



**Responding to the Crisis
Caused by the War in Ukraine
A Report on Capacity-Building Activities**



Responding to the Crisis Caused by the War in Ukraine: A Report on Capacity-Building Activities



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BACKGROUND

On 24 February 2022, the Russian Federation escalated its conflict in the Donbas region to a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. As a direct result, UNHCR¹ estimates that, from 23 March 2022 onwards, approximately 5.9 million Ukrainians have been internally displaced and 8.1 million Ukrainians have fled to neighbouring countries.

In addition to these vast numbers of refugees and the increased risk of Human Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, OCHA also estimates that approximately 1 million children are at risk of conflict-related mental health issues.

In response to this ongoing crisis, UNICEF's Europe and Central Asia Regional Office has initiated the project *Hearing the Voices of Ukrainian Children and Young People: Child Helplines Responding to the Ukraine Crisis*. Coordinated by Child Helpline International, this project had three objectives:

1. To improve and maintain the **capacity of child helplines to ensure quality services to children and young people in need of care and protection, with a particular focus on children affected by the Ukrainian conflict**;
2. To raise **awareness** of the public, with particular focus on Ukrainian children and parents, of the existence of child helpline services (especially the harmonized 116111 number) for children and families; and
3. To ensure the inclusion and amplification of children's voices and generate **evidence** to influence policymaking through reliable national and regional data collection, analysis and sharing.

This report focuses on the activities pertaining to the first objective: capacity building.



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1. <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine> and <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/ukraine/>

NATIONAL WORKSHOPS

To achieve the capacity-building objective, a series of three-day workshops were devised and conducted on a national level, bringing together participants from Child Helpline International's local member child helplines, as well as other frontline workers and organizations aiding Ukrainian refugees. **Seven such workshops took place** between February and April 2023, in Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Moldova, Czechia and one on the Polish border with Ukraine for participants from Kyiv, Lviv and neighbouring regions.

The workshops provided training in several of the most pressing issues emerging from conflict, presented by leading experts in the field. The sessions of the first day were aimed at increasing counsellors' knowledge of conflict-related **Gender-Based Violence** (GBV), and **Trafficking in Human Beings** (THB), especially as these relate to children and their caregivers. The second day intended to increase counsellors' ability to provide children with conflict-related Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), as well as how to manage their **personal and professional wellbeing**. The last day was devoted to working groups discussing current and future issues relating to the Russia-Ukraine war and raising possible solutions to these issues.

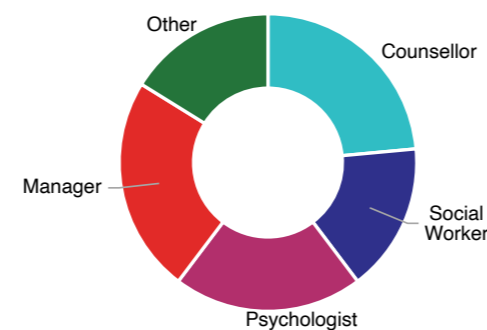
PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

The workshops brought together participants from 51 state-run, civil and international organizations, including national helplines, as well as UNICEF country offices. **209 participants** attended. We obtained valid **survey responses from 68 of these participants**, including 16 counsellors (23.5% of responses), 11 social workers (16.2%), 14 psychologists (20.6%), 16 managers (23.5%), and 11 other roles (16.2%).

Number of participants in each workshop



Participants' backgrounds



QUANTIFYING THE SKILLS LEARNED IN THE WORKSHOPS

Pre- and post-workshop survey

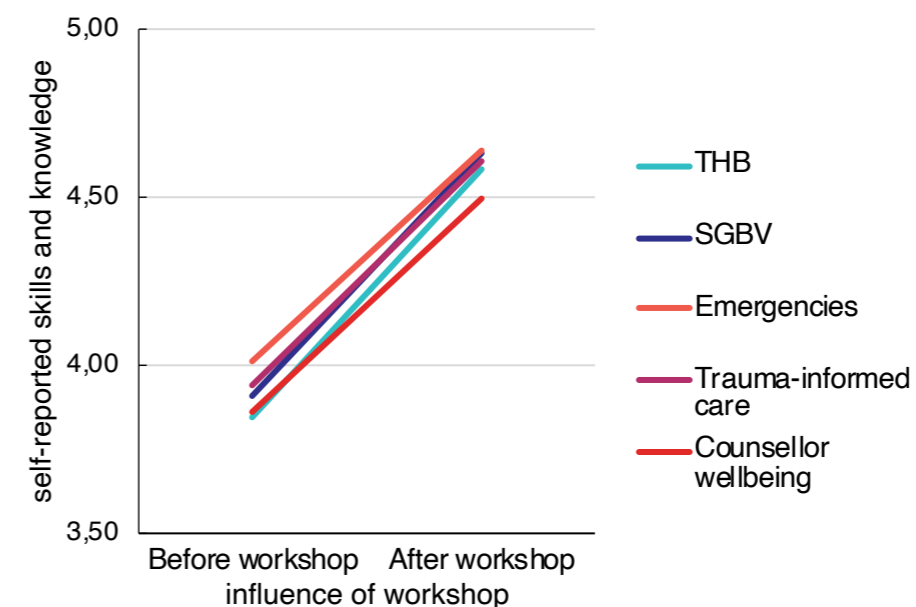
To measure the success of the workshops in improving the participants' knowledge and skills in the subject matter, we conducted a survey before and after each workshop. In these surveys, participants rated their confidence in various skills corresponding to the training topics: THB, GBV, the role of counsellors in emergencies, trauma-informed care, and counsellor wellbeing. The survey consisted of 19 such confidence statements using a 5-point scale, from **Strongly Disagree** (1) to **Strongly Agree** (5). Towards the end of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to provide feedback on the workshop using open-ended questions.

Change in skills and knowledge

Overall, participants felt fairly confident in their skills prior to the workshops, scoring an average 3.9 out of 5, with higher scores indicating stronger confidence in skills and knowledge, across all statements in the pre-workshop survey. After the workshop, their **overall scores improved by an average of 0.66 points** to 4.56. Self-reported **skills and knowledge improved in 63 of the 68 participants** (92.6%).

By training topic

The average pre-workshop score on the four statements concerning Trafficking in Human Beings was 3.85. In the post-workshop survey, this average changed to 4.56. Similar improvements were evident in the four statements concerning Sexual Gender-Based Violence (from an average of 3.92 to 4.6 post-workshop), understanding of the role of counsellors in emergencies (one statement, improved from 4.02 to 4.62), trauma-informed care (five statements, improved from 3.9 to 4.6), and counsellor wellbeing (five statements, from 3.86 to 4.48). To conclude, **participants' self-reported skills and knowledge increased in all training topics covered during the workshop.**



CONCLUSION

In line with the 1st objective of the *Hearing the Voices of Ukrainian Children and Young People: Child Helplines Responding to the Ukraine Crisis* project, the workshops have improved and maintained the capacity of child helplines to ensure quality services to children and young people in need of care and protection, with a particular focus on children affected by the Russia-Ukraine war.

First, the workshops *maintained* and reinforced the child helplines' capacity to provide mental health and psychosocial support to Ukrainians by addressing the counsellors' wellbeing and equipping them with tips and tools to protect them from burnout. Second, the workshops have *improved* the capacity of counsellors and other frontline workers to support Ukrainians by exposing them to conflict-related subject matters and response. This new knowledge and these new skills will make the counsellors better informed and better able to respond to contacts from children and families affected by the Russia-Ukraine war and provide them with the quality services they deserve.

The response to the workshops was overwhelmingly positive. Participants rated their **overall impression of the workshops with an average rating of 4.55 out of 5** (with higher scores indicating more positive ratings). This is also evident in the responses to the open-ended questions, which frequently asked for more such workshops. The workshops equipped the child helpline counsellors with information and tools, presented an opportunity to communicate, meet colleagues from other organizations, and provided a safe space to air their struggles and hopes. In the words of a participant from Hungary, when asked what made their experience positive: "*Tudás, közösség, hangulat, lehetőségek, kávé*" – **knowledge, community, atmosphere, opportunities, coffee**.



Individual statements

Examining the individual statements in the survey, we found that the participants felt that their confidence improved most for the statement "*I feel confident in my level of understanding of conflict-related Trafficking in Human Beings (THB)*" (an increase of 0.93 points), followed by "*I feel confident in my ability to integrate trauma-informed care in my professional practice*" (0.85 points) and "*I have a good knowledge of characteristics that may make certain individuals more vulnerable to SGBV victimization*" (0.83 points).

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

The quoted responses below were translated using DeepL, from their native languages.

What made your experience of this workshop positive?

We had 71 responses to this question from participants in all seven workshops. Four main themes can be identified in the responses to this question. First, participants highlighted the **quality and professionalism of the trainers (mentioned in 35.2% of responses)**, their clear presentations and their expertise. For example, a participant in the Hungarian workshop wrote: "*I really appreciate that trainers who are extremely knowledgeable in their field of expertise shared their knowledge in a way that was enjoyable and engaging.*" Second, participants commended the friendly and **welcoming atmosphere (11.3% of responses)** in the workshops, which allowed open communication, socialization and **sharing of experience and knowledge (32.4% of responses)** with other organizations and colleagues. A third benefit that came up often, as noted in the responses of a Ukrainian participant: "*the opportunity to communicate with colleagues in a different format*" and a participant from Poland: "*Sharing and hearing other NGO colleagues' stories and experiences.*" This latter theme came up most often in the Ukrainian participants' responses – 11 out of 19 participants (57.9%) mention it as a positive experience in the workshop. Lastly, participants highlighted the **interesting topics and new knowledge (31% of responses)** they gained in the workshop and how useful they found it; a participant from Slovakia wrote: "*I learned a lot of new things, it was very beneficial.*"

Where do you feel we could have improved the quality of the workshop?

We received 40 responses to this question, spanning the seven workshops. One main point for improvement emerged from participants' answers - participants frequently **wished the workshop was longer (27.5% of responses)**. Several participants noted that the long days meant that at some point it became hard to retain new information. As one Bulgarian participant put it: "*Longer seminar duration and less information per day.*" Specifically, they would have liked to have more time for group work, of a more **practical and interactive nature (mentioned by 32.5% of participants)**: "*I think more group activities would be welcome.*" (participant from Moldova); "*More practical workshops.*" (Czechia); "*I would have been very happy to see more interactivity added to the seminar. The theoretical information and models provided by the speakers are definitely valuable, but I think they would have been better received if there had been an opportunity to work in small groups for longer, perhaps even with the involvement of trainers and joint discussion in smaller groups, with more space to communicate with the facilitators.*" (Ukraine).

Are there any other topics that you would like us to have covered in this workshop?

A variety of topics of interest for future workshops was raised by the participants. Some would like to have more training on things like bullying or child sexual abuse and exploitation. Others were interested in learning more about cooperation with governmental organizations or getting tools for working at a child helpline. Others brought up dealing with displaced children and with the multicultural contact of Ukrainians and locals. Most commonly came up an interest in more practical information and tips for handling specific cases, which somewhat coincides with the interest in more interactive parts added to the workshop, brought up in the previous question.



Every child has a voice. No child should be left unheard.

Child Helpline International is a collective impact organization with 155 members in 133 countries and territories around the world (as at June 2023).

We coordinate information, viewpoints, knowledge and data from our child helpline members, partners and external sources. This exceptional resource is used to help and support child protection systems globally, regionally and nationally, and to help our members advocate for the rights of children and amplify their voices.

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