savED

War and Education:

How a Year of the Full-scale Invasion Influenced Ukrainian Schools

RESEARCH SUMMARY

Cedos

INTERNATIONAL
RENAISSANCE
FOUNDATION

About the research

The research was conducted by Cedos think tank at the request of the savED charitable foundation with the support of the International Renaissance Foundation. This summary reflects the position of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the position of the International Renaissance Foundation.

The purpose comprehensive analytical research "War and Education: how a year of the full-scale invasion influenced Ukrainian schools" was to find out how the full-scale war affected access to general secondary education, in particular in hromadas[1] that were in the combat zone or under occupation; what is needed to restore this access; and possible ways to address these needs depending on the scale and nature of the war-related impact. Furthermore, the report offers possible solutions to meet these needs.

The research consisted of three parts:

1. Secondary data analysis of the damage to the infrastructure of general secondary education, the need for its restoration, organisation of education process and the number and displacement of students and teachers.

2. Quantitative stage: a representative national survey of parents of school-age children.

3. Quality stage: conducting 6 case studies in hromadas of 3 regions — Kyiv, Chernihiv and Kharkiv regions. These areas were liberated, which gives an opportunity to see what problems and difficulties arise in the recovery process.

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[1] Territorial community (hromada) is a unit of basic level of the administrative division, that includes territories of one or several settlements, has self-government and provides public services. Hromadas are responsible for providing access to preschool, secondary and extracurricular education, they own schools and manage school network, fund them (with state support) and employ school principals.

Some facts about the influence of the full-scale war on Ukrainian schools

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, as of January 20, 2023

3,051 educational institutions were affected — of which **420** were completely destroyed

Almost half of them are secondary schools. Thus, as of January 23, 2023,

1,259 schools were damaged — **223** were completely destroyed

In April 2022 went abroad

605.5 thousand students — **23** thousand teachers

14% of the total number — **4%** of the total number

As of December 2022 **13%** of students and **3%** of teachers were still abroad.

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, as of December 2022,

36% of schools were teaching remotely — **36%** of schools were using a mixed method — **28%** of schools were providing learning in classrooms

According to the findings of a national survey of parents,

90% of children have at least one gadget for studying, most often a mobile phone.

The largest share of children who learn using the phone is among children from families with the lowest level of well-being — **69%**

85% of parents surveyed

believe that the **learning gaps in knowledge and skills** that children have as a result of the pandemic and full-scale invasion **will have an impact on their education and future.**

24% of parents

mentioned that their **child has difficulty concentrating** during online tasks.

24% of children

lack communication with their peers. This is particularly common among children who study online, with about half of parents from this group citing this problem.

61% of parents

their children have stress symptoms, such as insomnia, anxiety, concentration issues, problems with communication with teens and teachers. Students obtain a high level of anxiety.

42% of parents

observe anxiety in their children

14% of parents

believe that their children are anxious often or all the time.

Introduction

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which began on February 24, 2022, has led to serious consequences for secondary education in Ukraine. Schools have suffered human losses: teachers, students, and parents died due to military actions and/or Russian occupation. Hundreds of schools have been destroyed or damaged. Millions of children and thousands of Ukrainian teachers have been forced to relocate within the country or move abroad. Every day, all the participants of the education process have to overcome the challenges of war: forced breaks during classes, switching to remote or mixed format of studies, air raid warnings and power blackouts. The full-scale war has made access to education worse and existing education inequalities deeper, it has negatively affected the quality of the education process and the students' progress, and has impacted the mental and emotional state of students and teachers.

Secondary education is an important public good and a right guaranteed by the Constitution of Ukraine. Restoring access to it is among the state's priorities. Teachers and school administrators, representatives of central and local government bodies, and Ukrainian and international organizations have already begun working to restore the education infrastructure, education environment, and the capacities for teaching and studying in general.

This report aims to answer the questions of how the full-scale war has affected access to secondary education, particularly in hromadas which were or have been located in the combat zone or under occupation; what is needed to restore this access, and what the possible ways to meet these needs are, depending on the scale and nature of the impact of the war. The research consisted of three components: a quantitative nationwide representative survey of parents of school-age children; a study of cases in hromadas; and an analysis of secondary data. The study findings represent the national and regional context. The research focused especially on three regions where active fighting took place and which were partially occupied and then liberated: Kyiv Region, Chernihiv Region, and Kharkiv Region.

Overview

Destruction of education infrastructure

As a result of Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, as of January 2023, 1,259 schools have been damaged; this constitutes 11% of the total number of schools in the country. 223 schools have been completely destroyed. Half of the destroyed and damaged schools are located in Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Luhansk Regions. For instance, in Kharkiv, half of the city's schools have been affected. Schools located near the frontline or the border are under constant increased threat of destruction due to shelling. At the same time, schools in hromadas located further away from the frontline and the border also suffer from missile attacks.

The causes of damage and losses in education infrastructure were military actions in which schools were direct targets of attack or suffered damage due to proximity, and looting. Destruction has been caused by direct missile or bomb strikes, debris hits and fragments of missiles, and fire. In addition to school buildings, school property and buses have been destroyed, damaged, and/or stolen. So even in cases when the school building and territory have remained intact or only mildly affected, the loss of property limits the possibility of returning to in-person studies, even when the security situation allows it.

Impact of the war on the organization of the education process

During 2022, the education process in all Ukrainian schools was paused for a while due to the Russian Federation's full-scale invasion—at least for two weeks, but in many schools it was a longer period, and in some the pause lasted up until the end of the 2021/2022 school year. The students who resumed their studies in 2022 mostly studied online until the end of the school year. For the children living in the occupied areas, access to proper education in Ukrainian schools has remained limited or unavailable due to problems with communication and threats by occupation administrations.

As of December 2022, 13% of students and 3% of teachers continued to stay abroad. The highest number of them have left the eastern and southern regions, parts of which are still under occupation, are active battlegrounds, or are located close to the border with Russia.

Most schools in Ukraine cannot teach children in the usual in-person format due to the full-scale war. As of December 2022, 36% of schools alternated between remote and in-person learning, and another 36% only taught their students remotely. In particular, the majority of schools in eastern and southern regions of Ukraine work remotely.

Impact on students and teachers

The experience of studying during the COVID-19 pandemic allowed schools to adapt to remote learning during martial law more quickly. However, remote learning still bears the risks of worsening the quality of education and student progress, as well as deepening the existing education inequalities. In addition, remote learning increases the workload of students and teachers and negatively affects the mental and emotional state of the participants of the education process.

During remote learning, the availability of a device and a workplace at home becomes a mandatory condition for students. According to the findings of our survey, the majority of children (90%) have at least one device of their own which they use to study. For most of them, their main device for studying is a smartphone, which can affect the quality of their learning, especially if it is conducted remotely. Among IDP children and children from lower-income families, the share of those who own devices is lower.

Children who study remotely spend more time studying at home in addition to attending classes. Wartime conditions also create additional workload for teachers: they have to spend more time organizing classes during air raid threats and blackouts, and perform the work of their colleagues who have relocated, as well as support the students who are currently abroad. Remote learning has also become a challenge for parents, since they have to spend more time on their children's studies. Parents of children in primary and basic school are the most involved in their children's education (63% of these parents participate in it every day), and parents of high schoolers are the least involved (14%).

Parents and teachers agree that the full-scale war has caused learning gaps. Students miss online and offline classes due to air raid warnings and threats of artillery shelling, as well as due to blackouts, interrupted internet access and cell connection as a result of bombings. Despite

the difficult working conditions and the security challenges, teachers try to adhere to the curricula. For this purpose, they combine topics, reduce the number of tasks for independent learning, and use non-synchronous teaching—for instance, by publishing video recordings of classes and study materials on online platforms. However, teachers have no capacity to spend enough time with each student during remote learning. In addition, teachers lack in-person communication with students, which is needed to ensure their proper education and evaluation.

Parents mostly agree that certain steps need to be taken to compensate for the gaps in their children's knowledge and skills, caused by the pandemic and the war: additional group or individual classes with teachers or tutors, independent or family-assisted learning of the material. However, both parents and teachers mostly did not support the idea of having an additional "rehabilitative school year."

The full-scale war has negatively affected the mental and emotional state of students and teachers. The majority of parents (61%) believe that their children have symptoms of stress such as deteriorated sleep, anxiety, trouble concentrating, problems in communication with their peers and teachers. Children have high levels of anxiety. In addition, students feel lonely, because during the forced break and remote learning they lack opportunities to socialize with their peers and teachers. Teachers have also experienced considerable stress and worsened mental state since the full-scale invasion began, especially in the hromadas where active military actions have taken place or which used to be occupied.

Restoration of education infrastructure

The Ukrainian government and local government bodies are trying to ensure that universal access to secondary education is restored as quickly as possible, so in the areas where school infrastructure has been damaged, the first step is to provide the means of access to remote learning: internet, computers, power sources. In-person education at schools is only possible if the school has a bomb shelter. According to the Ministry of Education's data, as of January 2023, shelters have been arranged for 71% of schools across the country. The total number of shelters covers 62% of all students. Access to shelters is better in

western and central regions and worse in the regions located closer to the border with Russia or to the warzone.

The government has not adopted a plan for restoring school buildings yet. At the same time, it is working on a long-term plan for restoring the field of education, which involves not only rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure, but also continuing the New Ukrainian School reform and creating a more capable school network[2]. In December 2022, the Ministry of Education presented its own program for the development of education based on this plan, but that document is more of a declaration of intentions and does not list specific steps or deadlines for its implementation, nor does it specify the budget[3].

In the medium-term perspective, Ukraine's postwar rebuilding, according to the government's plans, is meant to be done with broad involvement of funding from international partners, and with an orientation towards Ukraine's EU integration. Meanwhile, international organizations and charities are already acting as important partners for hromadas in the restoration of schools and provision of access to education by undertaking some of the repairs, providing computers, power sources, and other resources needed by schools. In addition, international organizations and charities create opportunities for studying in places where the infrastructure has been destroyed. For example, in order to support students in some schools in Chernihiv and Kyiv Regions, digital education centers have been arranged with the help of savED and Save the Children. They give students the opportunity to visit the centers for individual consultations and communication among themselves and with teachers, even if their school is closed due to damage or undergoing repairs.

The coordination and planning of the restoration of infrastructure should be carried out by the Ministry of Infrastructure. However, we have not been able to obtain any information about the Ministry's plans related to the rebuilding of schools either at the regional level or at the level of hromadas.

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[2] Plan for the Recovery of Ukraine (План відновлення України). recovery.gov.ua

[3] Ministry of Education (2022) The Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine has presented a program of major transformation titled Education 4.0: Ukrainian Dawn (Міністр освіти і науки України презентував програму великої трансформації «Освіта 4.0: український світанок»).

Political leadership in the restoration of school infrastructure currently belongs to local self-government bodies which own the schools. The efforts to collect information about losses and loss assessment, as well as the restoration efforts are coordinated at the regional level; regional governments also manage the coordination with international organizations and charities.

In the three regions which this study focused on, school restoration is at different stages. As of January 2023, 59% of damaged schools (41 schools) had been restored in the Chernihiv Region. 71% of schools (87) which suffered damage had been restored in the Kyiv Region. Meanwhile, in the Kharkiv Region, hardly any rebuilding has been done—only 13 of the 296 damaged schools have been restored. This can be explained by the fact that the Kharkiv Region was liberated much later than the two other regions, that military actions and intense shelling still continue in a part of the region, and that the scale of destruction is much bigger here.

Education administrators and educators from the hromadas which this study focused on emphasize that for now, planning can only be short-term for them—both due to the security situation and due to the current problems associated with destruction and the full-scale war in general which need to be solved. In particular, hromadas that were under occupation for a long time and/or suffered major destruction face the need to rebuild critical infrastructure and housing first of all.

Interviews with educators in the three regions allowed us to generalize the **needs of hromadas for the restoration of education infrastructure in order of priority:**

- First-priority needs: make access to secondary education as broad as possible right now.
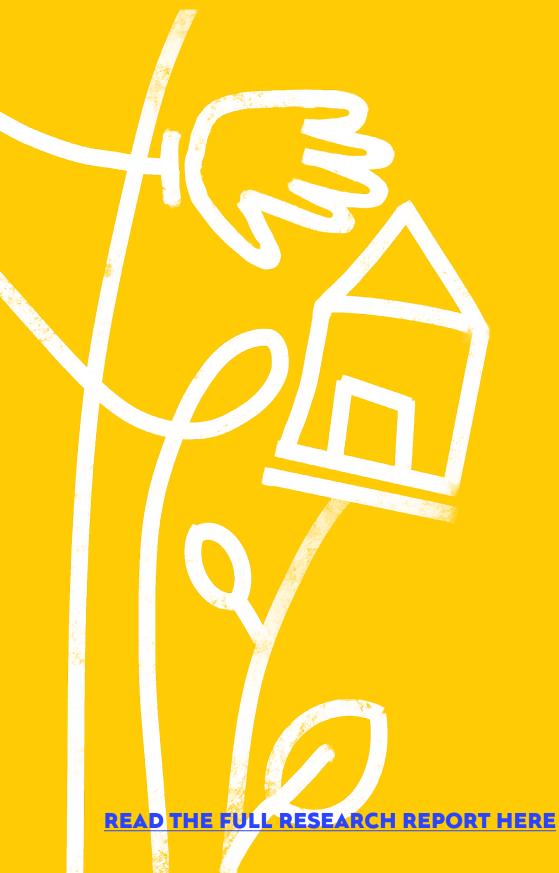
  For regions where in-person and mixed education is possible, this requires building and repairing shelters at schools and furnishing education spaces in shelters, including for extracurricular activities; urgently repairing school buildings or repairing minor damage; arranging modular (temporary) schools; providing school buses, generators and internet connection, devices for learning. For the regions and hromadas where only remote learning is possible, this requires generators, internet access, and devices for students and teachers.

- Second-priority needs: restore education infrastructure to resume in-person studies.

  This includes repairing schools with significant damage, refurbishing other hromada-owned buildings (administrative buildings, houses of culture, etc.), undamaged by the war, to serve as schools. It also involves restoring the education environment (furniture, learning equipment, technology, utilities) at the damaged schools.

- Third-priority needs: ensure universal access to high-quality education.

  This is about fundamental rebuilding of severely damaged and destroyed schools, as well as the schools which require fundamental renovation, in accordance with the relevant needs of hromadas in terms of secondary education facilities and with the plans for the development of the school network. This also involves the creation of an education environment that would meet the requirements of the school reform and the state standards (architectural standards, hygiene standards, etc.) for all schools. In addition, educators need knowledge and skills in fields such as interaction with international organizations and charities, fundraising and grant management, and mental health help for students and for the educators themselves.

KYIV, 2023