize a summer camp.
- Refugee students from International University Ukraine in Kyiv together with Ukrainian students regularly organize charitable events to support Ukrainian children.
- In Kyiv, a former unaccompanied minor from Somalia volunteers with the NGO “Youth for Peace”, which supports elderly disabled Ukrainians and distributes food to homeless people.

5. Unaccompanied or separated children (UASC)

Separated children (SC) are those separated from both parents, or from their previous legal or customary primary care-giver, but not necessarily from other relatives. These may, therefore, include children accompanied by other adult family members. Unaccompanied children (UA) (also called unaccompanied minors) are children who have been separated from both parents and other relatives and are not being cared for by an adult who, by law or custom, is responsible for doing so. Although small in numbers in Ukraine among UNHCR’s persons of concern, dealing with cases of UASC requires multi-faceted and comprehensive protection interventions and involves coordination among multiple actors with various expertise. In the first half of 2019, UNHCR identified and supported 36 UASC. For these children, UNHCR Ukraine initiates a Best Interest Procedure (see below) for all UASC as well as other children at risk or in need of assistance. UNHCR also coordinates the efforts of different actors for child protection advocacy and interventions as well as liaises with the Ombudsperson about sensitive cases, such as family reunification, cooperation with the ICRC on family tracing, coordination of implementing partners and liaising with other agencies for individual case management.

DID YOU KNOW

Best Interests Procedure (BIP) is a child protection tool for managing and implementing activities determined to be in the best interests of individual children at risk. In Ukraine, BIP is led by UNHCR with the involvement of multiple relevant actors with diverse expertise: childcare workers, psychologists, social workers, legal guardians, representatives of migration service, experts from partner agencies, etc. Not all children require individual follow-up and case management. But for those vulnerable cases that require a solution (UASC, child abuse, other protection risks etc...) the BIP lays out a blueprint involving multiple child protection actors to ensure that all are engaged in finding solutions for the child. Solutions have included confirmed custody and identification of foster families.

6. Youth Empowerment Events

UNHCR has conducted a number of **Youth Empowerment events** for young people from refugee-, IDP- and host communities. The last one was organized jointly with the **Council of Europe** and **UNHCR in Strasbourg**. The activities brought together more than **100 young people** aged **between 16 and 25** from **all over Ukraine**. The events provided participants with skills, knowledge and tools to raise up new initiatives, projects or products in order to facilitate their inclusion and become **agents of change**. As a result, participants have prepared **14 community-based initiatives**.

7. Sports

UNHCR supports the development of sport activities for its persons of concern. In the past, activities have included:

- **Two self-reliance grants** related to sport related activities. One of them for **Sambo** martial art classes and a **boxing gym**, which provide free of charge access to refugee and IDP children and youth.
- UNHCR provides assistance to **four football teams** of **Afghan** and **African** refugees, as well as for **one IDP Roma community**.
- **Three prominent football players** and **two boxers** from the refugee and asylum-seekers communities were supported.

Key concerns and advocacy messages

- The Government should adopt a procedure for birth registration that is responsive to the specific needs of families in the non-government controlled areas, as well as in Crimea.
- Access to education must be free and unimpeded for every child.
- Engage with asylum-seeker and refugee communities.
- Provide language instructions to asylum-seekers and refugees.
- Asylum-seekers must have access to free urgent medical care.

Working in partnership

UNHCR is part of the UN Youth Working Group. The group was established with the objective of ensuring a coordinated and collaborative approach across all UN Agencies active in Ukraine through the support of the Government of Ukraine, non-governmental organizations, academia, and most importantly, to Ukrainian young people, with the overall aim of ensuring that youth development is a strategic priority for the country.

[See the State of Youth in Ukraine – Analytical Report compiled by the UN Youth Working Group](#)

UNHCR is grateful for the following Government partners: Ministry of Youth and Sport of Ukraine; State Migration Service of Ukraine and the Ministry of Social Policy of Ukraine

UNHCR NGO PARTNERS



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