

## Ukraine Response Snapshot

Expanding Opportunities to Learn, Grow, and Thrive in the Face of Adversity



Sesame Workshop mobilized to meet the evolving needs of young children and families impacted by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Since the start of the invasion on February 2022, Sesame has been guided by the following goals:

- Help families cope with traumatic events and big changes;
- Support caregivers, professionals that interface with children, including teachers and educators, and children to communicate and process what they are experiencing;
- Provide structure and routine to children that includes moments of joy, comfort, and learning activities, and
- Celebrate Ukrainian pride and national identity.

This work builds on Sesame’s deep experience supporting the immediate and long-term needs of children, families, and communities impacted by crisis and conflict under our *Welcome Sesame* portfolio. Through *Welcome Sesame*, Sesame

Workshop has delivered programming since 2016 to children in crisis throughout the Middle East and North Africa, Latin America, East Africa, as well as in Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and now Ukraine.

### Strategic Objectives



Sesame Workshop’s Ukraine Response overall goal is to expand access to quality, playful, inclusive, and contextually appropriate early childhood education for young children of Ukraine. Our response is oriented around four strategic objectives:

1. Improved social emotional learning (SEL)
2. Increased opportunities for playful learning
3. Improved inclusive environment
4. Increased positive self-concept

## Progress snapshot

Our *Welcome Sesame* Ukraine Response to date has focused on reaching Ukrainian children and caregivers in their country and across the region.



### Needs of Children and Caregivers in Ukraine

**The Education system has been severely impacted by the crisis.**

Disruption in learning and acute exposure to conflict related trauma and psychological distress increases Ukrainian children's risk of experiencing psychosocial harm and learning disruptions.

**39%** of children ages 0-5 had access to ECD programs (as of December 2022)

**75%** of Ukrainian school children have experienced stress<sup>1</sup>

**There is a shortage of qualified teachers in Ukraine with many teachers internally displaced.** The UN OCHA estimated around 370k teaching staff require additional support to provide education services, with training needs including providing mental health and psychosocial support to teachers, and equipping them to manage classrooms and address learning loss due to the war and displacement.<sup>2</sup>

### Research

Sesame Workshop conducted two needs assessments and a number of curriculum advisories with local experts including practitioners working with children, and an evidence review workshop between June 2022–March 2023 with educators and caregivers in Ukraine to assess the priorities for children and families.

**The research revealed the need for the following type of content:**

- Support children's social-emotional learning needs and the processing trauma
- Celebrate a sense of self and Ukrainian identity
- Support Ukrainian caregivers and parents with resources including illustrative and practical examples of how to interact with their children, to help them cope and support their children's healing



*In response, Sesame Workshop dubbed 140 episodes from the Watch, Play, Learn series into Ukrainian, providing a foundation for Math, Science, Social-Emotional Skills, and Health and Safety for children ages 3 to 8.*

## Content

### **Watch, Play, Learn Dubbed into Ukrainian**

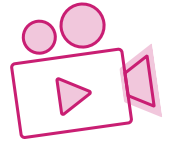
In consultation with Ukrainian education and cultural advisors, and in partnership with a Ukrainian dubbing agency, Sesame Workshop dubbed 140 episodes from the animated series *Watch, Play, Learn* into Ukrainian. The series provides a foundation for Math, Science, Social-Emotional Skills, and Health and Safety for children ages 3 to 8. [Learn more about this series.](#)

### **Live Action Films**

Under USAID’s Ukraine Confidence Building Initiative III (UCBI III), Sesame Workshop partnered with a Ukrainian Production company to create x5 Live Action Films to represent Ukrainian identity and culture through dance, musical instruments, food, language, alphabet, and clothes, featuring Ukrainian children.

### **Trainings and Facilitator Guides**

With funding from OTI/USAID and Chemonics International Sesame Workshop is working directly with early learning educators in Ukraine and providing trainings and facilitator guides to support teachers on the use of the content with children in their classrooms. These resources can be accessed on the [Welcome Sesame Ukraine page.](#)



### **Welcome Sesame (Ukraine): “Invisible Shield” Film**

“Invisible Shield” film has been selected for screening and award competition for the 40th annual Chicago International Children’s Film Festival (CICFF40).

These videos are publicly available on the [Welcome Sesame Ukraine YouTube channel.](#)



### **Caregiver and Parent Facing Videos**

Supported by the US Department of State (US Embassy in Ukraine), and in partnership with IREX, Sesame workshop is in the process of creating a Caregiver/Parent facing videos to support mental health needs. Featuring trusted messengers as part of the Parenting Program curriculum, the videos will cover four topics: **Self Care, Psychosocial Support, Early Learning, and Social Cohesion.** These are targeted to be complete by Spring 2024.

## Distribution: Direct Services

### PARTNERSHIPS

We have established partnerships to reach children and families by layering and integrating our content, materials, and trainings into existing efforts and delivery channels. More than 10 partners are currently using our Ukrainian content.

**Key implementing partners:** Chemonics International, EdCamp (Ukrainian NGO network of educators), International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), JCC Krakow, Kyiv Star TV platform in Ukraine, the government of Ukraine's Ministry of Education and Science Ukraine (MoES), *PlusPlus* Broadcast Children's network, Save the Children Ukraine, Stories with Clever Hedgehog Digital Playground, and UNICEF.

**Key donors:** U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of State (DOS), United Airlines, Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), and individuals.



### Ministry of Education and Science (MoES)

As a result of the challenges facing the Ukraine Education system due to the ongoing war, the MoES has launched the Vision of Education 2030 Initiative which aims to ensure that all children in Ukraine have access to continuous and quality early childhood education services.

#### The MoES has five key priorities:

1. Integrate early childhood education through legislative changes to emphasize flexibility, innovation and modernization of the education sector.
2. Improve the qualification of personnel, working conditions, training systems and opportunities for professional development for education personnel.
3. Transition from care to comprehensive child development by updating the curriculum and approaches to early childhood education.
4. Create a robust system for monitoring and evaluating the quality of early childhood education and overall educational policies.
5. Introduce digitalization and changing the funding model to improve efficient management and financing.

In response to those challenges, and leveraging Sesame Workshop's expertise in social-emotional learning (SEL) and early childhood development (ECD), we identified with the MoES that we could contribute significantly to teachers' development, MHPSS support, and enhance of social-emotional skills of young learners, teachers and caregivers. Sesame Workshop and the MoES are signing a Memorandum of Intent (MOI) in November-December 2023. In the interim, we are establishing partnerships with international NGOs, local NGOs, and educational universities to design our response ensuring that we are contributing to the Vision of Education 2030 in support of the education needs of children and families in Ukraine.



## Distribution: Direct Services Reach

As part of the OTI/USAID and Chemonics International grant in 2022 and 2023, there were:

**150+** **educators** were trained on Sesame Workshop's Ukrainian content

**95%** of training participants showed a high level of **satisfaction** and **receptibility** of Sesame Workshop content to be used in their classrooms

**SAVE the Children Ukraine is distributing Sesame Workshop's content as part of its ongoing Education activities with teachers and children in kindergartens across Ukraine. As of November 2023:**

**2,298** **children** reached in **15 Kindergartens** with Sesame Workshop's Ukrainian content

**1,109** kindergarten **educators** and **caregivers** trained in Sesame Workshop's Ukrainian materials



*The Welcome Sesame videos will be engaging for my students and easy to follow. I think they will be drawn to the content because it is visually fun and cute to watch."*

*Thank you for sharing your creations with Ukrainian educators so sincerely! Inspiration, creativity, not stopping at what has been achieved. Very rich, meaningful, useful!"*

## Distribution: Digital and Broadcast

In 2022, immediately after the invasion of Ukraine began, Sesame Workshop ensured existing Ukrainian content was made publicly available for children.

### YouTube Distribution

Existing non-Ukrainian content was reviewed for cultural relevance and translated and dubbed into Ukrainian for distribution on [YouTube](#).

### Social Media

Sesame Workshop carried out 2 targeted Social Media campaigns to promote our Ukrainian content to parents and caregivers. The campaign was shortlisted for the “Better Media Practice award” as part of the Festival of Media Global Award, one of the longest-running and most prestigious programs rewarding innovative online campaigns.

### Social Media Campaign performance:

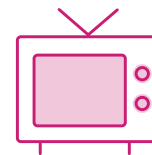
**38M+** impressions across social media

**60%** engagement with our content



### MoES' NUMO Early Learning Platform

At the onset of the conflict in 2022, Sesame Workshop rapidly adapted 76 age-appropriate videos in Ukrainian and Russian language covering the topics of Social Emotional Learning and Math, which have been posted online on YouTube for open use. These videos were posted on the Ukraine MoES' NUMO early learning platform.



### PlusPlus Broadcast Children Network Partnership

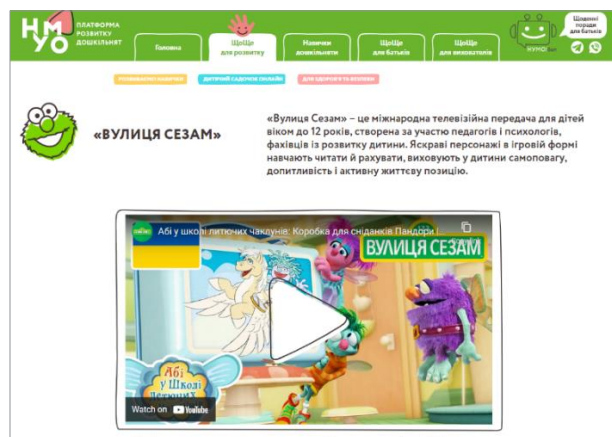
In March 2023, Sesame Workshop launched its partnership with *PlusPlus* Broadcast Children's network in Ukraine and started airing the *Watch, Play, Learn* series on TV and the *Kyivstar* streaming service. [The video is available on the PBS NewsHour YouTube channel!](#)

### As of August 2023, the series garnered:

**750K+** views from children aged 4+

**130K+** views on the *Kyivstar* platform in 5 months

This partnership was also promoted by the First Lady of Ukraine's Mental Health Initiative.



Sesame Workshop Ukraine Response videos featured on the Government of Ukraine's official e-learning platform, NUMO.

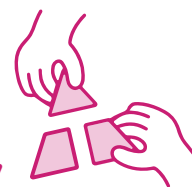


## About Welcome Sesame

*Welcome Sesame's* vision is for "Millions of young children and families affected by crises flourish in the face of adversity with support from *Welcome Sesame's* innovative, evidence-backed educational media and programs."

"Welcome" is more than a greeting. It's the sense of belonging, security, and hope that too many children affected by crises around the world have lost. One in every six children worldwide live in a conflict zone, and more than 43 million have been forced to flee their homes. For the youngest children, exposure to crises during their formative early years can disrupt their development, with long-term effects on their learning and well-being. But research shows that if children have access to high-quality early childhood development (ECD) support, they can overcome adversity and build a brighter future.

As young children are increasingly exposed to crises around the globe, Sesame Workshop is responding with our *Welcome Sesame* initiative. *Welcome Sesame* unites multiple programs with the shared goals of providing comfort and emotional support for children and families, building foundational knowledge and skills, promoting positive identity and belonging, and fostering more inclusive environments for children affected by crisis.



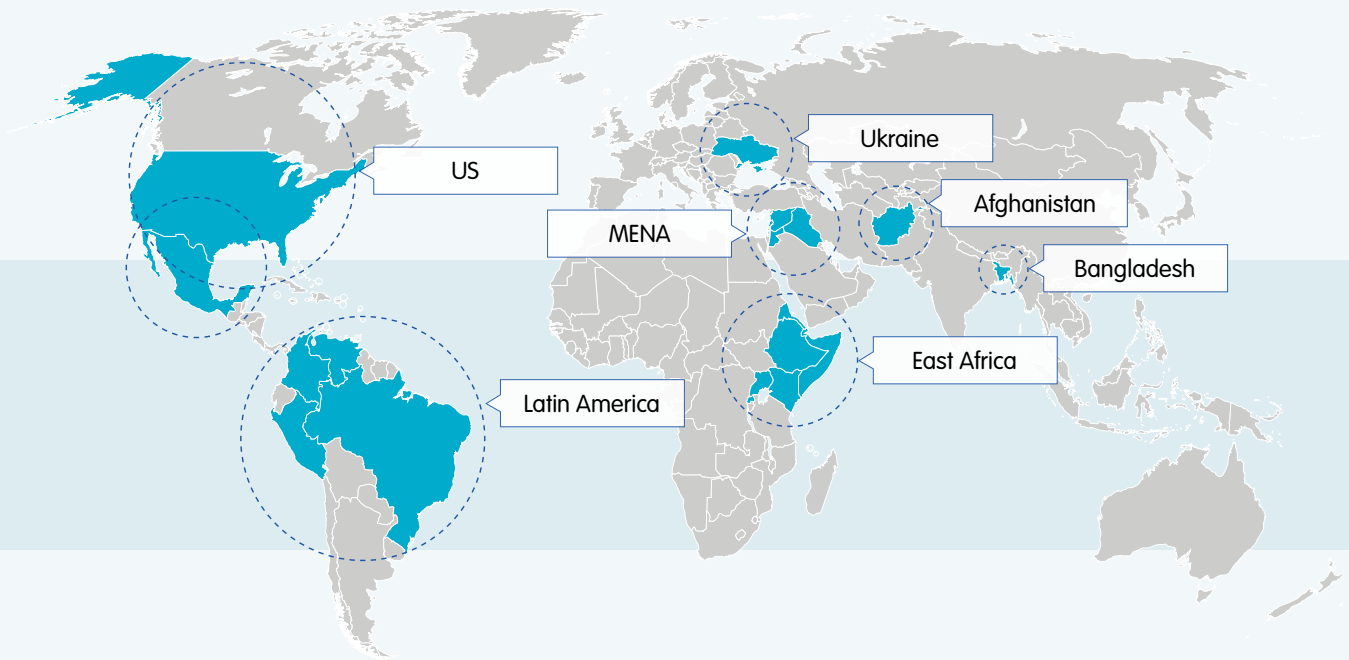
### Benefits of Investing in Early Childhood Development

ECD investments support children from birth to age 8, a crucial period when neuroscience shows that a child's brain undergoes its most rapid phase of development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning, health, and productivity. These investments cover services that promote nurturing care, including health, nutrition, safety and protection, responsive caregiving, and play based early learning. Evidence shows that quality support in the early years for young children and their caregivers can provide tremendous returns—up to 13% per year—through improved education, health, and economic outcomes.<sup>3</sup>



#### Learn more

For more information about *Welcome Sesame*, please visit our website: [m.sesame.org/CrisisResponse](https://m.sesame.org/CrisisResponse)



*Welcome Sesame* programming leverages educational media that is distributed via broadcast and digital platforms, as well as integrated into programs directly serving communities in partnership with governments, humanitarian organizations, and local actors. Along the way, we engage in continuous learning to enhance the reach and impact of our media and programs.

We also leverage our research findings to advocate for increased prioritization of and investment in early childhood for crisis-affected communities globally.

**Together with our partners, we are working to transform how the world supports children and families affected by crises, wherever they may be.**

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Ukraine: 15,000 school psychologists trained by UNESCO to support learners and teachers, UNESCO [unesco.org/en/articles/ukraine-15000-school-psychologists-trained-unesco-support-learners-and-teachers?hub=701&mc\\_cid=6e8b211a5e&mc\\_eid=db61ff2005](https://unesco.org/en/articles/ukraine-15000-school-psychologists-trained-unesco-support-learners-and-teachers?hub=701&mc_cid=6e8b211a5e&mc_eid=db61ff2005)
- <sup>2</sup> OCHA. Humanitarian Needs Overview. January 2023.
- <sup>3</sup> Moving Minds Alliance, "ECD and Early Learning for Children in Crisis and Conflict," 2018. <https://movingmindsalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ecd-and-early-learning-for-children-in-crisis-and-conflict.pdf>

## Photo credit

Page 1: Courtesy of Little People. Page 6: Ryan Donnell/Sesame Workshop

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**Sesame Workshop** is the global impact nonprofit behind *Sesame Street* and so much more. For over 50 years, it has worked at the intersection of education, media, and research, creating joyful experiences that enrich minds and expand hearts, all in service of empowering each generation to build a better world. Our beloved characters, iconic shows, and outreach in communities bring playful early learning to families in more than 150 countries and advance our mission to help children everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder.