Faculty building of Karazin National University after shelling, Kharkiv, March 2, 2022. Source: Radio Svoboda

**SDR Summary**

The escalation of hostilities in Ukraine is impacting the entire school-aged population, 5.7M girls, boys and adolescents between 3-17 years of age, eroding their right to education. Nationwide closure of schools and education facilities due to the escalation, which includes intense attacks on education in full violation of International Humanitarian Law is expected to severely increase vulnerabilities and loss of learning outcomes.

**Methodology**

This SDR was conducted between 1st and 4th of March 2022 to provide an overview of the Education situation in Ukraine since the start of the invasion. Sources were compiled through a combination of identifying publicly available data and reports, as well as using sources from members of the Education Cluster in Ukraine including from the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). These included situation reports, briefs, Inter-Agency, multi-sector and education-specific assessment reports, gap analyses, among others, primarily from UN agencies, International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and the Government of Ukraine.

Key data was captured and appropriately tagged using the Global Education Cluster’s SDR matrix template. Data was then consolidated, cleaned, and analysed for this report. Findings are presented using the INEE Minimum Standard Domains (access and learning environment; teaching, and learning materials; teachers and other education personnel; and the education policy domain), as well as protection as an analytical framework.

Results of this review will provide a basis for development of an initial Education in Emergencies (EiE) response for the Cluster as means to restore return to learning and help identify data gaps that can be filled with an assessment. This report serves as the first SDR issue and shall be periodically updated as new pieces of evidence emerge.
By 2021, eastern Ukraine had entered its eighth year of armed conflict. Civilian populations of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts continued to experience ongoing ceasefire violations along the 428 kilometers ‘contact line’. The protracted nature of the conflict led to a significant loss of lives, concerns over the protection of civilians, and significant damage to critical infrastructure in conflict-affected areas. Eastern Ukraine had also become one of the most mine contaminated regions of the world, with mines/explosive remnants of war (ERWs) being the leading cause of civilian deaths since 2017 (REACH MSNA).

On the 22nd of July 2020, the Trilateral Contact Group on Ukraine (TCG) agreed on a ceasefire that took effect on the 27th of July, which was largely effective through the remainder of 2020, resulting in a decrease of both security incidents and fatalities. But from the beginning of 2021 the security situation started to deteriorate monthly with an increase of military presence in the region, intensification of military clashes and use of heavy weapons, however with year-to-year comparison with 12 months before and after the ceasefire took place, there was a 32% decrease in the numbers of security incidents after the ceasefire came into effect. Nonetheless, the ongoing conflict, coupled with the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation that households living in proximity to the contact line were already in. As a primary effect of such ongoing conflict, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 3.4 million people would need humanitarian assistance in 2021.

**Key Education Indicators –**

**Temporarily school closures due to the conflict**

On 25th February 2022 following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Ministry of Education and Science announced ‘extraordinary holidays’ for all schools across the country for two weeks. Given the fluidity of the situation, there’s no information on re-opening of the schools. The escalation of hostilities impacts the entire school-aged population - 5.7M between 3-17 of age - due to nation-wide closure of schools and education facilities.

Before the announcement, schools in eastern Ukraine had already closed on 21 February as hostilities escalated, leaving an estimated 350,000 children with no access to education. Some schools in other areas of Ukraine had closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic but others had remained open.

**Access to learning opportunities**

While 4.1 million children were enrolled in primary and secondary schools across Ukraine in 2021 and at least 588,000 teachers and other education personnel were working in over 14,000, the national school closure has restricted access to learning opportunities for the absolute majority of children in Ukraine. This is increasing vulnerabilities particularly for the children that experienced both covid-19 and conflict induced barriers to education.

Nonetheless, there are ongoing efforts to provide learning opportunities including by private bodies. These include; a)Viber Community (“Schkola_Info” (School info)) which has initiated an online education initiative for the pupils of primary schools (grades 1-4) to continue their education amid school disruption. Their daily school schedule includes lessons in Maths, Reading, Science, English Language, etc. b) Gimnasium A+ (Akademia A+) – opened its schedule for online Zoom classes for all children in Ukraine as of March 2nd. They have daily schedule for pre-school, primary school (grades 1-4) and middle school (grades 5-9). They are working now on taking as many people as possible (Zoom limit is 100 people per meeting) and clearly much more than 100 students are willing to join. c) Distance Education school “Optima” opened access to its education site for students all over Ukraine (grades 1-11) free of charge for 1 month (with consideration to prolong it if required). d) Mathematical platform CIOS opened its web-site for students and teachers until March 31st. e) Web-sites “Osivtoria” and "New Ukrainian School" provide, resources, tips, online meetings and activities aimed at supporting children under current difficult circumstances, including communication about war, psychological support.

Since the above are provided on private basis, there is no official quality control that the UEC knows of.
Attacks against education

Between 17th February and 3rd of March 2022, there were over twenty incidents of attacks against education. In 2021, education facilities came under attack 15 times with 11 incidents recorded in non-Government-controlled-Areas (NGCA) and one in Government-controlled-Areas (GCA), which represented an increase compared to the 2020 calendar year, when ten incidents were recorded in NGCA and one in GCA. While only minor damage to infrastructure was recorded, the impact on the physical and mental health of children and educators remained substantive. The continued attacks on schools/education facilities in Ukraine are endangering the lives and the future of the country’s 7.5 million children with reports of up to 10 children killed in the fighting and a large number of educational facilities being attacked as of 27th February.

Prior this current escalation, more than 400,000 children experienced the direct impact of the conflict as they live, play and go to school within the 20-km on both sides of the “contact line”, where shelling and extreme levels of mine contamination threatened their lives and wellbeing in Easter Ukraine. The escalation of this ongoing conflict coupled with the still more widespread proliferation of small arms and light weapons is likely to severely increase the risk of recruitment of school-age adolescents into armed groups.

While schools must be inviolable safe spaces for children and teachers, which are granted protection also in times of conflict, shelling of educational institutions has increased since the most recent escalation of the conflict.

Physical damages to school infrastructure

As of 3rd March, the MoE announced destruction of 160 education facilities in government- and non-government-controlled areas over the past week. Prior to the national wide closure, schools in Eastern Ukraine had been closed since 21 February in non-government-controlled areas, and with no information about reopening or possibilities for alternative learning modalities. In government-controlled areas, the Ministry of Education previously reported that 33 schools with over 5,500 students were closed for face-to-face learning due to insecurity in areas along the line of contact. The number of children with no access to education is now well beyond 500,000 as a result of the recent crisis.

1 Attack on education is defined by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) as any intentional threat or use of force – carried out for political, military, ideological, sectarian, ethnic, religious, or criminal reasons – against students (of all ages), educators (schoolteachers, academics, other education personnel, members of teacher unions, and education aid workers), and education institutions (Any site used for the purposes of education, including all levels of education and non-formal education facilities)

2 According to UA Minister of Education 160 education facilities were damaged/destroyed (source: ministry web). NB: Please notice, these figures has not been verified.
Since 2014, the conflict in Eastern Ukraine has destroyed, damaged or forced the closure of more than 750 schools, disrupting access to education for thousands of children, with many too scared to attend and distressed by the presence of armed soldiers in and around their schools.

While UNICEF in partnership with the Ministry of Interior, State Emergency Services, hromadas and other partners have been supporting the rehabilitation of schools damaged during the 2014-onset of the conflict, these efforts have now been halted by the ongoing hostilities.

Military use of schools or close proximity to military sites
There are reported use of education facilities with a case reported on February 27, in which soldiers used an empty school for refuge in Kharkiv city, Kharkiv oblast. The military use of schools can lead them being attacked contributing to endangering the lives of children and damage to infrastructure and educational materials, etc

Unexploded ordnance
There are several reports of dropped grenades and other unexploded ordnances (UXO). Some of these have damaged schools but producing no casualties (according to the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence). Mine risk education and mine victim assistance are critical as explosive ordnance contamination remains a major source of threat to life, safety, and stability including in education facilities. During the current escalation of hostilities, it is of particular concern that newly displaced children and their families will be at increased risk to UXO and landmines due to lack of familiarity with the terrain.

Teaching and learning materials
Given the massive destruction of the education infrastructure, teaching and learning materials are neither spared. In preparation for response, partners are planning to preposition educational materials in available warehouse in Kyiv for dissemination. Prior to the escalation of the hostilities, there were plans to deliver the first batch of supplies to non-government-controlled areas through a UN convoy and distribute through implementing partners on the ground. Partnerships with municipalities in nine oblasts are being discussed and an agreement is attempted to be established to preposition supplies in eastern, central, and western Ukraine. UNICEF’s country office in Ukraine currently has some limited education supplies to support prepositioned in warehouses in Kyiv and Kramatorsk.

Teacher Training/Capacity
Based on the Ukraine Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), 2022, there is a shortage of qualified teaching staff and education personnel due to internal displacement and the inability to retain and recruit staff in an unpredictable conflict environment on both sides of the “contact line”. In GCA, approximately 30 per cent or a total of 200 education facilities reported that they do not have enough teachers. This is even more of a problem in the NCGA, especially in small rural communities as qualified teachers tend to move away from those areas. Furthermore, many teachers in conflict affected areas are close or over the retirement age.

there is need to deliver series of trainings targeted for teachers, volunteers, and administrative staff of education facilities, including on life skills education, emotional support, conflict resolution and non-violent

hromadas is a basic unit of administrative division in Ukraine, similar to a municipality
communication, as well as psychosocial support. Not only is learners’ ability to learn severely impacted by conflict, teachers’ ability to teach is equally impacted by the erosion of safety and loss of normalcy, and teachers and education personnel are as both crisis-affected and as educators and care-givers in need of coping strategies and tools to support to the best of their abilities.

Protection concerns
Psychosocial First Aid
Eight additional partners in child protection and education have been identified and a humanitarian programme document is under development for scaling up response in case management, psychosocial support for children and families and to provide psychosocial first aid trainings to teachers. UNICEF is expanding partnerships with NEEKA, Caritas, and ADRA to scale up its response in water and sanitation and emergency supply distribution in the western part of the country. Thirteen mobile teams are providing psychosocial care to children and caregivers in government-controlled areas, as well as case management support for the most vulnerable families with children. This includes cases of gender-based violence, children with disabilities in need of support, unaccompanied or separated children and other extremely vulnerable internally displaced families with children. Care is currently being provided online from basements, until the security situation allows face-to-face service provision. An additional five teams composed of psychologists, health and/or social workers, to provide first aid and psychological first aid in conflict-affected areas are being supported. These teams will be deployed as soon as the security situation allows.

General Protection issues
The increase in hostilities is reported to cause at least 240 civilian casualties (as of 24th February (OHCHR), including 64 dead and 176 injured across the country due to aerial and ground attacks, nearly 85 per cent recorded in Government-controlled areas, figures could rise in the coming days. President Zelenskyy announced more than 130 people military personnel were killed and more than 310 others injured after the first day of increased military operations. Significant infrastructural damage has left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity or water, while bridges and roads damaged by shelling have left communities cut off from markets for food and other basic supplies. The most pressing humanitarian needs are emergency medical services, critical medicines, health supplies and equipment, safe water for drinking and hygiene, and shelter and protection for those displaced from their homes.

Protection – Mental Health/Wellbeing
In coordination with the Ministry of Social Policy, State Social Service, hromadas and other partners, UNICEF is supporting training on emergency preparedness, case management for vulnerable children and the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. This training is targeted for the social service workforce and staff of institutions for children (e.g., baby homes, child-care institutions, family type institutions, detention facilities for children in conflict with the law) in 24 oblasts (provinces). UNICEF is exploring the possibility of replicating the success of the ‘Blue Dot’ child friendly spaces to provide critical support to children and families on the move. These spaces were established along anticipated routes of major migration flows - often done in conjunction with local municipalities in strategic areas. They provide key information to traveling families, safe spaces for mothers and children, and the ability to identify unaccompanied and separated children and ensure their protection.

Protection – GBV
With the continued hostilities, children and their families are exposed to destinating trauma. Therefore, many of them will require systematic protection services including to address gender-based violence, violence against children and to access psychosocial care. Efforts to strengthen GBV and SRH sub-sector coordination at national and sub-national levels are also ongoing with the respective authorities and UN agencies.
Impact of COVID-19 on Education

In 2021, access to education for thousands of children in Donetska and Luhanska oblasts continued to be significantly affected by COVID-19, related restrictions, and the deteriorating economic situation of families with children. Many children, particularly those in poorer households and rural areas along the “contact line” did not have necessary equipment to access distance learning modalities (internet access, personal computers, smartphones, TV, etc.), which amplifies the effects of existing learning inequalities. As a result, many faced the risk of never returning to school to continue their education. This proportion is significantly higher in rural areas with families reporting experiencing issues with distance education and inability to buy all required school supplies for their children. Therefore, the escalation of the current hostilities is exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in especially the eastern areas of the country.

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<th>% of enrolment</th>
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<th>boys 3-5</th>
<th>girls 6-11</th>
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Table 1: Enrolment in Donetsk and Luhansk (MSNA Data Sept 2021)

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<th>boys 3-5</th>
<th>girls 6-11</th>
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Table 2: School attendance in Donetsk and Luhansk (MSNA Data Sept 2021)
Shelling in eastern Ukraine damaged a kindergarten, 17th of March 2022. Photo credit: The New York Times