



Joint Statement on Early Childhood Development and the Ukraine Crisis

March 3, 2022

The Early Childhood Development Action Network ([ECDAN](#)), the Early Childhood Peace Consortium ([ECPC](#)), [Moving Minds Alliance](#), the International Step by Step Association ([ISSA](#)), the Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood ([ARNEC](#)), the Africa Early Childhood Network ([AfECN](#)), and the Arab Network for Early Childhood Development ([ANECD](#)), are deeply concerned as we watch the violent conflict and humanitarian crisis unfold in Ukraine. Sadly, the children caught up in this conflict will be the most adversely affected. We must put the protection, health, learning, well-being and developmental needs of Ukraine's young children, [2 million children under the age of 5](#), at the heart of our response. **The instability and resulting wounds and trauma that are being inflicted on children and families living in Ukraine, and who are now refugees, are tragic, and without any intervention will be long lasting from generation to generation. The global community must act now.**

The conflict in Ukraine comes on the heels of humanitarian and multi-dimensional crises in Afghanistan, Haiti, Madagascar, Lebanon, Palestine, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Syria, Yemen, and many more places around the world. UNICEF estimates from 2018 show that [more than one in five babies](#) are born into and start their lives in situations of conflict and crisis. Funding focused on Early Childhood Development (ECD), particularly through [child protection](#) and education, has been insufficient, especially in crisis-affected countries. Only [an estimated 3% of total development assistance](#) to crisis-affected countries and 2% of humanitarian funding goes towards providing quality early years services to newborns, young children, and their caregivers. **The global community must act now to increase this critical ECD funding.**

An entire generation of children who live in or have recently migrated from Ukraine is at risk. [Many families](#) have already been forced to flee their homes. Before the present crisis began, 2.9 million people in Ukraine were already in need of humanitarian assistance, and 750 education facilities had been damaged due to the violent conflict that began in 2014. The [United Nations estimates](#) that 12 million people inside Ukraine will need relief and protection, while more than 4 million refugees may need protection and assistance in neighboring countries in the coming months.

Displaced families have an immediate need for basic necessities including a safe place to live, adequate food, warm clothing, and clean water. The most vulnerable children need particular attention, such as [children with disabilities and special needs](#) who may experience mobility challenges when fleeing for safety or have an immediate need for specialized support services or medication when arriving in host countries. **The international community must assure safe passage and protection of families fleeing the destruction. We also call on host and transit countries to ensure the best interests of children, including providing gender-sensitive services, protecting children from abuse, and ensuring the provision of psychosocial support and learning opportunities as an essential element of interventions to support children and their caregivers.**

We know that holistic early childhood development services are CRUCIAL to mitigate the current and long-term impact of the adversities facing so many of the children and families in Ukraine and in the neighboring countries.

Governments, donors, and other international actors must respond with urgency to protect and support all young children and their families in Ukraine and those seeking refuge in neighboring countries. Safeguarding young children impacted by the current crisis and prioritizing their survival, development, and protection is not only necessary to alleviate suffering and uphold their rights but will also drive economic recovery and build a strong foundation for peace and security, resilience, social justice, and social cohesion.

"It's not too late to save this generation from the scourge of war," says UN Secretary-General [António Guterres](#), "We need peace". The international community must act NOW to minimize the enduring impact that this conflict will have on the lives of young children and their families. The signing organizations of this statement have mobilized resources, have efforts underway in Ukraine and neighboring countries, and stand ready to provide our expertise to other planners and implementers of the humanitarian response.

We call on governments and donors to direct funds to support all families, including those who are displaced, who are struggling to keep their children safe and to meet their children's basic needs including access to psychosocial services. This includes expanded investments in the five components of [nurturing care](#) (good health, adequate

nutrition, opportunities for learning, safety and security, and responsive care) as a core part of development assistance, emergency response, and humanitarian action.

The science heralds a new era, asserting that ECD is a vital opportunity for building a sustainable future fit for children from Ukraine, other conflict and zones, and around the world, and empowering them through promoting The Culture of Peace, as called for by the United Nations ([UN Resolution A/RES/74/21](#)).

If we are to build real peace in our world, we must protect and support children and work together towards rights' fulfillment, equity, embracing diversity, and social justice for and among our children. **Let us commit our efforts and resources to raise our children to embrace each other, to play and learn with each other, and support each other, and to be resilient and agents of change as a pathway to a more peaceful and sustainable world.**

The views expressed in this statement are those of the ECDAN, ECPC, ARNEC, AfCEN, ANECD, ISSA, and Moving Minds Alliance at-large and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of each individual member of the networks.

Many of our partners are quickly mobilizing on the ground in Ukraine and neighboring countries and have established online sites where donors can directly support the children and families affected by the Ukraine crisis. These include the partner organizations of the [Early Childhood Development Action Network](#), [International Step by Step Association](#), and [Moving Minds Alliance](#). We are most grateful for their presence and determination to make a real difference.

For more information, please contact info@issa.nl.