

Childcare is a critical need for women refugees. It must be made a priority^[1]

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EXCERPTS

The importance of childcare has long been overlooked in humanitarian responses, but the war in Ukraine offers a stark reminder of why it needs to be raised up the agenda, both now and for future crises.

The UN's refugee agency, UNHCR, estimates that 90 percent of the more than 6.5 million refugees who have fled Ukraine are women or children under the age of 18. In Moldova, which has received the highest number of refugees per capita to date, 65 percent are women and 36 percent are children, with the zero to six age range representing the largest group.

Millions of Ukrainian refugee women now find themselves as single heads of households, shouldering the enormous burden of searching for safety, stability, and opportunities to work while also caring for children and dealing with the psychological toll of the conflict and separation from family members and loved ones.

Given all they are facing, it's difficult to imagine how women refugees will be able to manage without targeted support in the form of childcare.

Yet, despite the groundswell of aid initiatives that have cropped up along Ukraine's borders, few efforts are focused on children under five years old. Similarly, neighbouring countries have begun to enrol school-age children into their education systems, but there are few organised efforts to provide childcare to the youngest refugees.

This gap is not unique to the Ukraine crisis: The Moving Minds Alliance, a coalition of UN agencies, NGOs, private foundations, and researchers working to address the needs of displaced infants and toddlers, estimates that only three percent of total development assistance to crisis-affected countries, and two percent of humanitarian funding, goes towards providing quality services to newborns, young children, and their caregivers.

What are the solutions?

To address the childcare needs of Ukrainian refugees and other crisis-affected people, our recently published research shows that governments and aid organisations must:

- Expand access to safe, quality childcare by establishing childcare hubs along migration routes and integrating refugees into host childcare systems
- Ensure quality childcare is affordable for refugee populations
- Promote capacity building to provide trauma-informed support for displaced populations
- Bundle essential services, such as play-based early learning opportunities, parenting, nutrition, health, protection, and psychosocial support, in the same location

At the end of April, the World Bank, the US, Canada, and Australia, along with a group of private foundations, took an important initial step in raising this issue globally by launching the Childcare Incentive Fund, which will provide more than \$180 million over five years to expand quality childcare.

The amount of funding is relatively small – especially spread out over five years. But compared to the absence of investment in the past,...

Region: International^[3]

Tags: child care^[4]

Women^[5]

refugees^[6]

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/22/05/childcare-critical-need-women-refugees-it-must-be-made-priority> [2]

<https://theparadise.ng/childcare-is-a-critical-need-for-women-refugees-it-must-be-made-a-priority/> [3]

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