



© UNICEF/UN0647119/Evgeny Kanaplev and Julia Leidik

UNICEF EDUCATION - ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Case Study

POLAND

Creating classrooms that are responsive to the mental health needs of learners, including refugees

March 2024

After two years of war, the Ukraine refugee crisis remains one of the largest displacement crises worldwide. According to UNHCR, nearly one million refugees from Ukraine are hosted in Poland – approximately 40 per cent of them children.

Due to COVID-19, Poland's educational institutions and staff have been navigating unprecedented challenges related to learning. Polish schools have also been responding to the learning needs of children who have fled the war in Ukraine. This has posed various difficulties in classrooms, including differences in educational backgrounds, cultural dissimilarities, and language barriers. Children coming from Ukraine experienced life-threatening situations and faced psychosocial distress related to forced displacement, separation from friends and families, and uncertainty about the future. In response, UNICEF, in collaboration with the Polish Ministry of Education, launched the [Learning Passport](#) – a collaborative initiative between UNICEF and Microsoft. A comprehensive e-learning platform, the Learning Passport is supporting the inclusive education of refugee children in the Polish school system. Access to the platform and all its courses is free.

Poland's Learning Passport now offers teachers access to resources and training to support their students' learning and mental health and well-being. Due to the growing number of refugees in Polish schools, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, and UNICEF's partner (SOK Foundation) developed a three-module teacher training programme. Training modules empower teachers to manage stress and prevent burn-out, communicate cross-culturally, create an inclusive classroom, and foster the resilience of their learners.

After completing the training, teachers can continue to learn and share their experiences with peers through periodic one-day online workshops. An evaluation of the Learning Passport training programme noted that the courses were well designed, with a balanced combination of theoretical and practical content. The programme provides users with various learning materials, such as videos, readings and podcasts, catering to different learning styles. The gradual introduction of new terminology and content is proving to be an effective approach in assisting users to learn. Most importantly, the programme is equipping teachers with practical tools to improve their teaching practice.

RESULTS

- **9,500 teachers and educators** (pre-primary to upper secondary) have completed the three-module teacher training course, equipping them with the skills to create classrooms that are responsive to the diverse mental health needs of approximately **200,000 learners**.
- **2,243 teachers and school counselors** participated in a one-day-long online training focusing on resilience building and cross-cultural communication.
- **635 school managers** completed an advanced and comprehensive mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) training programme, named "Quiet Mind." This training programme covered crucial topics such as stress management, burnout prevention, adaptive leadership, psychological-informed classroom strategies, cross-cultural communication, and ways to foster kindness and inclusion.
- Feedback from teachers using the Learning Passport training programme has been overwhelmingly positive, with teachers reporting **decreases in stress and tension**

levels of their students as well as **improvements in their cross-cultural teaching practice**.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Training government schoolteachers:** A system-strengthening approach implemented in the humanitarian response has proven an effective method to address the needs of vulnerable children in a country with multiple stakeholders, favourable socio-economic conditions, and robust governmental capacities.
- **Working with the Ministry of Education:** UNICEF collaborated with the Ministry of Education, municipalities and CSO partners at the national level to embed Learning Passport courses into the Ministry of Education's learning platform. This initiative has led to the courses being accessible to teachers across different municipalities in Poland, positively impacting the learning experience of both Polish and Ukrainian children.
- **Engagement with teachers and gathering feedback:** The capacity of the Learning Passport to engage with teachers and gather their feedback is an important feature. This feature enables the adaptation and continuous update of training content to ensure that the needs expressed by teachers are met.
- **Certification:** With the Ministry of Education's recognition, the Learning Passport training certificate has become a valuable incentive for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills. This recognition propels teachers to improve their performance and serves as an acknowledgment of their efforts and achievements.

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF is committed to expanding the reach of the Learning Passport training programme across Poland's 10 largest municipalities. UNICEF is advocating to expand further by including this MHPSS content in both pre- and in-service teacher training. Moreover, UNICEF will develop new MHPSS training courses that are tailored to the current needs of teachers, with a focus on promoting the mental health and well-being of learners in the classroom, a crucial aspect of education that will benefit both teachers and learners.

Cost effectiveness: UNICEF invested **US\$ 425,000** to improve the knowledge and skills of 9,500 educators, promoting the integration of Ukrainian children into formal education in Poland and enhancing the mental health and well-being of 200,000 learners.

For more information, please contact:

UNICEF Refugee Response in Poland
ecaro@unicef.org