



ANALYTICAL REPORT

on the Situation of Children and Families of
Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine
«Children of War: Testimony and Analytics for
International Advocacy»

2026

This analytical report was prepared by a team of specialists and experts in the fields of child rights protection, social policy, psychosocial support, and advocacy for the rights of internally displaced persons.

The authoring team combined experience in qualitative research, community engagement, documentation of testimonies from war-affected families, and the development of recommendations for national and international institutions. The report is based on in-depth interviews with children and their families who have experienced war, occupation, evacuation, and internal displacement.

The authors worked with the sensitive subject of traumatic experience in full adherence to the principles of ethics, non-discrimination, confidentiality, and prevention of retraumatization.

The methodological approach combined qualitative case analysis (20 individual stories) with a quantitative overview of recurring indicators of traumatic experience and the needs of children of war. This approach made it possible to preserve the authentic voice of the child as the foundation of the text while at the same time formulating systemic conclusions and recommendations for the state, communities, social services, and international partners.

The authoring team proceeded from the belief that children of war are not merely recipients of humanitarian assistance, but bearers of lived experience that must be heard at both national and international levels.

Therefore, the report has a dual purpose: to serve as a document of its time and at the same time as an instrument of advocacy.

The authors express their sincere gratitude to the children and families who agreed to share their stories. Their openness and trust made this report possible. Special thanks are extended to representatives of communities, educational institutions, social services, civil society organizations, and volunteer initiatives who contributed to the research process and supported families of children of war at the local level.

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INTRODUCTION

“We were in the basement... we stayed there, yes... for a month.”
“The scariest thing is that you get used to it.”
“I cried all the time – that was my way of coping.”
(Quotes from the project stories)

The report was prepared within the framework of the project **“Children of War: Testimonies and Analytics for International Advocacy,”** implemented by the NGO **“Network of Civil Society Organizations Supporting Internally Displaced Persons in Ukraine”** with the support of the Askold and Dir Foundation, administered by ISAR Ednannia, as part of the project **“A Strong Civil Society of Ukraine – a Driver of Reforms and Democracy,”** funded by Norway and Sweden. The aim of the initiative is to collect real testimonies from children and families who have experienced war and forced displacement and transform them into analytical material for international organizations, diplomats, and media; the collected stories became the foundation of the multimedia exhibition **“Children of War – A Voice That Must Be Heard.”**

This analytical report is based on **20 stories of children of war** – testimonies recorded in the format of interviews with children and/or their parents. This is not “generalized statistics” and not abstract formulations about trauma. These are living voices in which the war sounds different for each child: for some, it echoes through the corridors and bunkers of Mariupol; for others, through the basements of Kharkiv; for some, through checkpoints while fleeing occupation; for others, through bullying at school already in the rear, where a child should finally have felt safe.

In these narratives, it is important not only what happened, but how it “settles” within the child: in the habit of listening to the sky, in the reaction to a sudden sound, in the fatigue from air raid alerts, in silence instead of words. A child’s experience of war rarely takes the form of a “clear chronology” – more often, it consists of fragments that return at night or without warning. That is why direct speech here is not decoration, but evidence: it conveys what no formal report can capture.

Particular value lies in the direct quotations – the words of children and parents that record not only events but also consequences: how the war changes a child’s behavior, learning, trust, sense of safety, and family relationships. This is a document of its time and, at the same time, an advocacy tool: so that international partners, donors, media, and policymakers do not perceive the war as a “distant event,” but see its consequences in the lives of specific children.

There is yet another dimension that this report makes visible: mothers as an invisible front line. Behind each child’s story there is often an adult who must be the “pillar of support” while internally carrying exhaustion, fear, and responsibility for life itself. Sometimes this is expressed directly – briefly, without pathos, as a fact of survival: “I cried all the time – that was my way of coping.” If international support sees only the child but does not see the mother or caregiver, it often falls short of real recovery.

The report aims to:

- document the experiences of children of war as evidence for international advocacy;
- identify common patterns of problems and needs that recur across different stories;
- demonstrate that support for children is not merely a “package” or one-time assistance, but long-term work focused on safety, education, mental health, and development.

The structure of the report combines individual portraits (so that the world can hear each child’s voice) and generalizations (to transform testimonies into solutions). For this reason, the section presenting 20 cases is followed by a quantitative overview of indicators of traumatic experiences and needs, then a block outlining recurring problems, and, as a result, recommendations and a roadmap for action for the state, communities, social services, civil society, and international organizations.

METHODOLOGY

Source Base

The material for the report consists of 20 interviews (stories) collected within the framework of a multimedia project about children of war. In some cases, the format includes “child + mother” pairs, allowing the same experience to be seen from two perspectives: the child’s (emotional, fragmented, deeply honest) and the adult’s (structured, with everyday and organizational details).

Data Collection Format

- Semi-structured interviews / narratives focused on experiences of war and displacement.
- Documentation of direct speech as key testimony.
- Questions covered both event-based aspects (evacuation, housing, school) and psychological and social consequences (fears, losses, integration, resources, future plans).

Geography and Context

The stories cover different regions and types of wartime experience:

- occupation and departure through checkpoints/indirect routes (including Kherson region); – cities under intensive shelling (including Kharkiv);
- Mariupol as an experience of survival in shelters/bunkers;
- internal displacement to safer regions (including Vinnytsia region);
- the experience of “rear-area” children who did not leave the country but live under air raid alerts and within communities mobilized by war.

The current place of residence for many protagonists is Vinnytsia and Vinnytsia region, which creates an opportunity to analyze the integration of internally displaced children in a specific region, as well as typical barriers (housing, school access, extracurricular activities, community attitudes).

Analytical Framework (Qualitative Case Analysis)

Each story was processed using the same structure of 9 thematic blocks (to ensure comparability of cases and visibility of recurring problems):

- The first days of the war, evacuation
- Housing and living conditions after displacement
- School / education / language issues
- Psychological condition
- Social support and resources
- Friendship, community integration
- The role of family (including absence of father/service/separation)
- Dreams and future plans
- Vulnerabilities (special needs, inclusion, risks)

Quantitative Component (Mini-Statistics Based on 20 Stories)

In addition to qualitative portraits, the report includes a quantitative overview –a conservative count of recurring indicators of traumatic experience and needs. Its purpose is not to provide “representative statistics,” but to make the scale of key problems visible even within a small sample and to strengthen the advocacy component of the report.

Unit of Analysis

- One story/case = 1 counting unit (out of 20).
- If a case includes a “child + mother” pair, an indicator is counted if it is directly mentioned by at least one of the two voices (child or adult), without duplication.

PRINCIPLE OF “NO ASSUMPTIONS” IN COUNTING

- An indicator is counted only if there is a **direct/unambiguous mention** in the interview text.
- If a topic may have been present but was **not articulated, it is not counted**.
- Therefore, figures are presented as **minimally confirmed (“at least”)**, ensuring an ethical and accurate approach.

GROUPS OF INDICATORS (WHAT WAS COUNTED)

The quantitative overview was structured according to the following blocks (the full table is presented in a separate section of the report):

A. War and Safety Experience

- staying in a bunker/basement/shelter;
- experience of occupation and/or complex evacuation routes;
- normalization of danger (“got used to air raid alerts/explosions”);
- testimonies of nearby threats/strikes.

B. Displacement and Housing Instability

- loss/damage of housing;
- temporary living conditions;
- number of relocations (once / 2+ times);
- signs of material hardship affecting access to recovery.

C. Education

- educational disruptions (interruptions in schooling);
- distance learning and infrastructural barriers (internet/electricity);
- change of school;
- language/adaptation difficulties;
- bullying/stigmatization at school or positive adaptation (as separate poles of experience).

D. Psychological Consequences

- anxiety, panic reactions, sleep disturbances;
- social isolation/social phobia;
- emotional “numbness,” apathy;
- seeking psychological/psychiatric assistance (as a fact).

E. Family and Separation

- father in military service / relatives serving;
- separation from father/relatives, lack of contact;
- living with only one parent (as a separate vulnerability factor).

F. Social Integration and Support

- loss of old social ties / emergence of new friendships;
- support from community/NGOs/humanitarian programs (as directly mentioned);
- volunteering/involvement in helping others as a resource.

G. Development and the “Right to Childhood”

- presence/absence of access to clubs, sports, creative activities;
- financial and logistical barriers to development.

H. Vulnerabilities and Inclusion

- direct mentions of special needs (ASD, disability, etc.);
- barriers to accessing inclusive services (where mentioned).

I. Future and Return

- desire to return home / fear or refusal to return;
- dreams of peace and the end of the war;
- presence of articulated professional plans.

PRINCIPLES OF WORKING WITH THE MATERIAL

- **No assumptions:** if facts/details are absent in a story, they are not artificially added.
- **Direct speech** is preserved as the evidentiary and emotional foundation of the texts (highlighted in quotation marks).
 - **Journalistic style with analytical emphasis:** each case is presented as an individual portrait within a structured framework that makes systemic problems visible.
 - **Trauma sensitivity:** emphasis is placed on experiences and needs without sensationalism or retraumatization.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

- The material is the result of qualitative research (analysis of stories and testimonies) and does not claim statistical representativeness of the entire population of children in Ukraine.
 - Some interviews contain fragmented memories (especially among younger children), which is a natural consequence of stress/age.
 - Certain topics may remain unspoken (personal losses, domestic violence, deep family conflicts), as the interviews were not psychotherapeutic sessions and did not aim to “extract” everything.
- In this report, qualitative case analysis (20 individual portraits with direct speech) is combined with a quantitative overview of recurring indicators. This approach makes it possible to preserve the human voice and emotional truth of the stories while demonstrating that behind them stand not isolated cases, but systemic patterns of needs and traumatic experience. The quantitative indicators are presented conservatively –only based on direct mentions in the interviews –and serve as a “risk map” explaining why support for children of war must be systemic, long-term, and targeted.

VOICES OF CHILDREN OF WAR:

20 INDIVIDUAL STORIES AND KEY TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES

In this section are the voices of children who yesterday argued about grades, dreamed of holidays and extracurricular activities, and today know the sound of a basement, the way the heart tightens at the sound of a siren, and how painful the words spoken in a new school can be: “you’re not from here.” In these stories, war is not only in strikes and occupation – it is in separation from a father, in “two-bag” suitcases, in lost friends, in pets that had to be left behind, in the silence that follows what has been endured and suddenly makes a child far too adult.

So that these testimonies do not dissolve into emotion and at the same time do not lose their human warmth, each story has been structured within a shared framework – nine blocks that recur again and again in the lives of different children. These are nine doors through which war enters childhood:

1. The first days of the war, evacuation
2. Housing and living conditions after displacement
3. School / education / language issues
4. Psychological condition
5. Social support and resources
6. Friendship, community integration
7. The role of family
8. Dreams and future plans
9. Vulnerabilities

This was done intentionally: so that the world hears not only “what happened,” but also what remains inside – in the body, in memory, in language, in behavior, in dreams. And so that it becomes clear: supporting children of war is not a one-time action, but a long path toward restoring their right to childhood.



ANDRII, 14 YEARS OLD

 *Donetsk region, village of Sukhanko (near Sloviansk) → Uzhhorod → Vinnytsia*

Andrii, 14 — From Donetsk region, he remembers the first explosions of war. He moved with his family, studied online, and now attends school in Vinnytsia in 8th grade. Andrii dreams of an economic education in Europe and returning to Ukraine to help develop it as a strong country. His story is about maturity, persistence, and a desire to make the world better.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

For Andrii, the war began in an almost ordinary way – as a phrase spoken over his bed at four in the morning: “The war has started.” He remembers not shouting or panic, but a brief internal pause: “I didn’t panic, I just thought: ‘What now?’” That morning he still asked about school, but the answer was simple: no.

In the first days, he tried to hold on to his usual routine – he turned on the TV, wanted to watch cartoons, but there were only news reports and instructions on how to live in a new reality: “I wanted to watch a cartoon... but there was only news about the start of the war.”

Fear did not come immediately. He clearly marks the boundary himself: “It wasn’t scary until shells started hitting our village. But there wasn’t much panic.”

Evacuation was not a plan, but a life command: his mother had long held on to the idea of “staying until the very end,” and then said briefly, without room for discussion: “Andrii, we’re going to Uzhhorod... a car will arrive now, then we’ll take a train.” It was at night. There was almost no time: “We could take only one backpack.”

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Their journey to Uzhhorod took two days by train. The first shelter was a storage space in a shop converted into a refuge: “There were mattresses, and we slept on them.” Andrii describes everyday life dryly, as if he immediately learned not to exaggerate: normal. But behind that “normal” was life in partitions, without privacy, in a temporariness that asks no permission.

He lays out the picture precisely: “One big room was divided by partitions,” “I had a bunk bed,” belongings in a corner, backpacks nearby, space shared. The shelter had a kitchen, a shower, a corridor, and a common room where people tried to restore some sense of social breathing: they played board games, video games, talked.

After Uzhhorod – Vinnytsia. First, a dormitory at a church (without personal religious involvement: “I didn’t attend that church”), later a sense of more stable life. He formulates it in a very adult way: “Now it’s easier, I feel like I have my own home, not something temporary...”

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Before the war, Andrii commuted to a city school – there was no school in his village. Fifth grade was still “before,” sixth grade was already online: “I finished sixth grade online.” Distance learning became the ground on which not laziness as a character trait appeared, but fatigue and distraction in a teenager growing up in uncertainty: “Yes, I relaxed because of distance learning.”

In Vinnytsia, he returned to offline schooling in seventh grade and is now in eighth. He says honestly: “I was just too lazy to do everything at once” – and in this honesty there is no excuse, but an attempt to explain the process: at first he did his homework, then only what was necessary.

An important – he is gradually pulling himself back together. Not “perfectly,” but deliberately: “I’m especially working on math, because it’s needed for economics.” And also discipline through success: his favorite subject is chemistry, because the approach is different and feedback is quick: “They praise me... the tasks are easy, the formulas aren’t complicated.”

The language aspect for him is not a conflict, but a transition: “Yes, I’m trying... I used to study at a school where everyone spoke Russian.”

4. Psychological State

Andrii speaks in a restrained way, without dramatization. But the strongest part of his story is not a cry, but short phrases that open loss as a fact: “I lost many things: home, belongings. Sometimes I feel sad.” He does not speak about panic attacks or nightmares, yet something else is visible – an internal adaptation to pain, learning to live alongside it.

His routine after school is also an indicator: “I just lie down and sit on my phone. Sometimes I fall asleep.” This is not laziness as a judgment – it is fatigue as a way of survival. He helps his mother with simple actions that maintain routine: “I can cook, take out the trash, bring water.”

Sports and clubs do not attract him: “It doesn’t motivate me... after school I’m tired and just want to rest.”

5. Social Support and Resources

His main resource is his mother. She made the key decisions: to stay in Ukraine, to go to Uzhhorod, to endure temporary conditions. He says directly: “Mom... said that we’re going to Uzhhorod and will live there until the war ends.”

He does not mention institutional support (psychologists, programs, clubs). Support is everyday, human, quiet. Where there is a roof and an opportunity to study – that is already a resource.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Andrii describes himself as not very social: “I’m not very communicative.” In his class, there are no stories of bullying: “No one insulted me because I’m displaced.” There are a few contacts – Tyma and Oleh – and for now that is enough not to feel completely cut off.

From his previous place of life, almost no connections remain: “Everyone scattered, and no one

knows where anyone is.” This is one of the most painful, though calmly spoken, losses: when childhood falls apart into “nowhere.”

7. The Role of Family (Especially Father)

His father had lived separately even before the war, but their relationship was warm: Andrii remembers helping him with the sheep and going to the river together. Now his father remains there, and contact is maintained: “Dad regularly calls and asks how I am.”

His grandmother and grandfather also stayed behind. Andrii уточнює that the territory is about 40 km from the front line, and that it has barely moved in the past year – in his words there is a desire to fix at least some stability.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

His dreams are not about “becoming a blogger,” but about the state and the system. Andrii wants to be an economist and work in the public sector: “in the Ministry of Economy or Finance.” He says this without pathos, even soberly: “If the war ends, I want to work in a ministry, even for a lower salary.”

At the same time, he sees a European route: “I want to study in Europe... if the war ends – return to Ukraine... if it doesn’t end – I will work in Europe.” This is not an “escape,” but a plan in case the adult world fails to give children guarantees.

His vision of peace is very simple and therefore strong: “Peace – no war, no air raid alerts, the opportunity to return home.” And he wants Ukraine to be seen not as a victim, but as an example of development: “not as a symbol of war, but as an economically developed country, like Singapore or South Korea.”

9. Vulnerabilities

Andrii does not report medical or special educational needs. His vulnerabilities are social and psychological: fatigue, a narrowed social circle, a “drop” in motivation after distance learning, the experience of losing home and belongings. Even his pet became a marker of that loss: his cat Ryan stayed behind, and for a long time Andrii thought he was alive – until he learned that he had been hit by a car.

🌀 Unique Markers

The phrase “The war has started” at 4 a.m. – and the child’s “What now?” as the first reaction. “Valerian/a pill so I wouldn’t worry” – a mother’s gesture extinguishing panic before it becomes an explosion. Loss of home and belongings, without demonstrative complaint – rather “sad, but I remember.” Education as an anchor: math/chemistry, a dream of the public sector and a modern Ukraine.

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“I didn’t panic, I just thought: ‘What now?’” “Mom gave me... valerian so I wouldn’t worry.” “Yes, I lost many things: home, belongings. Sometimes I feel sad.” “Peace – no war, no air raid alerts, the opportunity to return home.”



ARTEM (“TYOMA”), 13 YEARS OLD

 Kherson (occupation) → evacuation under shelling → Vinnytsia

Artem, 13 — From Kherson, a sincere, kind, and bright boy with a big heart. He survived occupation, evacuation under fire, and now builds a new life in Vinnytsia. Artem loves sports, music, theater, and art, and dreams of becoming a chef. His story is about joy in simple things, the power of creativity, and faith in peace where all children can celebrate and be happy.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Artem remembers that the war began – although the adults tried very hard to make sure he would “see and hear less.” His mother speaks directly: they tried to maintain his usual routine – online lessons, theater studio, communication with friends via the internet – but after several months of occupation it became unbearable: “constant explosions, shelters, anxiety.” The decision to leave matured not in comfort, but in fear – “when they came to our home twice, we decided to leave.”

The evacuation turned into a road that is impossible to forget: “we came under shelling, for two hours we were driving to the sound of explosions.” And in this adult danger, a young boy found his support – he sang. His mother recalls that Artem sang the national anthem of Ukraine the entire way, and Artem confirms simply: “Yes! For Ukraine!” When asked whether it helped, he answers briefly: “Yes.” It is a moment when a child, without weapons and without any power over events, supports his family with his voice.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

In Vinnytsia, the family did not arrive at a shelter or a gym, but to a person who agreed to host them for at least two weeks. His mother explains that this is why the city was not chosen randomly: there was at least one safe “human shoulder” to lean on and begin again from scratch.

But “from scratch” is not a metaphor. “We were simply pulled out of our home with two backpacks. One – documents, the other – underwear. And that’s all.” Now they rent housing, and this is a separate struggle: “assistance... covers only the rent. Utilities are separate.” Their income consists of Artem’s pension, his mother’s pension, and IDP payments. At the same time – constant needs: clothes, dishes, everyday essentials.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Artem is now in the 5th grade and loves learning. He names his favorite subjects confidently: “Math, Ukrainian language, English,” and then adds: “History... and... almost all of them!” His mother emphasizes that math is not typically a strong subject for many children with intellectual disabilities, but Artem loves to calculate, go to the board, “raise his hand.”

The most important thing is the format. His mother says that online learning does not work for such children: there is not enough concentration or teacher attention. That is why in Vinnytsia they deliberately searched for an offline school. The first year was difficult, then the class became cohesive, and the transition to middle school was made where there were already “their” children from the previous group – so that it would be easier for Artem to adapt. At the same time, his mother earnestly asks for quality of education: Artem has socialization through sports and studios, but school must provide results “as much as he is capable.”

4. Psychological State

Outwardly, Artem may seem like the same cheerful boy – but his mother sees something else. She describes his reaction to the sudden loud noise of a large vehicle: Artem instantly hid and sat quietly behind a wheel until the danger “passed.” This is not a whim or a game – it is the body’s memory of the sounds of war. A fear of thunder appeared, and a need for a nightlight: “He says, ‘So that there is light.’”

Another painful change is the “dampening of emotions.” His mother speaks very honestly: before the war Artem was “a child of emotion,” but after the occupation “everything seems muted... that ‘spark’ has not returned.” It sounds like the consequence of prolonged stress that the child lived through silently, internally.

5. Social Support and Resources

Artem’s resource is the structure of his life: sports, music, theater, camps with “their” families. The family holds on thanks to a network of people who did not turn away: “It’s good that older children and friends help.” An important resource is the community of families raising children with Down syndrome: in Vinnytsia, his mother knew they would be understood. Their organization did not disappear because of the war – they continue projects, camps, meetings, so that children do not lose one another.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Artem knows how to be friends in his own way – gently and practically. When asked how he befriends girls, he answers: “I help – carry a backpack, offer a chair.” He remembers his friends by name, and this matters: in a world of ruptures, memory of friends is like a thread to normal life.

After the move, what was most lacking was live communication. His mother says: not just socialization – communication. And here appears a powerful image: Artem draws houses and “settles” everyone in them – family, friends, loved ones. When their home in Kherson was damaged, he painted the house black. Later, he returned to colors – as if through drawing he was learning to breathe again.

7. The Role of Family

The family is large, but the war scattered them across the country. In Vinnytsia with Artem are his mother, her husband, Artem, and Ksenia; the older children are in other cities. They communicate by phone and try to gather at least once a year. About grandparents, his mother speaks briefly and painfully: “Unfortunately, no, there is no one left.”

War is also close: there is a family member at the front – “godfather is at war,” and they support him, sometimes transferring money. In their home, a minute of silence is a rule, a daily reminder that the war is not “somewhere,” it is in every morning.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Artem’s dream is simple and deeply expressive: “I want to go to Kherson.” His mother adds a family detail that sounds like a point of return: the fountain by the Dnipro River, their native city, which the whole family is waiting for.

Artem also has a professional dream – bright and grounded: “To be a chef in an expensive restaurant, to cook for people.” He loves pizza, can cook pizza and pancakes, and speaks about money as a means to live: to buy food, to travel by train.

9. Vulnerabilities

Artem is a child with intellectual disabilities (the community of children with Down syndrome), and this defines the family’s daily reality. The harshest issue is constant supervision: “He cannot stay alone – not at home, not on the way to school, not after,” which means his mother cannot work even a few hours. The second issue is financial: in Kherson many activities were free or discounted; in Vinnytsia almost everything is paid, but they cannot refuse, because sports (especially swimming) support his health.

The third issue is bureaucratic: in Kherson there was disability subgroup “A”; in Vinnytsia it was removed, and the payment decreased almost threefold: “It used to be about 8 thousand... now about 3.” For a family living between rent and utilities, this is not a number – it is the difference between “we made it through the month” and “we didn’t.”

🌀 Unique Markers

A child with visible athletic achievements: swimming, athletics, football, dance. “Camp/Zoom/photos of friends” as a channel through which a sense of normality returns. Sport – not entertainment, but

therapy in action (structure, body, result, team).

 **Quotes (“Voices”)**

“He loves looking at photos... And when we turn on Zoom... they immediately start shouting to each other!” “Second and third place at the Special Olympics of Ukraine.” “He is the best midfielder in Ukraine at the Special Olympics!”



VIKTORIIA, 19 YEARS OLD



Mykolaiv → Novyi Buh → return home → Odesa
→ Mykolaiv region again → Vinnytsia (independently)

Viktoria, 19 — From Mykolaiv, she experienced explosions at home and several forced relocations seeking safety. Now in Vinnytsia, she studies, works, and dreams of becoming a journalist to honestly share the truth about Ukrainian life with the world. Her story is about adaptability, belief in the future, and finding meaning despite fear.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Viktoria remembers the beginning of the war not as “news,” but as a bodily shock that lifts you from bed and does not let you breathe evenly. She fell asleep at three in the morning – and by four, everything had already begun. In the morning, her mother woke her with a question that sounded like a siren: “Where is my passport?” And at seven – her father: “Get dressed, the war has started, and wake up your sister.” Viktoria’s response was not confusion, but a severe hysterical breakdown: “I had a strong hysterical reaction, for about thirty minutes I couldn’t calm down.”

For the first two days, they stayed in the city. The first day was quiet, but on the evening of the 25th, Viktoria heard explosions for the first time. They lived in a private house without a basement – without that “last line” families cling to in the first weeks. She saw how the war drained her mother: “Mom was very depressed... we forced her to eat for two days – she didn’t want anything.” Her father held himself together, but even in him “you could see it in his eyes”: “Dad kept a cool head, but you could tell he was nervous.”

They left with almost nothing: “with one suitcase” – her belongings, her mother’s, and her sister’s. This is not just “packing a bag,” it is the loss of control over life reduced to a single zipper. Her father drove them to Novyi Buh, his hometown, and... stayed in Mykolaiv.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Their war was a pendulum: a month in Novyi Buh – “fifty-fifty,” because the occupation was about 50 km away across the fields; then a return home for a few weeks; then Odesa for two months, because water disappeared in Mykolaiv; then back to Mykolaiv region – to her father’s relatives.

It was life without stability: today you are home, tomorrow “temporarily,” then “just a little longer,” and eventually you stop counting. Not because you do not care – but because this is how people survive.

In Vinnytsia, Viktoria lives alone. This is another dimension of displacement: not “arrived as a family,” but “pulled herself out of war” into another city to change the trajectory of her life. “I came to Vinnytsia to somehow change my life, not to live only by war and news.”

3. School / Education / Language Issues

At the time of the invasion, Viktoria was studying at a college. Education essentially stopped: “No one taught us anything... everyone was thinking about how to keep children safe, not about studying.” Only at the end of the year did online learning partially resume.

Education became her motivation to move to Vinnytsia: she wanted in-person studies, because at home it was unsafe and “mostly everything was online.” She enrolled in Vinnytsia – and this was her personal victory over the paralysis of war.

The language issue appeared as a stereotype: “At first they thought I didn’t know Ukrainian. When I started speaking – they realized everything was fine.” Viktoria reacts firmly: “If someone doesn’t like the language I speak, I will deliberately continue speaking it.” For her, language is not a minor detail, but a way of holding boundaries.

4. Psychological State

Viktoriia precisely formulates the main trap for children of war: they remember the emotions with which they left, and those emotions later catch up with them even in silence. She experienced this herself: “Any sudden sound caused panic – I didn’t know what to do with myself.”

It took about two years for the reactions to begin to subside. But even now, her body “throws” the war back at her in her sleep: “I wake up in the middle of the night because it feels like an explosion went off in my head... it’s just the body’s reaction. The brain remembered those sounds.”

She did not seek a psychologist – not because she “didn’t need to,” but because it is easier for her to talk to loved ones: “It’s hard for me to open up to strangers.” Her way of coping is self-control: “I keep myself together, I can squeeze my hand or pinch myself – and that’s it.” It sounds like a survival technique of an emotional person in a world where emotions can break you.

5. Social Support and Resources

Her resource is her family staying in touch. Her parents support her decision to live independently: her mother says something simple but vital: “Don’t overthink it, live your life, you’re doing fine.” Her father is “support at a distance”: “If something happens – call, he will help.”

Another resource is books. She names them directly: “Books save me,” especially detective novels – those not about war, but about “investigations and cleverness.” This is her “exit” from the informational front line.

It is also important that she works: “I also work... as a sales assistant.” This is not only about money – it is about reclaiming the role of an adult who can stand on her own feet.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Viktoriia did not lose contact with her friends from Mykolaiv: “they are all in Ukraine, in Mykolaiv.” In Vinnytsia she has also made friends – and for her this is important proof that life continues: “we talk about different things – from politics to the fact that a handsome guy came to our group today. Youth takes its course.”

But she is honest: Vinnytsia is not her “place.” Her dream of “leaving her hometown” came true, but now something else sounds louder: “I want to go back... Vinnytsia is not my place.” This is about how integration can happen – yet the feeling of home remains in one’s native city.

7. The Role of Family

Her father is the central figure in her story. In the first days, he was the family’s “cool head.” Later, he was mobilized: “It turned out that he was taken... he was ready – his military backpack had been packed since the first days.”

For Viktoriia, this was “very emotionally difficult.” She speaks about a special “protection mode”: her parents do not tell details, they “protect my psyche.” They speak by phone every day, and the most calming thing is a simple photo: “Dad sometimes sends me a photo that he is home, and that calms me.”

Her hero is also her father: “He was my hero even before the war... I am very grateful to both of them.” There is no pathos here – only a feeling: the war took much, but not the main thing – support within the family.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

She wanted to apply to the police, but the war and the admission process “strongly” influenced her – together with her parents they decided to pause. Then journalism appeared: “I chose journalism – it’s closer to me.” She sees herself in writing: “writing – no problem,” rather than on air. She wants to show Ukraine honestly – not as a postcard: “If you show only a beautiful picture... people will come and think Ukraine is dishonest.”

Her message to the world is journalistic in essence: pay attention to children. “They feel everything, even if they don’t show it.” This phrase is not theory, but lived experience – in her own family and in

the eyes of her younger sister.

About Mykolaiv, Viktoriia speaks as about a city that must be seen and heard: “Some people think we exaggerate, but... it was much scarier.” She wants the city to revive after victory: “so that children’s laughter can be heard there again.”

9. Vulnerabilities

Viktoriia does not report specific health-related needs. Her vulnerabilities are psychophysiological and social: anxiety reactions to sounds, night awakenings, delayed trauma, as well as living independently without her parents in a new city. She says directly: “At first it was very difficult... then I got used to it. I grew up.” But this “growing up” is forced, accelerated by war.

Unique Markers

A father at war as the constant nerve of the story: emotional tension that cannot be “put aside.” A child learning to “regulate” pain: when “you want to cry but there are no tears” – returning to memories in order to cry and survive. Panic from sudden sounds even in the rear: trauma “travels” with her – and heals over years, not days. Growing up through work: alongside studies – employment, a “first profession.” A shift in dreams: from plans to enter the police to journalism, as a desire to speak, to testify, and to hold reality with words.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“It was very emotionally difficult... the news that your dad is at war... They protect my psyche.”
“When there were the first explosions... they said it was just ‘aliens.’ But she replied: ‘No, it’s a bomb.’”
“When you want to cry but there are no tears... then I remember it all – and then I cry. After that it becomes easier.” “When I came to Vinnytsia, any sudden sound caused panic... About two years.” “I also work... as a sales assistant. This is my first profession.”



VIOLETA, 12 YEARS OLD

 Donetsk region → Khmelnytskyi region
→ Vinnytsia region

Violeta, 12 — From Donetsk region, her home was destroyed but she didn't lose strength. Quiet, observant, and deep — she speaks little but every word matters. Her dream is to live in a peaceful Ukraine and help rebuild it. Even after loss, she begins a new life and teaches others to do the same.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Violeta's memory of the beginning of the full-scale war is brief, as if cut out of an entire life with one sharp movement. She remembers winter, her room, and her mother's words – after which even the air in the house felt different: "Mom said that the war had started and that we should sit farther away from the windows. That's all I remember." Eight years old is the age when a child does not yet build a "chronology of events," but remembers feelings very well: danger is close, move away from the window, listen to adults.

She remembers more about the evacuation. First – to her grandmother's, quick packing, only the essentials: "we took only the most important things, documents." Then – the road in the morning: a week in the Khmelnytskyi region, and later – Vinnytsia region. Whether it was "in the first days" she is no longer sure: "I don't remember." But the key is something else: the decision was made quickly, and there was almost no time for children's "important things."

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Violeta describes her everyday life after the move without details about lack of food or cold, yet this very "lack of detail" sometimes speaks of something else – a child seems to learn not to complain. She says simply: "Yes, we have everything we need."

But between the lines – the experience of urgent packing, life on suitcases, and the sense that home is something that can be lost in one night. Violeta knows this not for the first time in 2022: her mother recalls that the family had already experienced relocation in 2014, and at that time "there were questions," but over time children get used to adults deciding where tomorrow's morning will be.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

At the beginning of the war, her schooling was online due to quarantine: "Yes, but there was quarantine. I studied online." After moving, Violeta enrolled in a school in the Vinnytsia region and has studied there ever since: "It was the first time I came here, and I've stayed in this school the whole time."

At school, she was mostly supported: "They supported me more." Now she has four friends and says that their communication is mostly "about school." Academically, she is doing well: her favorite subjects are music and art, the most difficult are chemistry and history, but she emphasizes: "I manage and have good grades."

She does not describe a language barrier or discrimination – which is important: sometimes for a child the key issue is not "what language I speak," but "whether I was accepted."

4. Psychological State

There is one phrase from Violeta that sounds like an inner darkness rolling in waves: "Right now I don't see the future, I don't know what will happen tomorrow." This is not simple teenage uncertainty, but a war that steals children's horizon of planning.

At the same time, she does not like to "discuss sadness" and seems to close it inside. When asked how she copes, she answers: "I don't do anything special." And when asked when sadness appears, she says: "Only when people talk about it." This is very telling: some children keep themselves at a distance from pain – until someone touches it with words.

Her mother adds an important layer: they worked with psychologists, but Violeta pulls much of it herself, "learning to cope with emotions," and overall "relies heavily on herself."

5. Social Support and Resources

Her resource is her family and inner discipline. Her mother describes Violeta as a child who does not wait to

be “picked up”: “She gets up herself, gets ready herself, comes to lessons.” There is parental oversight, but no pressure: “We don’t force her, but there is control that is necessary.”

For a child of war, this can be critical: when the world falls apart, the structure of the day becomes the “framework” that keeps you from collapsing.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Violeta remembers her friends from home – but she no longer communicates with them. Her memories are very childlike and therefore painful: “we played different games: tag, football.” When asked if she misses them, she answers simply: “Yes.”

In the new environment, she has nevertheless found a circle – four friends. But the communication seems cautious, school-based: “about lessons.” This looks like adaptation without excessive openness – when friendship exists, but the heart keeps some distance.

7. The Role of Family

Violeta has a complete family: mother, father, older brother (her brother now lives separately). She recalls that her brother was nearby during the evacuation, and that “nearby” is valuable to her: “I very often remember those evenings with him.”

She does not report her father being at the front or relatives at war: “No, there is no such information.” But the mere presence of her parents in her story is the support that holds her daily life together.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

War does a strange thing: it simultaneously takes away the future and forces one to grow up. Violeta says she does not see tomorrow – and at the same time plans to apply to university: “Yes, I plan to,” sets academic goals: improve math and English, “improving history.”

Her definition of peace is short, like a breath of air: “Peace is calm, when nothing worries you and you can live normally.”

And there is also a message to the world that sounds not for pathos, but for survival: “You must not give up, you must start a new life even if your home is destroyed.” She wants to return home, but speaks soberly: “Yes, but our house is already destroyed. We are building a new home here.” And she adds: “I plan to take part in rebuilding Ukraine.”

9. Vulnerabilities

There are no reported medical or inclusive needs. Her vulnerability is psychological and motivational: she stopped dancing, although she previously did hip-hop; now she says: “Nothing. I don’t want to right now, it’s uncomfortable here.” She refuses clubs “on principle.”

This may be a marker of loss of interest and narrowing of “joy” – typical for children under prolonged stress. At the same time, she holds on to her studies: “I started studying well. That’s the main thing.” As if she has clung to one stable support when other things “don’t feel right.”

🌀 Unique Markers

“Sit farther away from the windows” – a short command from her mother that sounds like a survival instruction and becomes the first memory of war. Evacuation in “bursts”: first to grandmother, then Khmelnytskyi region, then Vinnytsia region – a typical trajectory of a family fleeing not into comfort, but into a chance for safety. Loss in the details: toys left behind – “I didn’t have time”; sadness for the yard and childhood games as markers of stolen childhood. Self-reliance as armor: her mother describes Violeta as someone who “relies heavily on herself,” organizes her studies and daily life independently – which is often not only strength, but also a result of stress and accelerated growing up. Refusal of extracurricular activities “on principle”: an important marker – the child seems to cut off “additional life,” remaining in a mode of controlled survival and helping her mother.

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“Mom said that the war had started and that we should sit farther away from the windows.” “We came to grandma’s, took only the most important things, documents... then... to the Khmelnytskyi region... then... to the Vinnytsia region.” “I didn’t take my toys – I didn’t have time.” “Everyone was sad, nervous, worried.” “No, I don’t want to, on principle. I help my mom, but I don’t attend clubs.” “Violeta relies heavily on herself... She gets up herself, gets ready herself...”



ZAKHAR, 10 YEARS OLD



Kherson (first battles, occupation) → Vinnytsia

Zakhar — A 10 year old boy from Kherson who survived occupation at age six. He remembers dark basements, air raids, food shortages, and the difficult journey to safe Vinnytsia. Here he started school and strives for a normal childhood despite the war. His story is about childhood resilience and hope.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Zakhar met the war at six years old – at an age when children cannot yet name events with words, but remember them with their bodies. He recalls it in fragments: “It was a day off. They woke me up and said, ‘Get up, we need to get ready.’ I didn’t understand anything... then they told me the war had started.” In the first weeks, fear had the smell of dampness and the feeling of a cold floor: “It was unpleasant to hide. We sat in the basement, it was quite damp there.” They hid at his grandparents’ – “they had a garage.” Even that detail – about the basement-garage – is telling: the shelter was not prepared, but simply what was at hand.

His mother, Yuliia, shows another perspective – the adult one. She had prepared because she understood the risk for Kherson: “if the war starts, we will be the first in danger, because Crimea is nearby.” She even bought a month’s worth of groceries and told the children stories “about summer and the sea” so as not to frighten them. But when it started, her husband woke her – and for the first time in her life she had a panic attack: “I couldn’t do anything... for about ten minutes.” Then – decisions within minutes: “In about 15 minutes I packed everything... and we went to my parents.” A few hours later, the fighting began: “Russian planes were flying, dropping bombs nearby... we found ourselves on the line of fire and spent the first night in the basement.” She calls it directly: “one of the scariest nights of my life.”

And there is a moment that pierces the heart: “Zakhar would wake up at night, cry, and say he didn’t want war.” The child cried not “because of the news,” but because the basement shook from battle.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

For the first three months in Vinnytsia, a distant relative hosted them: his mother recalls simply and with gratitude: “she kindly took us in.” Then – renting an apartment and a more or less stable routine; “from the new apartment Zakhar went to school.”

About shortages in the first days, Zakhar speaks restrainedly, but it is important that he remembers: “sometimes there wasn’t enough food. We had to go look for it.” The child does not describe “empty shelves” – he remembers the act of searching, when adults go and “find” something.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

The war caught Zakhar in kindergarten: “I was in the senior group.” He started school already in Vinnytsia – first grade – and has remained in his 15th Lyceum to this day (he is now in fourth grade). He describes the beginning without drama: “somehow everyone didn’t really care... there were worries, like all first graders have.” Sometimes the best integration is when a new child is not singled out as traumatized, but simply accepted into the class.

Zakhar studies well and feels meaning in learning even during war: “School is like our job. I try to do it as well as possible.” His favorite subject is one that combines everything: “I explore the world... there’s chemistry, history, physics, geography.” It is the voice of a child trying to piece the world back together when it has fallen apart.

He does not directly speak about language as a problem, but his mother emphasizes the change: in Kherson communication was mostly in Russian; in Vinnytsia the children quickly switched to Ukrainian: “Zakhar especially began speaking Ukrainian very well, and we support this at home.”

4. Psychological State

Zakhar seems to demonstrate a child's ability to "move away" from acute trauma – but that does not mean it was absent. He remembers the basement as "unpleasant," damp, and remembers food shortages. But when asked about air raid alerts in Vinnytsia, he answers: "No, not really. Those feelings are no longer there." This may sound like relief, but also like protection: the child has learned not to let the memory come too close.

In his mother's part – the prolonged psychological pressure of occupation: "it was scary to go outside... if they noticed a Ukrainian flag or embroidery, you might not return home." And a paradox: "When the explosions stopped being heard, it was even scarier," because silence under occupation meant the unknown. This is a powerful marker of trauma that children absorb alongside adults – even if they do not "talk" about it.

5. Social Support and Resources

Their support is family and very concrete "survival plans." His mother says that during the occupation they hesitated to leave because the road was dangerous: "many cars with children were shot at." They prepared systematically: "cleared phones, made copies of documents."

In Vinnytsia, his mother consciously built the summer as a "soft cushion" before school: workshops, walks, distractions – so that the children would not fall into anxiety. This is also support – not with money, but by preserving childhood.

Another resource is family unity. When grandparents visit from Kherson, Zakhar formulates it simply: "That the whole family is together."

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Zakhar has a rare advantage for an internally displaced child – his best friend moved with him, and they even ended up in the same class: "I have my best friend who is here with me... yes, we're in the same class." For a child of war, this is not just friendship – it is a bridge to life before the invasion. They communicate as families. Zakhar also has another friend – also displaced from Kherson. They walk, play, talk after school.

Importantly, he says directly that there was no discrimination at school: "No, it never happened." In the context of war, this is something that should be heard as an example: community support truly heals.

7. The Role of Family

Zakhar lives with both parents, and he sees the adults' condition: "They didn't feel very well... they understood they had left their home, and it was hard for them." This is important for an international audience: children are not isolated from adult grief – they see it and carry it.

He does not speak about his father being at the front, but he clearly expresses his attitude toward the military: "I feel that they are our heroes... AFU – Armed Forces of Ukraine." For him, heroism is not abstract, but a national support.

In his mother's part there is another painful detail: her parents returned to Kherson after de-occupation because they are doctors and needed by children: "he could not leave the department... there are still many children in the city." Even after evacuation, the family remains tied to a dangerous territory through profession and moral duty.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Zakhar answers very clearly why not abroad: "This is our native Motherland. Leaving Ukraine feels wrong." This is the voice of a child thinking in terms of dignity.

His main wish is shared by millions of Ukrainians: "Victory." And then – a very adult thought: even if victory comes tomorrow, they may not return to Kherson, because "everything is mined there and it will be very difficult." The child already understands: war does not end when explosions stop – consequences remain.

His personal dream is not about gadgets: "To have many friends." He wants something simple – support, communication, sometimes help with homework. Professionally he is still searching, but

something interesting sounds: “maybe... a decorator... to decorate streets. Alleys... to arrange a beautiful alley in a forest park.” It is deeply symbolic: a child of war dreams of decorating space – making the world safer and more beautiful.

And there is a direct message to the world – exactly what he wanted to be “heard”: “I would ask for help, because this is a common enemy, and it needs to be stopped as soon as possible... only help.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned. Vulnerabilities are typical for a child who experienced sheltering and occupation: damp basements, food shortages, fragmented memory of the move (“I don’t remember”), reduction of extracurricular activities. He did dance before the war, but in Vinnytsia did not resume clubs: “No... nothing.” It is telling: during war, children often lose precisely what gives joy and development.

🌀 Unique Markers

Patriotic stance: “Leaving Ukraine feels wrong” – a mature position voiced by a child. An important contrast: no bullying in the new school (a rare positive signal that should also be shown). Direct address to the world: a request for help – simple, without pathos, but very powerful.

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“Leaving Ukraine feels wrong.” “AFU – Armed Forces of Ukraine.” “I would ask for help... it needs to be stopped as soon as possible.”



IVAN, 9 YEARS OLD



Kherson region (village of Dariivka, Inhulets River)
→ Kryvyi Rih (briefly) → Vinnytsia

Ivan, 9 — From Darivka, Kherson region. Cheerful, open, and sincere, he was the first to ride his bike in his new village and say “Glory to Ukraine!”. His family lost their home and his older brother went missing during occupation. But Ivan keeps faith in goodness. He dreams of a small motorcycle and peace for all. His voice is about a world without war where toys are shared and everyone stays alive.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Ivan is nine, and when asked about life “before,” he answers almost like an adult, briefly: “I don’t remember.” His memory seems to have erased the peaceful layer – leaving only fragments of joy: a bicycle, friends, the Inhulets River. The beginning of the war in his story sounds not like a date, but like shared family fear: “They were afraid... and I was afraid.”

They left as a family – with his mother, father, brother, and sister. There were more moves at first (Ivan recalls Kryvyi Rih “for a little while”), and then – Vinnytsia. Who made the decision and how, he no longer remembers: “I don’t remember.” This too is a consequence of war: for children, the route often disappears, leaving only the emotion.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Today Ivan lives only with his mother: “Just Mom.” His brother “sometimes visits,” his sister lives separately, and there is a cat at home – already a “new” one, adopted here.

He does not describe everyday life in terms of shortages or difficult conditions. Yet the fact that the child now lives day-to-day alone with his mother says much: the war did not just “relocate” the family – it reshaped it into fragments, where everyone survives as they can.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Ivan attends school offline and has remained in the same class from first to third grade: “Yes.” He was accepted simply and warmly: “No one pays attention, everyone is friendly.” He names his friends, says friendship is “in games and communication,” and even has one friend he texts with in the evenings.

At school, he most enjoys Ukrainian language: “Yes.” Mathematics and English bring less joy: “No, math – no... English – Mom makes me.” Despite this, he understands the necessity of knowledge – like a small adult whom war has forced to think practically.

4. Psychological State

When Ivan feels sad, he does not make scenes – he hides: “I just hide somewhere and sit on my phone.” The phone “helps” – “Uh-huh.” It looks like a typical child’s self-protection strategy after stress: not to talk – but to disappear.

His mother adds an important detail about adaptation after occupation: “The first month it was hard to get used to the fact that we didn’t need to hide... we still check where we are even inside the house.” War lives not only in the news – it lives in bodily reflexes. Ivan is still afraid of thunder: “The first storms were real hysteria... now he sleeps with me.”

5. Social Support and Resources

His main resource is his mother and his ability to connect with people. He is “social,” he “needs an audience,” his mother says. This helped him root quickly: he rode his bicycle around the village and loudly declared himself: “Glory to Ukraine!”

He also asked a very adult question that no child should need to ask: “Which soldiers can you already say ‘Glory to Ukraine’ to?” This sounds like a marker of occupation: the child had to know what could be said out loud – and what could be punished.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Ivan integrated quickly: he has friends, in class “everyone is friendly,” he befriends both boys and girls. What is striking, however, is that he has almost no memories about returning “to his own place” – he does not remember the village clearly, but remembers the people around him and that his mother “is still alive.”

His phrase sounds like a child’s verdict on war: “Mom brings joy because she is still alive.” This is what the world must hear: children of war sometimes live not by dreams – but by the fact that their loved ones survived another day.

7. The Role of Family

Ivan has an uncle in the Armed Forces of Ukraine: “Yes,” but information is hidden from children: “They don’t tell us, they hide it from children.” His hero is Uncle Ilyusha: “He’s an officer... he doesn’t tell anything yet.”

But the deepest wound of this family is not only the front. His mother speaks about the older son, Anton: a child with a disability who had been in the Oleshky Center for Children with CNS disorders. Before the de-occupation of Kherson, he was taken in an unknown direction, and for four years there has been no confirmation of even the most basic and terrifying fact – whether he is alive.

“The information vacuum is very large... there is almost no support from the state,” his mother says, adding that an international foundation helps more. This is a story the world must not only “hear,” but take as a challenge: children disappear in war, and families live for years without answers.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Ivan’s dream is childlike and specific: “I want a small motorcycle.” But his “global dream” sounds not like fantasy, but like a list of basic needs: “For there to be a lot of money – for a car, a normal house, food, water.” This too is a marker of war: the child dreams not of superpowers, but of stability and essential resources.

He imagines peace simply: “It’s when no one fights, everyone is friends.” And to adults in the world he would say just one thing: “That everyone stays healthy and alive.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No diagnoses or inclusive needs are mentioned for Ivan himself. But his vulnerabilities are evident: fear of loud sounds (thunder), dependence on “escaping into the phone,” living in a fragmented family, separation from animals left behind (he misses them, asks to see videos), and above all – the family trauma of the abduction/disappearance of his older brother with a disability.

Another layer is the lack of accessible extracurricular activities: Ivan wants to play basketball because “I always score in the hoop,” but school sections are for older children, and younger ones “weren’t offered.” His mother sums it up precisely: “He needs development, clubs, many things.”

This is a direct signal for support: internally displaced children need not only financial assistance, but an environment for development – otherwise war steals not only their present, but their future opportunities.

Unique Markers

A child’s longing for pets left behind – one of the most precise formulas of “losing home.” A family torn by geography: grandmother, grandfather, great-grandfather remain in the Kherson region; communication happens “by camera.” War present even in children’s conversations: “uncle in the AFU,” but adults “hide things from children.”

Quotes (“Voices”)

“And I was afraid.” “Grandma, grandpa, and great-grandpa stayed... We talk to them by camera.” “Yes, my uncle is in the AFU.” “They don’t tell us, they hide it from children.”



KYRYLO, 15 YEARS OLD



Donetsk region, Druzhkivka → Khmelnytskyi region (village)
→ Vinnytsia region, Sutysky

Kyrylo, 15 — From Druzhkivka, calm, thoughtful, and responsible. He dreams of becoming a police officer or rescuer, living in Ukraine and helping others. Within him is quiet strength and maturity. After losing his home, he did not lose his balance. His voice is about order, justice, and children’s right simply to live.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Kyrylo does not describe the beginning of the war as a “date,” but rather as a wave that covered the city: “in one day... panic started... rockets were flying, shelling was already nearby.” His reaction was typical for a teenager who just yesterday was thinking about school and friends: he stayed at home and waited for adults to decide. “Yes,” he answers when asked whether he simply listened to what the elders would say. In this short reply lies a profound meaning: in war, children quickly become dependent on whether adults can maintain direction.

The decision to evacuate was conditional at first: they hoped to “wait it out,” to stay if it “wasn’t too bad.” But war does not ask how bad is “too bad”: when it became dangerous, the family left. Kyrylo does not mention hysteria or tears – instead he speaks like someone who has learned to clench emotions into a fist: “The main thing is that adults are nearby, and everything will be fine. There’s no need to fill your head with unnecessary thoughts.” It sounds like an internal command – the kind that appears in children when they see fear in their parents and do not want to amplify it.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Their first refuge was a village in the Khmelnytskyi region. And here is something rarely spoken about in “official” reports, but something the world must hear: displaced families sometimes face hostility not only from the enemy. Kyrylo says directly: “We were not welcomed very well – they said ‘Banderites, go away.’” This episode is an early trauma of displacement: when you have already lost your home, and the new place greets you not with support, but humiliation.

Later they moved to the Vinnytsia region, to Sutysky – and have lived there for almost four years. Kyrylo says little about household hardships: “I was never interested in finances,” but he adds an important detail about his role in the family: he helps when asked. “If they tell me – I’ll do it... almost perfectly.” This is the language of a child whom war has taught to be “convenient” and responsible, so as not to create additional burden at home.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Kyrylo is now in 10th grade. He liked his old class, but the new one is harder: “now – not really, because I don’t know anyone yet.” A simple phrase, but behind it – the loneliness of a teenager who must “fit in” again, even though he is already tired of constant changes.

He did not want online learning – on the contrary, offline school was a way to regain control. He is already thinking about the NMT (National Multi-Subject Test) and consciously improving his subjects: “math, Ukrainian, history of Ukraine, and biology.” He does not describe a language barrier, and there is an important social marker: classmates know he is from Donetsk region and treat him normally: “like a local,” he did not feel prejudice.

4. Psychological State

Kyrylo is careful with the news: “I don’t want to upset myself.” For him, war is like excessive informational weight: if you constantly watch, you can “fall through.” He does not speak of panic attacks, but he shows another sign of prolonged stress – cutting off memories. When asked about shelling, he answers: “Probably not anymore. I don’t recall,” and about home he says: “I don’t even want to remember.” This is not “forgotten” – it is “I don’t let it come close.”

He does not describe himself as someone who often feels sad: “I usually don’t get upset,” but alongside this appears the theme of motivation that “comes and goes,” which he himself calls laziness. In the context of war, such “laziness” is often not about character, but about exhaustion: when the psyche takes a pause after living too long under tension.

5. Social Support and Resources

Kyrylo’s strongest resource is his parents. He directly calls them heroes: “Because they took us out of a dangerous city, and now I can live calmly, not be afraid that I’ll step outside – and be gone.” This is a frighteningly adult phrase for a teenager: even “stepping outside” once meant a risk of death in his inner experience.

His mother adds that the first period was shock, but now she is proud of her children, especially Kyrylo: “Kyrylo is very responsible... he can look after the younger ones and help around the house.” This is a social portrait of war: children grow up faster – not because they want to, but because they must.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

He has almost lost contact with old friends, though he keeps in touch with some via social media: Telegram, Instagram – and some are already abroad. In the new place, he communicates with a few people, sometimes they walk “around the area.” Overall, he has integrated: “The town where I live now feels like home.” But it is important to note: “home” does not always mean “chosen.” Often, it is the result of long adaptation, when there is no road back.

7. The Role of Family

Kyrylo says directly that there are no close relatives at the front: “no acquaintances or relatives at war.” But war is still in the house – through the news, through the sense of danger, through the fact that the family had to leave together in a large group: mother, father, brother, sisters, and another family with children. It is the logistics of escape that always leave a mark: you do not remember the things – you remember that there were many people in the car and everyone was silent.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

He clearly says: abroad – no. “This is my Ukraine... my people are here, I’m comfortable here.” And he adds another important point for the world: he has heard from acquaintances that Ukrainian children abroad may not be accepted. This is something donor systems must understand: emigration is not always “salvation” – sometimes it is a new trauma.

About his future profession, Kyrylo speaks in terms of service: “either a police officer or a firefighter-rescuer.” After experiencing danger, he wants to be the one who protects.

His advice to other children sounds like a summary of war in one sentence: “A home can be rebuilt, but a life cannot.”

And when asked to address the world, he speaks not with a slogan, but with a human request: “We also want to live in peace and calm. We are children, not monsters. We have the right to live, to feel, and to have emotions.” This is precisely the voice for which the project exists.

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned. But there are other vulnerabilities often overlooked: social trauma from rejection in the first village of displacement (“Banderites” insults); loss of sports opportunities: before the war – gym, Thai boxing; now no nearby sports section, Vinnytsia is far, and what is available (taekwondo) does not interest him. He trains at home, but says himself: conditions and a pull-up bar are needed – and “motivation.”

This is an important signal for the world: displacement cuts children off not only from home, but from development infrastructure. Without clubs, sports, accessible spaces, teenagers are left with phones and fatigue – and this too is a consequence of war that can and must be compensated through support.

Unique Markers

The strongest metaphor of loss: “I would take my home with me, if it were possible” – a simple phrase that says more than pages of description. A conscious decision to stay in Ukraine: “This is my Ukraine... my people are here”; alongside this – awareness of stigma abroad heard from acquaintances. Break in friendships: “Now – no” (about friends in the new place); some friends have left, contacts maintained only through social media. Post-war fatigue described as “like an illness” – an important marker of teenage apathy/exhaustion after prolonged stress. Everyday rooting: “greenhouse, garden” – as an attempt to make life seasonal and manageable again, not defined by sirens.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“All my things and my home, if it were possible to take it.” “Because this is my Ukraine. I was born here, my people are here, I feel comfortable here.” “Now – no.” (about friends in the new place) “In my case, it’s like an illness.” “Greenhouse, garden.”



KSENIIA, 14 YEARS OLD



Kherson → Mykolaiv (1 day) → Odesa region
(Izmail / village of Ozerne, ~2 months) → Vinnytsia

Ksenia, 14 — From Kherson, sensitive, mature, and strong. She survived occupation, relocation, and loss, yet continues to dance, dream, and fight for justice. She wants to become a lawyer and create a guide dog school. Her voice speaks of dignity, empathy, and strength even during war.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Kseniia lived in Kherson her entire childhood – “all my 11 years” – which is why her memories of the city before the war are so warm and vivid: “Kherson for me was very beautiful and warm... people were kind... they always responded to help.” But the war did not stay “far away”: it entered the stairwell, the apartments, children’s games.

When it became truly dangerous, the decision to leave matured from fear of occupation and real threat to life: “There were many cases when cars were shot at.” Kseniia was afraid, but like many children tried not to show it: “I was also afraid, but I tried not to show it. I think they also hid their fear.”

The road is short in facts, but long in inner experience: they left “not all together,” the family separating in waves, and in their bags – only the minimum: “We were allowed to take only two bags... two laptops and two backpacks – that was all.” For a teenager, this sounds like a verdict: an entire life folded into “two bags.”

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

After leaving, they did not immediately arrive in Vinnytsia: Mykolaiv for one day, then Odesa region – Izmail, village of Ozerne, where they lived for about two months. Only later in Vinnytsia were they hosted by her mother’s acquaintance: “she agreed to take us in until we found housing.”

Daily life now seems stable, but not without painful details. Kseniia speaks about two houses: at first they loved it – a quiet area, close to school. Then the house was sold, and they moved: “near the forest... beautiful nature... but I don’t really like that it takes a long time to get to school and dance classes.” War often forces families to change housing for reasons beyond their control – and the child pays with time, energy, lost hours on the road.

Another marker of instability is power outages: “In the new house, the electricity was often cut off, so we bought necessary things for charging.” Even when “everything is there,” life requires constant backup – as if still in a risk zone.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Kseniia finished the school year online in Ozerne, and after summer enrolled in a school in Vinnytsia: “We registered at a new school... yes, I attended.” Old classmates did not become a deep loss – she honestly says that in fifth grade friendships were not yet strong, and now she communicates only with one girl from Kherson who is in Germany – via Telegram and TikTok.

In Vinnytsia she changed schools and feared she would not find friends: “I thought I wouldn’t find friends. But everything turned out very well.”

The language issue appears not as a barrier, but as part of attitudes toward internally displaced persons. What hurts her is not so much language, but reactions – when people say, “Why did you come here?” as if she were to blame.

4. Psychological State

Kseniia has a vivid traumatic experience of occupation – twice, occupiers entered her building and essentially “touched” her home. The first time – when they were inside and heard doors being broken: “We turned off our phones, deleted chats, hid them in different places.” The second time – occupiers rang their apartment, and she saw their van under the window: “It was very scary.” This is not “news about war,” but direct threat experience that a teenager carries for years.

It is important how she describes her survival mechanism: sometimes she “switches off emotions”

to complete what is necessary. One of the strongest episodes: a charity fair performance to raise funds for the Armed Forces – and right before performing she learns of a new strike on her building: “It was very hard to pull myself together... but thanks to experience I just switched off emotions... and at home I cried.” This is a classic wartime child syndrome: first functioning – then tears in silence.

At the same time, Kseniia actively seeks support: “I practice meditation... I can sit in silence for five minutes,” she worked with psychologists: “I worked with many psychologists, it helped to stabilize.” This is valuable for the report: the child did not “just cope alone” – she invested effort and needed support.

5. Social Support and Resources

Support in Vinnytsia was noticeable at first: “When we arrived, there was humanitarian aid... people just came themselves.” But now, according to her, “there is almost no such support.” This is one of the key issues the world must hear: the war continues, but attention and resources are exhausted.

IDP payments exist, but even in her response instability sounds: “My brother used to receive assistance, but now it was canceled for some reason.” The child says “for some reason,” because for families such decisions often feel opaque and undermine their sense of security.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Kseniia’s integration has two realities. The first – support and friendship: “I have a best friend now... one at school, one at dance,” and at the new school everything worked out well.

The second – painful stigma: “Some said, ‘Why did you come here?’... some joked that I had nowhere to return... these were inappropriate jokes... both at school and on the street.” She tried to protect herself properly – told the teacher – but the result was weak: “The teacher talked to them... but nothing else changed.” The world must know this: integration is not only about “friendship,” but also whether the school protects a child from humiliation.

7. The Role of Family

Kseniia has a large family: three brothers, two sisters, a niece. Her older sisters have volunteered since the beginning of the war: “They help the military and people, and I am very proud of them.” Her older brother is an example: “He is very smart, and I want to be like him.” The family is geographically divided: sisters in Kyiv and Odesa, and the older brother – “unfortunately, now in Kherson.”

There is also direct pain of war: “My older sister’s father is missing... I was with them at an action about the missing.” For a teenager, this is not a “distant issue”: it is her own family living in waiting without answers.

Her father is with them now – the family is complete. But Kseniia says a phrase that sounds like a summary of trauma for thousands of children: “The main thing is that they take them – and that’s it.” She seems to know: when someone is mobilized or disappears, explanations no longer change the fact of lost control.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Kseniia is not simply a “talented child” – she thinks in terms of justice and systemic support. Her dream was born from empathy: to open a guide dog school for people with visual impairments, because there are almost none. And also – to create a supportive environment for soldiers with psychological consequences of war: “so they can share experiences and receive support... it should be treated with respect, not mockery.”

She already sees herself in law: she wants to apply to the Yaroslav Mudryi Law University. And she imagines Kherson after victory not as “ruins forever,” but as future reconstruction: “I believe that we will have to rebuild it... and it will become better.”

Her message to the world is strong and mature: “Today it is Ukraine, and tomorrow it can happen anywhere... it is important to support us and help end the war.” She does not ask for pity – she speaks of shared security.

And a direct statement about support for IDPs: “I don’t think IDPs have already adapted... help is still needed... housing is very expensive... apartments don’t want to be rented to IDPs just because they are IDPs. We had that too.” This is practical discrimination that international programs can and must address.

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned, but her vulnerabilities are clear:

experience of occupation and direct intrusions into the building/apartment;

stigma and “jokes” about having “nowhere to return”;

emotional “switching off” as a survival mechanism;

financial barriers to development: she dreams of equestrian sport, but says directly: “It’s expensive,” and her mother searches for free opportunities in the region.

Despite this, Kseniia is an example of how a child of war not only “holds on,” but transforms pain into action: volunteer performances, meditation, psychological work, professional victories in dance – “multiple champion of Ukraine and world champion.”

And this must be spoken clearly to the world: strong children also need support, because their strength is often not “easy,” but built “through great pain.”

🌀 Unique Markers

Eleven years of dance as an “inner core” that survived relocation. Loss of friends and new friendships – experience of “re-meeting” the world. A very mature dream: a guide dog school + psychological support for soldiers (social justice born from trauma).

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“When I lost all this, I realized I didn’t value what I had... I grew up a lot.” “In total, I’ve been dancing for 11 years.” “I want to open such a school... so that these dogs can help people with visual impairments.” “It should be the norm – to understand, support, and not devalue their condition.”



MYKOLA, 13 YEARS OLD



Druzhkivka, Donetsk region

→ *Vinnytsia (effectively relocated “alone”)*

Mykola, 13 — From Druzhkivka, he survived war, evacuation, and moving to Vinnytsia. Calm, attentive, and observant, he learned to value family, responsibility, and self improvement. With new friends and schooling, he is building his life and dreams of becoming a cook and seeing a world where no one fears explosions. His story is about family, responsibility, and a dream of peace.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Mykola remembers the morning of the war down to the hour: “It was at five in the morning.” He woke up – and his mother said the words that in one moment erase ordinary childhood: “The war has started, and I can’t go to school.” Then his teacher called and confirmed the same: “Don’t go, it’s dangerous.” A drone flew over their house – and fear became physical: “We were very scared and hid.” He does not hide it: “Yes, it was scary.”

Alongside him was adult fear, even greater than his own. When asked who worried more, Mykola answers without hesitation: “The parents.” And about himself he speaks the way children do when learning to live in the abnormal: “At first I was afraid, and then I got used to it.” Behind that “got used to it” is the price of adaptation: a child gets used to danger because otherwise he cannot endure it every day.

The evacuation carries its own particular drama: the decision about his departure was voiced not by a parent, but by his brother – “My brother said that they were taking me.” And another detail that cuts sharply: when asked who he traveled with, Mykola answers: “Alone.” He struggled deeply with this: “Yes, very... at first I didn’t want to leave my city, but then I understood that I had to, and I left.”

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Mykola speaks about daily life not through complaints, but comparisons: “If you compare how it was for me in Druzhkivka, it’s like night and day. There was almost nothing there, and here I have everything.” This is an important signal to the world: some children in the east were already living in conditions where “nothing worked,” where normality had eroded even before the full-scale invasion.

But there is also a quiet loss – pets. Mykola had three cats, and they were not taken: “No, they stayed there.” For a child, this is not a small thing – it is another piece of home left on the other side of the road.

There are many children in the family (the interviewer notes: “nine children”), and Mykola understands how hard it is for his parents – even though he says “there’s enough of everything,” because they did everything to make sure the children did not feel the lack.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Mykola clearly shows how war destroys education not with an explosion, but through “getting used to” absence. Speaking about online learning, he says: “The internet often disappears, you have to miss lessons.” And then the key point: “Then you get used to missing them.” And that is what happened: “Yes, I allowed myself to skip lessons.”

The move to Vinnytsia returned real learning to him. In seventh grade he felt behind: “Yes, because online learning was difficult,” but gradually he caught up: “When I started going to school, I began to understand more... to answer in class.” He is even proud of the result: “Yes.” His mother confirms: “He tries... he understands that it’s important for the future.”

The class accepted him without humiliation: at first they were “a little scared,” then they asked questions and supported him: “With words. They didn’t insult me... on the contrary – they wanted to [be friends].” He now has three friends who help with tests: “They give hints if I don’t understand something.”

4. Psychological State

Mykola speaks honestly about himself: he is not “a hero in armor.” When asked whether he is brave, he answers: “Fifty-fifty.” And there is a very telling phrase about air raid alarms: when the siren sounds, he goes to the shelter, but his feeling differs from many others: “I’ve seen more. So I’m kind of indifferent.” This is a dangerous marker: children who have “seen more” may downplay risk – and at the same time they already know the value of life. He tells classmates: “Come on, I’ve seen worse,” but adds the crucial point: “I still hide, because I understand that life must be protected.”

His inner state is best revealed in what he would like to do for future children – erase his experience: “Probably I would stay silent. I don’t want them to feel what I felt.” This is not simple modesty – it is a wish that the next generation not inherit trauma.

5. Social Support and Resources

His main resource is his family and the sense that his parents “pulled him through.” When asked about a hero, he answers without pathos: “My parents. Because if not for them – I would have nothing. I wouldn’t have achieved anything without them.”

Mykola also becomes a resource at home: “When I see that help is needed... I come and ask... and if they’re silent – I just start helping. I don’t stand aside.” This is typical “adulthood” of children of war: they learn to be useful so as not to be a burden.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

He has friends at school, but they rarely meet outside: “After lessons we don’t often hang out.” Still, school is his anchor – people who help him academically, which for a teenager can be even more important than neighborhood groups.

Connection to home is maintained through one acquaintance who stayed in Druzhkivka: “He says that every day Shaheds are flying.” This phrase is like an ongoing chronicle: the child is in safety, but his “yesterday’s world” is still under attack.

7. The Role of Family

Mykola does not speak of his father being at the front, but he mentions an important detail about a friend who cannot leave: “Because of his father – they can’t leave.” For the world, this should sound as a question: sometimes children remain in danger not “because they want to,” but because circumstances, adult decisions, mobilization, family conditions keep them there.

In his own family, his parents are the foundation, and he expresses gratitude: “I tell them... and thank them for it.” This is one of the rare bright accents: despite losses, his family was able to give him “peace, warmth, and the opportunity to study.”

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Mykola does not yet have a “big” professional dream, but he already feels drawn to working with his hands: “I rather want to be a cook... when I cut or cook something, I understand that I like it and I’m good at it.” He thinks about studying after 9th grade: “go to vocational school,” and interestingly, his brother is guiding him in this – again, family as navigator.

His dream is simple and very adult: “Finish school, go somewhere to study. And for the war to end, so that we can study calmly.” His definition of peace is basic safety that children have lacked for years: “When nothing flies over your head... there are no alarms at school... you don’t have to hide in the basement.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned. But his vulnerabilities are very clear and quiet: a child accustomed to fear, to drones and basements; loss of home and pets (three cats remained in Druzhkivka); educational setbacks due to online learning and getting used to skipping lessons; and most importantly – emotional hardening: “I’ve seen more. So I’m kind of indifferent.” This is not strength, but consequence. It is the psychological cost the world must understand: in children of war, “indifference” can mean they have already endured too much.

Mykola's final phrase is a brief portrait of a child of war today: "Just go to school, have breakfast, live through the day." And that alone is enough to understand: for many children, war has reduced life to a single task – to survive one more day.

Unique Markers

Online learning as a trap: internet disappears → lessons are missed → "you get used to missing" – and the child himself recognizes how educational gaps form. Turning point: transition to offline school brings noticeable progress – "I began to understand more, to answer." School support + mother's pride: a rare but crucial resource – adults see the child's effort and reinforce it rather than diminish it. Dream of a hands-on profession: cook – because "I like it and I'm good at it"; the voice of a child seeking stability in tangible action.

Quotes ("Voices")

"Online – you sit in front of the camera, the internet often disappears, you have to miss lessons." "And then you get used to missing them, right? – Yes." "When I studied remotely, I almost understood nothing. But when I started going to school – I began to understand more..." "I'm proud. Mykola tries... He understands that it's important for the future." "I rather want to be a cook... I like it and I'm good at it."



MYROSLAV, 14 YEARS OLD



Vinnitsia (a child who did not leave, but grew up inside the war)

Myroslav, 14 — From Vinnitsia, he grew up during the war alongside his volunteer mother, whose home became a shelter and aid hub. He saw how people were supported, shelters prepared, and help given to displaced families, and he became part of that community. His story is about empathy, solidarity, and a generation learning to serve others amid war.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Myroslav is from Vinnitsia. His story is important precisely because it shows that war breaks childhood not only where there is occupation or destruction. Even in the relatively “deeper rear,” the first day remains sharply etched in memory. He recalls the morning through an everyday scene that became a symbol of national panic: “We woke up in the morning and went to some store. There were very long lines, literally stretching beyond the shop... we stayed there until midday.”

That night came the first air raid alert in Vinnitsia – the boundary after which a child can no longer sleep “like before”: “I was very scared, but then we went to the shelter and basically everything was fine. After that it wasn’t so scary anymore.”

There was no evacuation – but there was another reality: getting used to sirens. Myroslav says directly: “The first time it was scary, and then not anymore.” This is one of the most dangerous normalizations of war: a child should not get used to air raid alerts as if they were weather forecasts.

2. Housing and Daily Life

There was no relocation, but daily life changed – Vinnitsia became a city people were fleeing to. Myroslav recalls that internally displaced persons stayed at their home for one night: “They came to us, stayed one night, and left.” For him, it did not turn into a “big story,” but it shows something else: war entered even rear-area homes – through other people’s suitcases, exhaustion, and brief “just for the night.”

3. School / Education / Language Issues

At the beginning of the war, Myroslav was in fifth grade. He speaks about school through a simple human truth: during war, it matters who knows about your fears. He says that his teacher and one friend knew, but “others – no.” It sounds like a way of preserving privacy when the world around becomes too loud.

He does not describe language issues or academic setbacks. Instead, he speaks about another “lesson” of war: growing up. “Yes, I became more mature and independent,” he says – and this sounds like a summary of a generation forced to grow up early.

4. Psychological State

What stands out most in Myroslav is not fear, but his mechanism of self-calming. He says he did not panic much and seemed to steady himself: “I think I calmed myself down more.” His mother, meanwhile, was his “navigator”: “She immediately understood what needed to be done and where to go, and we did everything right away.”

His anxiety takes the form of fatigue. When a siren sounds at night, he does not think about “heroism,” but about sleep: “I just want it to end faster so I can sleep.” It is honest and very childlike. Children need to sleep – not live in constant response mode.

5. Social Support and Resources

Myroslav’s first resource is a sense of usefulness. Within a week or two, they were helping an elderly neighbor from their building who struggled to buy goods: “We helped.” Later – helping IDPs, helping the military, his mother volunteering “in the rear.” Myroslav does not stand aside; he does his part.

He mentions specific tasks that for a teenager sound almost like “adult work”: “carrying things... going to the seamstress... picking up bulletproof vests... carrying tents.” War literally integrated a 14-year-old into rear logistics.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Before the war, he “spent more time with friends.” After – less. And he names the hardest part honestly: not explosions or lines at stores, but that his mother began volunteering more, and they walked less together. “The hardest thing was that Mom spent more time helping, and we walked less.”

This is one of the invisible consequences of war the world rarely talks about: children lose not only safety or homes – they lose time with loved ones, walks, normal adolescence.

At the same time, there is community strength: together with neighbors, they organized and restored a shelter near their building – an old one unused for 30 years. “We organized a group of people and started cleaning it... I was very pleased to help.” It is an example of how a community compensates for what the system did not manage or could not do in time.

7. The Role of Family

Myroslav does not speak about his father. The central figure is his mother: “She is very responsible, works hard, often at night.” She is both example and anchor. For him, she is not simply an adult nearby, but someone who knows how to act during an air raid alert and how to hold direction.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

His dreams are restrained, but deeply about life: “I want to study well, find a good job that I like and that is well paid.” Globally – he wants the country to rebuild and catch up with Europe: “I wish for the war to end and for Ukraine to recover.” If he had unlimited resources, he would help the country morally and financially.

This is important: even a child from the rear thinks in terms of reconstruction, because war has made it part of their worldview.

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned. His vulnerabilities are different, but no less important: normalization of air raid alerts (“first time scary – then not”);

loss of part of childhood because his mother devoted much time to volunteering, and they walked less together;

child participation in war-related logistics – carrying bulletproof vests, helping with equipment, restoring shelters.

This story shows that war “pulls in” even teenagers who did not relocate into adult responsibilities. And this too must be heard internationally: support is needed not only for those who lost homes, but also for those whose childhood became part of the war every day – through sirens, volunteering, fatigue, and the absence of normal teenage life.

Unique Markers

The first day of war remembered through lines at stores and the first air raid alert – a domestic shock rather than headlines. “Getting used to sirens” in a living formula: “The first time it was scary, and then not anymore” – the voice of a generation forced to normalize danger. A child as a rear helper: carried things, picked up bulletproof vests, transported tents – adult roles at 14. Community shelter restoration – neighbors organizing, cleaning, equipping it with pallets: self-organization born of necessity. The cost of helping: “Mom spent more time helping – we walked less,” yet it brought a sense of usefulness. Mother as pillar: “very responsible... works hard, often at night” – proof of how families endure through maternal resilience.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“That night there was the first air raid alert... I was very scared... After that it wasn’t so scary.” “The first time it was scary, and then not anymore.” “I helped... pick up bulletproof vests, carry tents.” “We started cleaning it... The hardest thing was that Mom helped more, and we walked less. But it gave a feeling that we were useful.” “My mom... is very responsible, works hard, often at night.” “I wish for the war to end and for Ukraine to recover...”



MILANA, 11 YEARS OLD



Severodonetsk, Luhansk region → evacuation train
→ Lviv region (until mid-2022) → Vinnytsia region
(renting, living with her mother)

Milana, 11 — From Sievierodonetsk, she experienced evacuation under fire, lost her home, and faced challenging adaptation in Vinnytsia. She thinks deeply, loves art, studies successfully, and dreams of becoming a designer combining creativity with technology. Her story is about gentleness, resilience, gratitude, and faith in a peaceful future.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Milana does not detail the morning of February 24 – her story begins with something equally telling: fleeing a city where basic living conditions had already collapsed. Her mother speaks sharply and concretely: “In Severodonetsk there was no gas, no water, no electricity.” They searched for any way to leave – acquaintances refused, communication disappeared, checkpoints, shelling. “No acquaintance agreed to take us out... we waited for a taxi, but the connection kept dropping.”

One date remains precise: “On March 8 there was already no gas, water, or electricity.” From that moment, the question was no longer “to leave or not,” but “to survive.” Their departure was not a “comfortable evacuation,” but a risky escape: “When you were leaving, was there shelling?” – “Yes.”

Then – an evacuation train to Lviv. Milana says briefly: first Lviv, “kind people took us in,” then the Lviv region, and later the Vinnytsia region. When asked whether she is grateful to her mother for deciding to leave under shelling, Milana answers as a child speaks about life: “Yes, very. If not for that – I don’t know what could have happened.”

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Milana and her mother have been living in a rented apartment in Vinnytsia for three years. Just the two of them – and that matters: two people carrying daily life without a large family network. There is no complaint in her words – only realism: “We wouldn’t have wanted it this way, but we are very grateful for the low rent. Housing is very expensive now.”

An everyday problem sounds unexpected, yet it is the reality of many IDPs: in a small apartment, humanitarian aid and boxes accumulate – help that becomes a burden because there is no space to live normally. “There’s a lot of clutter: boxes, humanitarian aid... nowhere to store it, because the apartment is small.” And another very adult detail: “If we sorted through it all, it would take weeks.” For a child, this should not be a “task,” yet war pulls children into adult domestic realities.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

When the war began, Milana was in 2nd grade; now she is in 6th. She studies online with her pre-war class because her school relocated: “Yes, but there are far fewer children now... some are in Poland, in Germany.” Her education is “more or less calm,” except for one daily disruption: “power outages.”

Yet Milana holds on as if it is her personal responsibility to life: “I just connect the router to a power bank... I try not to miss lessons.” She studies very well: “The lowest grade is 9 or 10,” and she excels especially in English: “I get 11 or 12 points... I even watch films in English.”

Her art education is also online: her art school relocated to Dnipro, and she continues studying. But here appears a problem often invisible to donors: the quality of distance creative education. Milana speaks painfully: “They just sent us some works from the internet and said, ‘Draw something like this.’ But they didn’t explain how. And materials are hard to get.” The child has talent – but support does not keep pace with wartime reality.

4. Psychological State

Milana says directly what many children do not dare to say: “I feel that the war took my childhood.” She explains not abstractly, but as a change in herself: “When I was younger, I was more positive, extroverted, I loved to communicate... And now...”

She names her problem with a word that should ring as an alarm for adults: “I have social phobia.” And she adds – it was not like this before. “In Luhansk region I communicated a lot with children... But now... I’m afraid when they look at me.” Her fear is fear of judgment and rejection: “I’m afraid I won’t

be perceived correctly... I feel different from others.”

There is also a physical symptom of war: “I started eating very poorly, and because of that I have health problems.” This is not a whim – it is a typical reaction to prolonged stress carried for years.

5. Social Support and Resources

Her mother voices something support systems must hear: “I see assistance... but it’s mostly for low-income, foster, large families... and for ordinary children – almost nothing. We asked. We weren’t lucky.” A family that does not fall into the “most vulnerable” category can end up without developmental programs.

Even more painful is the story of IDP payments. They were denied due to exceeding the income threshold by 5 hryvnias: “Because of a 5-hryvnia difference – they took it away... It’s ridiculous and painful.” In that sentence is not only offense, but a cry about injustice: a child pays in opportunities for “five hryvnias” in a spreadsheet.

Milana’s resource is learning and creativity. And also technology provided by the school: an old computer could not handle lessons; later it was replaced with a tablet: “It was also used, but it works well.” A small example of how an institution can save one child’s education.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

In Vinnytsia, Milana is still searching for friends. She found a friend in a club, but when she stopped attending, the connection broke: “Now we don’t communicate... there’s no opportunity to meet.”

Another wound – stigmatization. Milana says directly: “They even called me ‘moskalka’ because of it” – because of her native language and speech habits. This is crucial to understand: even in a safe rear area, a child can experience secondary trauma – not from explosions, but from words.

Much of her friendship moves into virtual space: online games, communication “through the camera.” The interviewer mentions the risk of replacing live contact with virtual – and this too is a consequence of war: children’s real social stage shrinks, and they retreat into the digital world, where it feels safer.

7. The Role of Family

Milana lives with her mother. There is no mention of her father in the interview. The relatives she worries about most are two grandmothers who remained where communication no longer works: “International connection doesn’t work... substations were bombed... we have no contact at all.”

This is one of the hardest types of trauma: not knowing anything. “I’m scared because no one knows what happened to them.” She herself assumes that her current condition is connected to this: “Probably, yes.”

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Milana dreams of the most basic and essential: “I dream of returning home and for the war to end.” If victory came tomorrow – “I would be very happy and joyful... I miss home and my relatives very much.”

For her, peace is not politics but ethics: “When people mind their own business and try not to harm others, but to help.”

Her professional dream has evolved: first veterinarian, now design: “Now I want to be a designer... I need English, Ukrainian, and math.” This is a strong moment: a child clearly knows what she must study to have a future – even during war.

Her message to the world is quiet but strong: “For people to be peaceful and not harm others. To help each other and not betray.” And to children in danger she says practically: “Think about safety and continue studying... Don’t be afraid to leave... but... they don’t let anyone leave from there.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No special inclusive needs are mentioned, but the vulnerabilities are numerous and systemic:

social phobia that appeared after the war;

eating disorder / health issues due to stress;

discrimination and bullying based on language (“they called me ‘moskalka’”);

lack of accessible clubs: she wanted taekwondo, but “the nearest section is very far,” and logistics

eliminate the opportunity;

loss of IDP payments due to formal threshold (“+5 UAH”);

absence of systemic programs for “ordinary” displaced children, as her mother directly states.

This is a story about a high-achieving, talented, hardworking child who still lives in constant compensation mode: a power bank for lessons, a small apartment filled with humanitarian boxes, fear of people’s judgment, no contact with grandmothers. And this is what the world must hear: even “successful” children of war can lose their childhood every day – quietly, without explosions, but painfully.

Unique Markers

Evacuation in a long arc: Severodonetsk → evacuation train → Lviv → Vinnytsia region. A typical path of a child escaping not to a “better life,” but to survival. Rental housing as daily compromise: “grateful for low rent,” but a small apartment filled with boxes – life “after rescue” does not automatically become home. Social phobia after war: “I go out. But I have social phobia.” Trauma does not always scream; sometimes it makes every introduction terrifying. Stigmatization by language: being called “moskalka” – not the front line, but still a wound. Heroes – defenders: for Milana, war has the faces of those protecting the sky and land.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“First we went by evacuation train to Lviv... and then we moved to Vinnytsia region.” “We wouldn’t have wanted it this way, but we are very grateful for the low rent... the apartment is small.” “I go out. But I have social phobia.” “They even called me ‘moskalka’ because of it.” “I think it’s all the people who are now defending our country.”



NASTIA, 15 YEARS OLD



Kherson (occupation) → departure “in a circle” through
Crimea–Russia–Belarus → Zhytomyr → Vinnytsia

Anastasia, 15 — She survived the occupation of Kherson, a long forced journey through several countries, and bullying at a new school. In Vinnytsia she found friends, is building a new life, and dreams of a peaceful, restored Kherson free from fear and destruction. Her story is about loss, strength, and yearning for the future.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Nastia remembers the beginning of the full-scale invasion, but she describes “before the war” very briefly, almost carefully: “Home, a cat, friends, constant walks.” At that time, she was transitioning to sixth grade, studying online due to quarantine, seeing friends rarely – mostly “through messaging.” War did what it always does to teenagers: it scattered people across the world. Now, she says, her friends are “all abroad,” and contact is maintained through video calls and chats.

Their departure from Kherson reflects one of the harshest realities of occupation: exits are often not direct, but humiliating and dangerous. Nastia says plainly: “We traveled with my mom through Crimea, through Russia, through Belarus, because the Antonivskyi Bridge was destroyed.” And the scariest part was precisely where, on paper, “there is a road,” but in reality – filtration and dehumanization: “It was scary there... they checked us, inspected our documents and belongings, insulted us.”

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Nastia did not arrive in Vinnytsia immediately. First was Zhytomyr, where she remained on online learning in her Kherson school until 2023 – sixth and seventh grade. They came to Vinnytsia about a year later and have lived here for two years now, in a house.

An important detail: she moved only with her mother; her grandmother arrived much later – “after half a year” – and it was her grandmother who became the “anchor” that eventually led them to Vinnytsia: “Grandma moved first, and then we did.”

A domestic loss that does not appear in statistics but breaks the heart: the cat remained in Kherson. Nastia speaks about it quietly and persistently: “He stayed there... and he’s still there... neighbors take care of him.” She has not gotten a new pet – as if not betraying her old home. About once a week, this pain returns: “I miss the cat... I remember about him once a week.”

3. School / Education / Language Issues

The educational gap caused by war is visible literally year by year: two grades online in Kherson school, then an attempt at offline schooling – and confrontation with discrimination. In her first Vinnytsia school, Nastia was not accepted as “one of their own”: “They told me that I’m not from Vinnytsia.” Then came what should be a red line for any education system: peers humiliated her, and adults did not protect her. “They said I was this and that... the class teacher knew, but did nothing.”

She changed schools – and only then could she breathe: “When I transferred to the second school, I liked it.” Now she has many friends, and even air raid alerts are experienced together in a childlike way: “During an alert we go to the basement and watch funny videos.” But the fact remains: adaptation and survival at school became her daily work, not “normal school life.”

Language is also sensitive, though not dramatic. She honestly says she once knew little English and therefore did not feel protected “by language” in another country: “I couldn’t protect myself with language.” She began improving Ukrainian through her grandmother: “She insists that I learn the language.”

4. Psychological State

Nastia articulates one of the key insights of this project: the most frightening thing is not always the sound of war, but adaptation after relocation – especially when it overlaps with adolescence. She says directly: “Adaptation. Especially when it coincided with puberty and a new class.” Her fear of walking outside diminished only with time: “I’m not as afraid to walk outside anymore... I met people, learned the city.”

Air raid alerts today are almost dulled: “Very little [fear].” But this does not mean everything inside is calm. She lost motivation: “Motivation disappeared,” and she names a typical point for traumatized teenagers: when it gets hard, it is easier to give up. “Usually... I give up” (about difficult algebra topics). This is not laziness – it is exhaustion.

5. Social Support and Resources

At the beginning, assistance was tangible and practical: “Food packages and household supplies were very helpful, especially at the beginning. Later they gave less.” This is an important signal for the world: war continues, but support tends to shrink – precisely when families are living long-term displacement.

The family’s resource is her grandmother, who is not simply “present,” but active: “Grandma has been weaving camouflage nets for the army in Vinnytsia for almost two years,” and also works part-time after retirement. This is a portrait of Ukrainian families in war: even elderly people carry the rear so children can attend school and keep going.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

After changing schools, Nastia finally gained what should be the norm: a safe environment and friendship. “There are many [friends]. We hang out on weekends... play during breaks.” She found “her” neighborhoods, “her” transport routes, stopped getting lost in the city.

But the scars of integration remain. She directly names discrimination: “They told me I’m not from Vinnytsia,” and this became a trigger for bullying. Even in extracurricular activities she sometimes felt prejudice: “There were a couple of times... but volunteers helped.” It is important to record: sometimes systems fail – and people nearby save.

7. The Role of Family

Nastia has her mother, grandmother, and grandfather; her father is not mentioned in this story. The role of family runs throughout: she chose to stay in Ukraine because “there are many close relatives and acquaintances here.” During the difficult journey, when her mother found it “very hard to endure,” Nastia supported her as she could: “I just hugged her.” An honest gesture of a child who cannot change the route through occupation, but can keep her mother from falling apart.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

If the war ended tomorrow, she would not rush back immediately: “Not right away.” This too is trauma: return does not cancel what was endured. But she thinks about Kherson’s recovery concretely – not romantically: “I would start by clearing the streets of fragments and mines.” She wants Ukraine to be seen in the world not through war, but through beauty: “So that it shines with beauty... not because of war.”

Her message to the world is direct and sober: “To help more: donate for ammunition, weapons, medicine for soldiers, especially on the front line.” It sounds harsh, but this is how a child speaks who went through filtration and humiliation at foreign checkpoints – and understands that goodwill without strength does not stop evil.

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned, but the vulnerabilities are clear:

- secondary trauma from filtration and insults during departure;
- bullying and adult inaction at school (“not from Vinnytsia,” humiliation, class teacher “did nothing”);
- loss of motivation and a “habit of giving up” on difficult subjects;
- interruption of creative activities: drawing – “I haven’t drawn for half a year,” dance – “no,” due to lack of time and motivation;
- emotional attachment to home through the cat left in occupation and constant searching for ways to transport animals: “I look online how to transport animals.”

This story is about a teenager who survived occupation and a humiliating “circular” escape – but was hurt most not at a checkpoint, but when a new school told her she was “not one of them.” And this is what the world must hear: children of war need not only packages, but safety at school, protection from discrimination, support for motivation and access to development – otherwise we lose a generation quietly, without explosions, but irreversibly.

Unique Markers

Kherson “before” in three words: “home, cat, friends” – childhood normality cut short by war. A pet left behind as an unhealed nerve: the cat remains in Kherson; neighbors care for him; Nastia would take him if possible – “but he wouldn’t survive the journey.” School discrimination against an IDP: “not from Vinnytsia” → humiliation by peers → silence from the class teacher – an example of re-traumatization in a “safe” city. Renewal through changing schools: the second school “I like,” friends appear, life resumes even during air raid alerts (basement, funny videos) – adaptation is possible when the environment does not wound. Adolescent maturity under limited resources: she wants to start wrestling, but “there are some physical and financial problems” preventing it – inequality in access to recovery. A practical vision of city reconstruction: beginning with clearing fragments and mines.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“Home, a cat, friends, constant walks.” “They told me I’m not from Vinnytsia... started humiliating me... The class teacher knew, but did nothing.” “The cat... stayed there... If you had the chance, would you take him? – Yes... He wouldn’t survive the journey.” “I want to start wrestling, but there are some physical and financial problems that prevent it.” “I would start with clearing the streets of fragments and mines.”



NASTIA, 17 YEARS OLD



Marhanets, Dnipropetrovsk region → (2–3 months under shelling) → Vinnytsia → dormitory during studies

Anastasia, 17 — From Marhanets, she endured shelling, forced relocation, and separation from home and loved ones. She kept her friendships and dreams, studies journalism in Vinnytsia, and is building a new life to share the stories of people and her city with the world. Her story is about resilience and finding meaning despite fear.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Nastia met February 24 not at home, but at her grandmother's – a very “Ukrainian” beginning of the war. There was supposed to be a test at school, but her grandmother told her to go back to sleep. Then reality shattered the ordinary morning: “The war started, and the electricity went out... around 4 a.m. there was a strike on the substation... the smoke was very heavy.”

They packed their things but did not leave immediately: “For about two or three months I stayed in Marhanets.” Why? The answer is honest: they did not know where to go, and there was hope that it would “end quickly”: “Both... there was hope it would end quickly, but it didn't.”

When the shelling became very intense, they finally decided to leave. She had two days to pack – but those days were not calm: “The shelling was very strong, even at night we couldn't sleep.” Only the moment of departure became a rare “window”: “We were lucky that the moment of leaving was quiet and sunny.” In that sentence lies the truth of children of war: they rejoice not at holidays, but that they were not killed on the road.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

They went to Vinnytsia not because they had chosen it, but because a chance to survive appeared: “Dad had a colleague who offered for us to come and live there for free. The people were very kind.”

One of the most painful themes in her story is pets. Nastia had three cats and two dogs, and four more cats remained in Marhanets. She speaks without pathos, but with a lump in her throat: “I cried a lot when we left them, because there was nowhere to take them.” For a child, this is not a “small” loss – it is enormous: war forces you to leave behind those you love and are responsible for.

Now Nastia lives in a dormitory because she studies in Vinnytsia. The everyday reality of a young person during war is also part of the children's issue: “The hardest thing is money – food, paying for electricity. It's difficult.” She is still very young, yet already calculating like an adult.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Nastia kept her Marhanets school online. This was not laziness or refusal to integrate – it was a way to hold onto the past and the hope of return. “My school is very dear to me... my classmate and I decided to stay with our class because we hoped we would return.” She completed grades 8–11 with her class online.

At the same time, war reshaped learning: “There were breaks, and we had to catch up with the program very quickly.” Knowledge was compressed and rushed, trying to close the gaps created by shelling and air raid alerts.

After school, Nastia enrolled in Vinnytsia – at the Vinnytsia Institute of Trade and Economics, majoring in journalism. A key indicator of integration: she did not just “attend,” she became part of the community – deputy group leader, a cohesive group, lecturers noting her involvement.

4. Psychological State

Nastia articulates one of the most dangerous consequences of war: habituation. In Marhanets they often slept in the basement; now she says: “I don't react to air raid alerts because I've morally gotten used to it. The scariest thing is that you get used to it.” The world must hear this: getting used to it is not resilience – it is trauma becoming normal.

The hardest part of relocation for her was not the road or suitcases, but the psyche: “The hardest thing is to forget what you went through... not to miss home... it was scary because I didn't know what would happen next. A foreign city, everything unfamiliar.”

Her method of self-regulation is strikingly mature. When she feels sad, she talks to herself in the mirror: “Right now you’re sad, but years are passing... what if tomorrow the war ends, and today you’re sad and not ready?” This is not philosophy – it is a child teaching herself to survive through thought.

5. Social Support and Resources

Key support came from people: free housing, kindness in a new city. Nastia speaks about Vinnytsia as a place that saved her morally: “Vinnytsia is my second home... it saved my mental state and built a new me.”

There is also state IDP support: “9,000 UAH for three months... in December another 2,000 UAH will arrive.” But even with these payments, she speaks about the real difficulty of young people who have just moved away from their parents. Support exists – but the cost of independence during war is high.

An important resource is the educational institution. When she told her story about Marhanets, “everyone cried,” lecturers supported her, spoke with her. “It was colossal support.” Educational institutions can be not only about learning, but about psychological anchoring.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Nastia preserved friendships from before the war. Her best friend moved to Germany – they have not seen each other for three years, but communicate daily: “We haven’t seen each other for three years... we talk every day, call each other.” She partially kept in touch with her class and even plans to return to Marhanets during holidays to visit her homeroom teacher.

In Vinnytsia she has also integrated – many friends in her group, a strong collective. Yet she remembers the first period clearly: the scariest thing was a “foreign city.” Not only explosions frighten children of war, but also the feeling of not knowing where you are, who you are now, and what will happen to you.

7. The Role of Family

Nastia left with her mother, father, and younger sister, along with a classmate and his family. The decision whether to stay in Ukraine or go abroad was made by her mother. Nastia wanted to stay: “Because my family, friends, grandmother and grandfather are here.”

Her heroes are her parents: “Because they gave me so much, support and help me constantly.” Her mother does not work; her father is a long-distance truck driver. Her mother tried to find work in Vinnytsia, but “it didn’t work out.” Even when a child has integrated, the family may remain economically vulnerable.

About the military in her family she speaks directly: “Yes... some died, for example, my physical education teacher and my uncle.” She knows what loss means: “It’s hard. But they are all heroes.” Adult deaths enter adolescent consciousness as something that must be lived with.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Her dream is not about possessions, but about unity: “For my whole family and friends to be together at one big table...” She wants to become a journalist to raise awareness after the war and rebuild her city with words: “So that people know and do not forget the history of their cities.” She dreams of working at 1+1.

She understands peace through loved ones: “When all your loved ones are near... smiling mom and dad... soldiers who returned home... the feeling ‘I am home.’”

To people who remain in Marhanets and are afraid to leave, she speaks almost maternally: “It’s very scary there: no water, no electricity, constant shelling... small children need childhood. Don’t stay there, save yourselves.” This is the voice of a child who already knows the cost of “waiting it out.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned, but vulnerabilities are clear and characteristic of wartime adolescents:

- life under shelling and sleeping in basements (traumatic experience before habituation);
- forced separation from pets (she cried because she could not take them);
- family loss (an uncle killed) and community loss (physical education teacher killed);
- rupture with a long-term identity anchor: nine years of folk dancing – “It was my beloved hobby. The war slightly destroyed this project.” She did not resume dancing in Vinnytsia – “it would feel like

betrayal” of the ensemble that was part of her identity.

This story shows how war breaks and hardens teenagers at the same time. Nastia became “stress-resistant and confident,” but the price is habituation to basements, losses, adult financial concerns, and the need to persuade herself not to be sad because “time is passing.”

This is what the world must hear: children of war grow up very fast – and they need support so that their forced adulthood does not permanently replace their childhood.

Unique Markers

Delayed departure: remaining in Marhanets for months until shelling became unbearable – the typical experience of “living on the edge” and postponing escape. The beginning of war remembered through darkness and smoke – everyday life collapsing at 4 a.m. Nine years of folk dancing disrupted – a core identity shaken. Normalization of danger: “The scariest thing is that you get used to it.” Home as an internal refuge: when she feels ill or sad, she replays memories – with her mother as inner “first aid.”

Quotes (“Voices”)

“We stayed in Marhanets for a couple more months. When very strong shelling began, we had to move to Vinnytsia.” “The war started, and the electricity went out... there was a strike on the substation... the smoke was very heavy.” “It was my beloved hobby. The war slightly destroyed this project.” “It’s scary, but people have already gotten used to it.” “Now I don’t react to air raid alerts... The scariest thing is that you get used to it.”



OLEKSANDR, 13 YEARS OLD



Kherson (occupation, near Chornobaivka)
→ Haisyn (temporary) → Uman (1 day) → Vinnytsia

Oleksandr, 13 — He and his mother left occupied Kherson, leaving their home and part of their family behind. Now he lives in Vinnytsia, studies at a lyceum, participates in Olympiads, and dreams of becoming a programmer. His story is about the power of knowledge, resilience, and holding onto dreams during war.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Sasha was in 4th grade when the full-scale invasion began. He does not remember an explosion as a sound, but rather “a rather tense atmosphere at home” – and immediately clarifies: his parents were the most worried. The family decided to leave right away, but did not depart the same day: “when the opportunity appeared.” They packed several times and postponed departure: “quite a lot [of time], because we planned to leave several times.” This is the typical reality of occupation: you want to leave – but you cannot, because there is no “window,” no guarantees, no certainty that departure will not turn into a trap.

When it finally became clear they were leaving, Sasha names mixed emotions that precisely describe a child’s state in war: “joy, calm, anxiety.” Joy – because you are escaping danger. Anxiety – because you do not know what comes next.

His mother adds depth that children’s memory sometimes lacks. She says Sasha experienced severe stress, and she herself cried constantly as a way “not to break”: “I cried all the time – it was my way of coping... He kept asking, ‘Mom, why are you crying?’” The most painful part: at 10 years old, under tension, Sasha seemed to “regress” into early childhood: “he started speaking in a childish voice again and playing with toys.” This is not “behavior,” but a trauma mechanism of an overloaded psyche.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Their path to Vinnytsia was not direct. First, they stayed in Haisyn for some time, but “didn’t like it.” Then the family did something remarkable under stress: they allowed themselves to choose. “We chose – Uman or Vinnytsia... we visited both for one day and decided to stay in Vinnytsia.” Even in war, the family searched not just for “a roof,” but for a place where a child could study and recover.

But the domestic price of displacement is a divided family. In Kherson remained his father, great-grandmother, grandmother, and grandfather. Sasha says plainly: “I miss my dad,” and adds that his father cannot come. They call often – connection exists, but physical presence does not.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Sasha did not abandon school. In Kherson, he continued online almost until the end of 4th grade. In Vinnytsia, he insisted on attending in person: “I wanted to go to school.” He entered a newly formed class where “no one knew anyone,” children from different schools and cities, many internally displaced – “everyone was in equal conditions.” This is a powerful lesson for the system: sometimes the best integration is not inserting a child into an established group, but creating a space where everyone starts from zero.

School became his anchor and breakthrough. His profile subjects are physics, mathematics, informatics – and this is not just preference, but achievement: 1st place in informatics, 2nd in physics, 4th in mathematics (city competitions). He honestly says he did not expect to become an Olympiad participant, though math “had always come easily.” War took much – but school in Vinnytsia gave him room to grow.

His mother adds another layer: the transition to a new school coincided with switching more fully to Ukrainian, since previously they communicated largely in Russian. This was not a conflict of identity, but an adaptation process that required support rather than judgment.

4. Psychological State

Outwardly, Sasha seems composed. He says memories of Kherson come “not with sadness,” but with good emotions: bicycle, yard, friends. Yet his mother describes how the body remembers fear. During occupation, they slept in the basement because they lived near Chornobaivka: “It was scary there, fighting was constant.” Due to stress, Sasha’s temperature rose and remained high: “he worried for a month.”

After relocation, the first year was difficult: “adaptation lasted long... I walked him to school because he

was afraid.” War follows a child even in the rear – anxiety transfers to new streets and school doors.

At the same time, Sasha shows how teenagers learn self-regulation: if anxious – “drink water, breathe slowly, think about something pleasant, sometimes eat something sweet.” A very human survival toolkit – but it should not be the only instrument available to a child in war. Systemic support programs are essential.

5. Social Support and Resources

Sasha’s strongest resource is the combination of family support and the “right environment” at his lyceum. His mother says directly: “I am amazed by his determination... no one forces him.” Teachers, she says, “live by science” and support their students.

Another resource was psychological assistance. An important detail: sometimes even brief intervention works if it is timely and quality. “We visited a psychologist... two sessions... they helped him cope with fears.” This is an argument for donors: not only large programs matter, but accessible crisis support “here and now.”

At the same time, his mother voices what the world must hear: “Displaced families struggle with uncertainty, housing, finances... Children lose childhood and time for development.” This is not rhetoric – it is lived experience.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

Sasha integrated not by chance, but through a well-structured environment: a new class, equal conditions. He has friends, and even their way of bonding reflects his interests: “We talk on the phone and solve Olympiad problems.”

Connection with Kherson friends has almost disappeared: “very rarely.” He says he had essentially one close friend there, but that friend has moved abroad. Another quiet consequence of war: a child may adapt successfully, but their pre-war circle dissolves and vanishes.

7. The Role of Family

Sasha’s father is not described as being at the front, but he remained in occupied/dangerous Kherson with older relatives. Sasha misses him and calls often. For children, separation from a father is not only emotional – it is constant background stress: you cannot hug him, cannot verify with your own eyes that he is safe.

His mother also points out how stress affects memory: “Older teenagers still remember, but younger ones – less... It’s good we are speaking now, because in two years no one will remember anything.” This underlines the urgency of documenting children’s testimonies now – before memory erodes under trauma.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Sasha dreams concretely: Olympiads, victories, the future. His goal is to reach the International Olympiad (in math/physics/informatics). He wants his achievements to “glorify Ukraine in the world.” Professionally, he is oriented toward the present and future: “a programmer in the field of artificial intelligence.” He is already learning programming and attending clubs.

His definition of peace sounds mature: “when there are no major conflicts, and if they arise – they are immediately resolved.” And to the world he would say what matters most: “In Ukraine many people suffer and cannot continue normal life after the invasion. I would like people to know about this.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No specific medical needs are mentioned. But the vulnerabilities are clear and telling:

stress of occupation (basement, fever, behavioral regression – childish voice, toys);

long adaptation after relocation (fear of school, mother accompanying him);

separation from father and relatives who remained in Kherson;

loss of ordinary joys: Sasha really wants a bicycle, but does not have one – simply due to practical circumstances (3rd floor without elevator): “Yes,” it’s inconvenient to carry. He once rented a bicycle in the forest park – and this sounds like a small need that is actually about normalcy: a child just wants to “ride like before.”

This story is about a boy who grew up under occupation and managed to transform trauma into academic growth. But it is also about how even “successful Olympiad winners” carry the imprint of war: anxiety, regression, need for psychological support, separation from a father, life without ordinary childhood pleasures.

And this is what the world must hear, if it truly wants to help children of war.

Unique Markers

A “sweater from occupation” as a memory-object: clothing becomes an archive of escape – what was lived through remains not only in memory. The mother’s “invisible front”: “I cried all the time... He kept asking: ‘Mom, why are you crying?’” – the intertwined psyche of adult and child. Memory gaps as stress markers: “he experienced very severe stress,” his mother says. School as a channel of civic engagement: writing letters to the Armed Forces, charity initiatives. Strong academic line: Olympiad tasks and results as a way to hold onto control and future.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“I symbolically wore this sweater today. We left the occupation in it... as a memory of that day.” “I cried all the time – it was my way of coping... He kept asking, ‘Mom, why are you crying?’” “At school we organize different initiatives... we write letters to the Armed Forces.” “Peace is when there are no major conflicts... they are immediately resolved.” “This year I got first place... second... fourth...”



OLEKSANDR, 12 YEARS OLD



Kharkiv → Yukhymivka village (Vinnytsia region)
→ Vinnytsia

Oleksandr, 12 — From Kharkiv, he moved to Vinnytsia due to the war. Despite panic, relocation, and losing his home, he maintains discipline, trains in swimming, loves IT, and dreams of creating technologies that help people. His story is about quiet strength, inner balance, and faith in victory.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Oleksandr remembers the beginning of the war as the moment when childhood abruptly “stood up” – not because of an alarm clock, but because of panic at home. “I remember my brother telling me that the war had started. I jumped up, got scared, and quickly started getting dressed because there was panic in our family.” First – the first floor, then the basement. In the first hours he did not even hear explosions, but very soon the sound of war entered the house: “A day or a few hours later I already heard rockets launching. It was scary.”

They stayed in Kharkiv for two more weeks – and for him this is not a “story of resilience,” but “bad memories” that sometimes return like a wave: “Sometimes I remember, and I feel sad.” The evacuation was initiated by his father. Sasha does not remember the exact words, but he remembers the pace: “We quickly packed what we personally needed to take.” They left in their own car, later switching to a larger vehicle at relatives’ when the whole family needed to be transported.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

First, the family ended up in the village of Yukhymivka, and three months later – in Vinnytsia. War in daily life showed itself not only in “where to sleep,” but also in how some childhood responsibilities turned into adult routine. Sasha says: “I look after my brother and sister... I clean.” There was even a case when he stayed home alone with his younger sister and missed training.

They created small “islands of normality” – family rituals that stabilize the nervous system: “On Fridays we regularly eat pizza,” and on weekends they travel around Ukraine or go to the forest for mushrooms and berries. This is important for the world to understand: a child needs not only walls, but rituals that restore the feeling that “we are still living.”

3. School / Education / Language Issues

After leaving, Sasha studied online for a while in Yukhymivka, then in Vinnytsia he finished fifth grade and after New Year went offline in sixth grade. He speaks calmly about distance learning – “It wasn’t hard for me... I understand gadgets and technology” – but emphasizes that offline school gave him what mattered most: live communication. “I really love communicating and immediately understood that this was an opportunity to make new friends.”

His favorite subjects are algebra and English, and he already connects them to his future profession as a programmer: “The main thing is to study algebra and English, because all documentation is in English.”

4. Psychological State

Sasha does not “play a hero.” He speaks directly about fear: “It was scary.” And about how war leaves traces even when you are far from Kharkiv. In his first year in Vinnytsia, he experienced a panic attack during a lesson: “Yes, in the first year there was a panic attack during class.” What helped him was not “inner strength,” but people nearby: “My friends supported me... I drank some water. The main thing is support.”

When there is an air raid alert at school, sometimes memories return, but he says mostly “I’ve calmed them down.” This is an important point for the report: children do not “forget,” they learn to mute – often at the cost of exhaustion.

5. Social Support and Resources

His resource is sport and friends. When he feels sad about Kharkiv, he has his “rescue mechanisms”:

“I either do sports, or look for something on the internet, communicate with friends.” Swimming is not just a hobby, but a way to stabilize his psyche: “After swimming my brain works better... I drive away bad thoughts. It relaxes me.”

Sasha says the family receives some support, “financial or material,” without details. But his story shows something deeper: the most effective help for a child is access to a safe developmental environment (school, sports, friends), because this is what “reassembles” a child after stress.

6. Friendship, Community Integration

In his new class, at first no one knew he was displaced: “They thought I was just new from another school.” And when he later told them he was from Kharkiv, the reaction was normal: “Everyone treated me normally, some even supported me.” He has many friends, but also a “core” – three best friends with whom they walked and rode bicycles.

From Kharkiv he keeps in touch with a friend “sometimes.” This is typical of war: some childhood connections remain, but in a “rarely” mode, because life has been torn apart by geography.

7. The Role of Family

For Sasha, his father is the key pillar: he made the decision to relocate and, according to Sasha, invents family traditions. When asked who his hero is, he answers without hesitation: “My parents, they supported us and protected us all this time.”

There are no relatives in the military, but war still does not leave the family: in Kharkiv remain his grandmother and her sister, and they “very often witness the war.” The most painful reason they cannot leave: “There is no possibility, because there is a child with a disability who needs care.” This is a direct signal to the world: disability in a family can “tie” people to danger, and without special support they physically cannot evacuate.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Sasha combines two trajectories – sport and IT. In swimming he trains six times a week, already has sports ranks, and speaks about future steps up to Master of Sport. Professionally, he sees himself in technology: “I want to become an IT specialist, a programmer,” studies independently, and even has a family example – a relative created an app for their school: “I use the app and I’m proud of it.”

His message to the world is clear – like the core thesis of this project: “Most people think it’s easy to пережить and that it leaves no traces. In reality – that’s not true.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned for Sasha himself. But his vulnerabilities are typical and very telling for children of war:

- traumatic memories of Kharkiv (“bad memories,” sadness);

- a panic attack at school as a consequence of what he experienced;

- overload of responsibility at home (looking after younger siblings, missing training);

- constant anxiety for relatives who remained in Kharkiv, and disability in the family as a barrier to evacuation.

This story is crucial for the world because it shows: a child may look “successful” (sports, studies, friends), but war still leaves its mark – in panic attacks, in sadness, in constant tension for loved ones. And such children also need systematic support – not only words, but safety, psychological help, access to sports and education.

Unique Markers

A teenager who truly “holds the household”: caring for siblings, sometimes missing training. Family traditions as “islands of peace”: Friday pizza, forest trips on weekends. A dual dream: sport + programming – a very contemporary profile of a “generation of war.”

Quotes (“Voices”)

“I look after my brother and sister... I clean.” “On Fridays we regularly eat pizza... we go to the forest for mushrooms or berries.” “I want to become an IT specialist, a programmer.”



OLEKSII, 8 YEARS OLD



Kharkiv → 10 days in a basement with student-children → village in Vinnytsia region (4 months) → Vinnytsia (rented housing)

Oleksii, 8 — He left Kharkiv at age four, so he remembers the war only in fragments. He lived in a village and then in Vinnytsia. Now he goes to school, swims, and helps take care of younger family members. His story is about adaptation, childhood resilience, and small victories despite the war.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Oleksii is one of those children whose war “entered” life so early that memory did not have time to record the beginning. He was four, and he honestly says: “I don’t remember” – neither the first day, nor the road, nor the decision. His war begins not with memories, but with consequences:

“They took you by the hand and brought you here?” – “Yes.”

But his mother, Olena, adds what a child cannot know as a “story,” because at that time he was inside the basement. They did not leave on February 24. The first 10 days the family spent in a basement together with about 70 students without parents who had to be evacuated and protected. “We had an inner obligation... we had to protect them,” his mother says. Only after the last student left did the family move on. They departed on March 2 or 3, 2022 – essentially “into the unknown”: “We were driving without knowing where we were going.”

There is another harsh detail of evacuation that the world must hear plainly: on the way through Kharkiv, they saw destroyed buildings and bodies. This is not “cinema.” These are the first images that embed themselves into the psyche of children and adults alike.

2. Housing and Living Conditions After Displacement

Oleksii remembers that in Kharkiv there was an apartment, toys, his own room – but here they brought “very little.” For the first four months the family lived in a village, and later moved to Vinnytsia. He remembers that moment – and his first childlike grievance toward war: “I was five. I wanted to go to school, but they didn’t accept me yet.”

Now they rent housing. Their daily life includes something statistics rarely show: a large family during war means constant shared responsibility. Oleksii helps his mother: “I carry my younger brother,” plays with his sister, understands the baby’s signals: “when he wants to eat or when something happened,” and immediately tells his mom. An eight-year-old speaks about this as if it were normal. But these are adult functions that appear too early in wartime childhood.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Oleksii is in 4th grade. For him, school is not only education, but a chance to return to “normal childhood.” He has been studying offline for about three months and says he needs it specifically offline: “Because without internet the lessons don’t happen, and Zoom doesn’t work.” It is a simple phrase, but it reflects a large problem: during war, education depends on electricity and connection.

His favorite subjects are mathematics, crafts, and especially drawing: “Landscapes.” There is a small but telling detail: he does not photograph his artwork, they are “not saved.” As if children’s achievements disappear as easily as boxes and toys during evacuation.

His mother adds a critical point: Oleksii completed first grade and almost all of second grade online in a Kharkiv school because in Vinnytsia he was not accepted into kindergarten or school. Thus, educational loss was caused not only by war, but by access barriers in the new place.

4. Psychological State

Oleksii speaks about air raid alerts briefly and maturely: when the siren sounds – “I think about going to a safe place.” No panic: “No, I just go, because I know I have to be in a shelter.” But when asked if he remembers the beginning of the war during alerts, he answers with one word: “Sad.”

The most important part is what the child cannot fully articulate, but his mother sees daily. Before the war, he was, in her words, “the happiest, most radiant boy,” loved kindergarten and his teacher. After the war began, he “completely changed, closed off.”

In Vinnytsia he faced something that should never happen to a child who fled war: bullying. “Some boys argued with Oleksii because he came here. It closed him off even more... we had to consult a psychologist and a psychiatrist.”

This is a point adults must hear: a child who escaped Kharkiv can experience secondary trauma in a relatively safe city – through words and attitudes.

5. Social Support and Resources

Oleksii’s resource is sport – a doorway back to trust. Symbolically, on February 24 he was supposed to attend his first swimming training in Kharkiv, but war erased that day. In Vinnytsia pools were closed, there were age restrictions, and everything was postponed. Eventually they found “Mayak” and a coach who “found common ground with him.”

Then something happened that often heals trauma better than a hundred conversations – regularity and success. Oleksii won three first places in different swimming disciplines.

He proudly says: “50 meters freestyle in 20 seconds,” “three first places and one certificate.” This is an important signal for donors and communities: sports and clubs are not an “addition,” but psychological rehabilitation through the body.

His mother also names another resource – offline school: “It was important to bring the children into society... it helped socialization.”

6. Friendship, Community Integration

At school, Oleksii has friends: “Dima, Yulia, Artem and Solomiia.” They mostly communicate at school, but sometimes outside: “once in the yard... and somewhere near the fountain.” He says the attitude toward him is normal and he did not feel like an outsider.

But his mother shows another layer – yard integration for internally displaced children can be more difficult than school integration. It was there that conflict with local children began. This is a key issue: a child may be accepted in class, but bullied in the yard – and trauma closes him again.

7. The Role of Family

The family is large: five children, the youngest – Adamchyk, 4 months old. Oleksii speaks about him tenderly: “Yes, I love him.” He helps his mother, plays with his sister Mariia Stefania (she is four and attends dance classes). His older brother moved to Slovakia – and Oleksii does not resent it: “I want to visit him during holidays.”

There is no mention of the father at the front. The father works online as a programmer, the mother teaches online. But war still grips them through older relatives: the grandfather died, the grandmother remained in Kharkiv, and Oleksii says a frightening phrase: “Grandma is occupied.” There is no contact: “No.” He misses her: “Yes.”

This is a separate problem for children of war: they live with the feeling that part of their family is “there,” and you cannot even call.

His mother adds another important layer about children’s reactions: the older sons (10 and 13) experienced it most heavily – they kept everything “inside,” and such internal silence often erupts as aggression: “The older children are a bit aggressive now, but we are coping.” The world must hear: adolescent aggression in wartime is often not character – but a symptom.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Oleksii says simply: after the war he wants to go home: “I will return home.” His definition of peace is childlike but unexpectedly precise about justice: “When Russia says that it attacked Ukraine first, then peace will come.”

To the world he sends a bright phrase that sounds like both faith and self-comfort: “Don’t worry, peace will come soon.”

He has not yet chosen a profession, but sees his father’s work and understands its value: “Programmer...

because he earns more,” and he knows the “secret”: “You need to know mathematics and informatics well.”

9. Vulnerabilities

No specific medical or inclusive needs are mentioned for Oleksii himself. But the vulnerabilities are clear:

age at trauma onset: war began when he was four; he does not remember events but lives with consequences;

bullying in Vinnytsia because of displacement – secondary trauma after Kharkiv;

withdrawal and sharp personality change (“radiant” → “closed”), need for psychologist and psychiatrist;

no contact with grandmother in Kharkiv, death of grandfather;

large family and early responsibility (helping with the baby and younger siblings).

This story shows that war strikes not only with rockets. It strikes with words in the yard, with refusals “we won’t take him to school,” with lack of contact with a grandmother, with childhood memory that “does not remember,” yet the heart still feels sadness during a siren.

And this is what the world must hear if it truly wants to help children of war – not once, but systematically.

🌀 Unique Markers

“I was little”: for the youngest children, war often has no narrative memory – the body and daily life remember instead. A large family: five children, newborn Adamchyk – life continues during war, but parental burden multiplies. Loss of belongings: “very little” was brought – experience of abrupt rupture from home. Online as educational risk: “Without internet the lessons don’t happen, and Zoom doesn’t work” – a child describes infrastructure collapse in simple words. Child’s message to the world – short and bright: “Don’t worry, peace will come soon.”

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“I came from Kharkiv... I’m eight years old.” “Five children... His name is Adamchyk. He is four months old.” “Very little.” (about the things they managed to bring) “Offline... Because without internet the lessons don’t happen, and Zoom doesn’t work.” “Don’t worry, peace will come soon.” “For me, heroes are the soldiers who gave their lives to defend Ukraine.”



OLESYA, 13 YEARS OLD



Kharkiv (Novobavarskyi district) → Poltava (1 week)
→ Vinnytsia / Zarvantsi

Olesya, 13 — From Kharkiv, she survived war explosions, evacuation, and moving through several cities to Vinnytsia. She kept her calm, deep thinking, and ability to overcome anxiety. Despite bullying and adaptation challenges, Olesya finds new interests, develops skills, and dreams of becoming a programmer. Her story is about inner strength, faith in peace, and the desire for safety and stability.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Olesya remembers the beginning of the war not through the news or a calendar date, but through a neighbor's phone call that woke the family in the middle of the night and pulled them into a reality where there was no longer a normal morning.

"We woke up from a neighbor's call asking for the basement keys. We didn't understand what was happening. They told us the war was starting."

Her reaction was pure shock: "I was very scared, I was in shock... It was very страшно, it was horror."

In the first days they stayed at home in Kharkiv. What stayed in Olesya's memory most vividly was not the siren, but the sky turning into a weapon:

"It was air bombings, fighter jets and bombers. It's especially scary when they fly over the house. It's real horror."

In a child's psyche, this image settles as heavy, sticky fear: you cannot hide from what is above your head.

2. Housing and Daily Life After Displacement

Their displacement was vulnerable on several levels at once: her brother had just undergone surgery with metal pins in his leg, her grandfather had cancer, and they had two cats in carriers. Olesya says simply: "We arrived with almost nothing."

They took only the essentials: "Two cats... my food because of a gluten-free diet... cat food. And that's all."

This is the everyday face of war: instead of suitcases full of memories – a carrier and documents; instead of favorite belongings – food to prevent health from worsening.

Their road to Vinnytsia was long and exhausting: a neighbor drove them to Poltava, they met their father there, stayed a week, then drove to Vinnytsia from 5 a.m. until 10 p.m.

"It was the final point where we could stop."

Not romance of a new city – but relief at having somewhere to exhale.

In Vinnytsia, a volunteer hosted them for one night, and later volunteers helped find housing: "They rented it to us for a low price... The woman was very kind and helped us."

Now Olesya lives with her mother, father, and grandfather in a house in Zarvantsi. Even in a "quiet place," war is present in small details: "Problems with electricity and it's cold, sometimes I do homework with a small lamp and a flashlight."

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Olesya encountered the war between 3rd and 4th grade. She essentially finished 4th grade already in Vinnytsia. The first months were online; later the school provided humanitarian aid – notebooks, pens – and they returned to offline learning.

But her central school trauma was not format – it was language-based discrimination. She speaks directly:

"There was bullying. First from the teacher, then the children picked it up."

The reason was her Russian-speaking background and accent:

"They said I was 'not like that' because I was Russian-speaking and couldn't speak Ukrainian without an accent."

The most frightening sentence came from an adult:

“The teacher said that because of me the war started.”

Olesia changed schools – and that saved her. She says briefly, but the relief is audible:

“I transferred to another school, and the relationships are normal there... the teacher is great.”

In Vinnytsia, she changed three schools before finding an environment where a child was not made responsible for war.

4. Psychological State

Olesia speaks about fear without embellishment. In Kharkiv – “horror.” In Vinnytsia – a different kind of tension: uncertainty, forced relocation, repeated new beginnings.

“The hardest thing to пережити... forced displacement, moving, uncertainty.”

At the same time, she demonstrates a typically “adult” wartime survival strategy – automatism in danger. She describes her actions during bombings:

“I assessed risks... went behind load-bearing walls, lay on the floor, opened my mouth and covered my ears. It’s automatic.”

In this automatism there is both strength and tragedy: a child learns survival techniques as naturally as multiplication tables.

Another important marker – loss of creative breath:

“I stopped drawing... there’s no inspiration.”

This is not laziness. It is exhaustion, when energy goes into “survive and study,” not “create.”

5. Social Support and Resources

Their support in Vinnytsia began with people – a volunteer for one night, then volunteers helping with housing. State assistance exists, but is tied to status:

“Once a year a food package, because I have a disability.”

The key issue is not the package itself, but that support often comes as a point action, not a stable system.

A strong resource for Olesia is English. She names it as a wartime achievement:

“The main achievement – raising my English to B1... now I can almost freely hold a dialogue.”

She studies two to three hours a day including homework, plus English-language content. It is an example of how a child “lifts herself” amid instability.

Her mother adds another important layer: the family consciously switched to Ukrainian:

“We consciously switched... we don’t watch Russian content – it’s taboo.”

For them, it is not performance – but an internal response to war.

6. Friendship and Community Integration

Olesia is honest: contact with pre-war friends has faded – “we grew up... the distance is large... many moved abroad, interests changed.” Neighbors have also changed – “completely new people around.”

Integration was complicated by bullying, but in the third school the situation stabilized: “Now... the class is good.”

Her new form of socialization is telling: she attends concerts alone:

“Alone, without friends... Dark Doers... Freak Cabaret.”

It sounds like independence – but also like loneliness normalized by war. A child gets used to being “alone with herself” because trust in groups was damaged by adults.

She also keeps her own media channel:

“I run a media channel... about my life, experiences.”

This is a digital diary of a generation that documents trauma in real time.

7. The Role of Family

Olesia left with her mother, grandfather, and brother; they reunited with her father only in Poltava:

“Father was at the dacha near Kharkiv. We met him only in Poltava.”

He could not leave for two weeks and “found some loophole” to escape. In the car, he was driving – a detail that sounds like a thread of rescue.

Her brother is her strongest emotional support: “Very much, more than anyone.” But war also affected him – depressive episode, withdrawal, disrupted routine, overload:

“He closed himself off, rarely goes outside... heavy workload, disrupted schedule.”

Trauma spreads across the family; it does not stop with one child.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Olesia dreams of the most important thing: “For the war to end.” She wants an ordinary life – which war took from children as a right:

“I want a family, children, pets, to live normally, in Ukraine.”

Peace for her is concrete: “When rockets don’t fly, there’s no hostility or bloodshed.”

Professionally, she leans toward programming: “Most likely a programmer... my brother and father are programmers.” It is a pragmatic choice toward autonomy and stability.

Her message to the world is clear and painful:

“I would ask for weapons for Ukraine and protection of the sky so that Ukrainian children do not suffer.”

This is the voice of a child who saw bombers flying over her home.

9. Vulnerabilities

Olesia has a disability (details not specified), which increases vulnerability during displacement and unstable living conditions. But her most acute vulnerabilities are social and psychological:

trauma from bombings in Kharkiv;

bullying and discrimination because of language – including direct blame from a teacher;

loss of motivation to draw and inability to attend dance classes due to logistics (“too far, the hall is cold”);

unstable household conditions in the suburb – cold, electricity outages, homework by flashlight;

family psychological strain (brother’s depressive episode, grandfather with cancer, brother post-surgery during evacuation).

Olesia’s case is not simply “a displaced girl from Kharkiv.” It is the story of a child who carried war on her shoulders with her family – and then received another blow in the rear, from a system that should have protected her.

And this is what the world must hear: a child of war needs not only shelter, but a safe school, zero tolerance for discrimination, access to development, and warmth – both literal and human.

🌀 Unique Markers

Family transition to Ukrainian as a value-based choice and internal resistance. Culture as survival: concerts, theater, music – not escape, but a way to process war. Personal media channel – a diary of a wartime generation.

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“Our family switched to Ukrainian... we don’t watch Russian content. It’s taboo now.” “I also go to concerts of Ukrainian bands. Alone, without friends.” “I run a media channel... about my life, my experiences.”



ROMA, 11 YEARS OLD

 Mariupol → corridor in the apartment → bunker (one month)
→ Berdiansk → Zaporizhzhia → Dnipro → Vinnytsia

Roma, 11 — From Mariupol, he spent a month in a bunker under shelling, evacuated with his family, and moved to Vinnytsia. He adapted quickly, made friends, and now studies and competes in math Olympiads. Despite all he has been through, Roma helps his mother, plays basketball, and dreams of peace, studying abroad, and rebuilding Mariupol. His story is about responsibility, strength, and faith in the future.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Roma was woken up by his mother – “in shock.” His first childish thought was one that echoes across hundreds of stories:

“I thought we would just miss school.”

But his mother already heard explosions. They sat in the corridor – this is how war began for many children in Mariupol: not “outside,” but in a narrow space between walls, not knowing whether they would withstand the next strike.

After three days they moved to a bunker. Roma says it briefly, but it carries weight:

“We were in the bunker for a month... we heard everything.”

Even shelter did not bring silence – only a chance not to die immediately. Only after a month or two did they begin moving through cities. This is a crucial truth about Mariupol: many families could not leave immediately.

2. Housing and Daily Life After Displacement

Roma’s path traces a map of escape through transit cities: Berdiansk → Zaporizhzhia → Dnipro → Vinnytsia. In Berdiansk and Zaporizhzhia they stayed only a few days – like brief breaths between panic and the next unknown.

In Vinnytsia, they first lived at one address for two months while Roma studied online. After moving again, life became “more stable.”

He emphasizes something deeply important:

“We were together, we didn’t leave each other.”

For children of war, psychological safety is often not an apartment or a city – but the fact that the family did not fall apart.

When asked what he brought from home, Roma remembers one thing first:

“Oh, I had a cat. I took her.”

When a child remembers the animal rather than objects, it means that in chaos, that living being was the emotional anchor.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

Roma resumed studying quickly – and the key word here is humanity.

“I resumed immediately because I understood everything, and the teacher was kind and explained a lot.”

First online, then offline.

At school he generally feels good, but he notices something often missing from reports: classroom atmosphere.

“People here are very kind, but many at school don’t want to study.”

For a child who survived a bunker, education may not be an obligation but a way to regain control over life. When others “don’t care,” it can feel frustrating.

His motivation centers on mathematics.

“Only mathematics.”

He has set a clear goal:

“I set a goal to participate in math competitions and Olympiads.”

His mother confirms that he performs well across subjects, receives high marks, and as class monitor helps organize assignments for classmates who miss lessons. This is not simply a “good student.” It is a child trying to maintain order where chaos once ruled.

The language issue exists in the family context. In Mariupol, daily communication was mostly Russian, while kindergarten and school were in Ukrainian. Roma adapted relatively easily, but his younger brother – who is on the autism spectrum – faces greater challenges due to mixed language exposure (English/Russian/Ukrainian). The family consciously works on expanding Ukrainian vocabulary through reading and media. Language adaptation here is not politics – it is daily labor.

4. Psychological State

Roma speaks about fear simply – and therefore powerfully. He remembers his mother “in shock,” the corridor, the bunker where “we heard everything.”

Another wound appears quietly: when his father joined the army, Roma cried at night.

“I once cried at night...”

That is enough to understand: during the day he holds himself together, but at night the defenses fall.

He describes how war changed him:

“More kind. I became more reliable, a helper for Mom.”

It sounds positive, but analytically it must be named: children often become “reliable” because circumstances force them to grow up early.

5. Social Support and Resources

In Vinnytsia, Roma says they were warmly welcomed:

“People here are very kind... they welcomed us well.”

A rejection-free environment after Mariupol gives the psyche a chance to stabilize.

But there is also financial strain. Roma speaks openly:

“Problems with money... big expenses. We arrived with nothing, we have to restore everything.”

He thinks in adult terms: if there is money, you can buy what is needed. This is another wartime marker – children begin thinking in categories of budgets and rebuilding life.

His resource is usefulness. He helps his mother with work, can carry orders, cleans his room, finishes homework quickly. He is not just a child – he is a small partner in family survival.

6. Friendship and Community Integration

Roma did not remain alone in Vinnytsia.

“I have many friends.”

Classmates accepted him calmly. He names them: Masha, Sviatoslav, Nikita, Oleh.

When he feels sad about Mariupol, his coping tools are telling:

“Friends.”

Memories of Mariupol return when he rides a bicycle or talks with friends – peaceful markers of life before war.

He does not maintain contact with Mariupol friends:

“No.”

For many children, the pre-war circle simply breaks – like a thread that cannot be tied again.

7. The Role of Family

For Roma, his hero is his father:

“My dad... because he defends the country.”

His father calls several times a day and reassures him. But the fact remains: his father is at war, and this weighs on him. His night tears are the most honest proof.

The family includes his mother, father (when not on duty), younger brother Maksym, grandfather, and great-grandmother. His younger brother is on the autism spectrum and struggles with language adaptation, sometimes switching to English even with teachers. This adds complexity and the need for specialized support in a new community.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Roma dreams of the most basic and profound thing:

“For the war to end and for everyone to live peacefully.”

For him, peace is concrete:

“When everyone is friendly and no one beats or oppresses others.”

He is unsure about his future profession but says he would like to move to Germany and learn German. At the same time, regarding Mariupol, he says something powerful:

“Mariupol... I will go to rebuild the city.”

A child who spent a month in a bunker already imagines himself restoring what was destroyed.

His message to the world is simple, like a prayer:

“For the war to end and for all of us to be together.”

And another deeply childlike wish: when he grows up, he wants to earn a lot of money and give half to his mom, dad, and brother – not out of greed, but gratitude.

9. Vulnerabilities

- Roma has no diagnosed medical conditions mentioned. But vulnerabilities are clear and systemic:
- Mariupol survival experience: corridor, bunker, a month of constant exposure to sounds of war;
- financial strain on the family;
- father in the army, child crying at night;
- disrupted or limited childhood activities (bicycle stored on the 3rd floor, hard to access – even small barriers matter);
- younger brother on the autism spectrum with language and adaptation difficulties, requiring specialized support not always available in new communities.

Roma’s story is Mariupol speaking not through ruins, but through a child’s voice. It shows two truths simultaneously: how war forces a child to grow up (“helper for Mom”), and how that same child still asks for the simplest thing – to be together.

And this must be heard: support for children of war is not only about food packages. It is about psychological care, support for military families, access to development, and protection of vulnerable children – including those on the autism spectrum – in new communities.

🌀 Unique Markers

Mariupol survival experience: relocation to a bunker three days after the invasion; one month hearing shelling constantly. The cat as the “last piece of home.” Father as hero and lifeline – frequent calls from the front. Early responsibility and maturity: war “made him kinder” and turned him into a helper for his mother. Mathematics as stability – goal of Olympiads and internal order. Family vulnerability: younger brother on the autism spectrum complicating language and educational adaptation.

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“...after three days we moved to the bunker, and then after a month or two we started moving through cities.” “You say you were in the bunker for a month... did you hear everything? – Yes, we heard everything.” “I remember... Oh, I had a cat. I took her.” “My dad... because he defends the country.” “I once cried at night...” “I set a goal – to participate in math competitions and Olympiads.”



ROSTYSLAV, 15 YEARS OLD



Kherson → (Antonivka / basement; hospital; home under occupation) → departure through checkpoints → Vinnytsia (first with a relative, then rental housing)

Rostyslav, 15 — After the war began in Kherson, he hid in basements, passed Russian checkpoints, and left home without knowing if he'd return. Today he lives in Vinnytsia, studies, plays sports, and dreams of peace. His story is about loss, growing up, and teenage strength in war.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Rostyslav met February 24 not with a sense of a “historic event,” but with a nearly childish hope that remote learning would finally end and he would return to school. Instead, he was woken up and told to pack:

“I was sleeping, they woke me up and said we had to leave... they told me the war had started.”

The first hours felt unreal:

“At first it wasn’t taken seriously at all... like it was a dream and not real.”

Evacuation was not immediate. They remained in Kherson, because under occupation every decision is not simply “go or stay,” but a choice without guarantees.

2. Housing and Daily Life After Displacement

Their first attempt at safety led them somewhere even more dangerous. They went to Antonivka, to his grandparents’ private house with a basement. But Antonivka was near the bridge – one of the most intense combat zones.

“When we arrived, there were already battles, especially at night. We sat in the basement.”

Later they found temporary shelter in the regional children’s hospital in the city center, where his grandparents worked. They lived there “about a week or two.” After that, they returned home and spent roughly two more months under occupation, constantly moving to shelters.

After leaving Kherson, in Vinnytsia they first stayed with a relative:

“In Vinnytsia we have a relative – Aunt Halya. We lived with her for about four months until we found an apartment.”

He honestly recalls the first challenge displaced families face:

“When we first arrived, there was a housing problem – we lived in a small apartment, and there were many of us.”

Now they rent, and “it’s more or less normal,” but the experience of overcrowding and temporariness has become part of memory.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

The war interrupted education entirely:

“For about a month there was no schooling at all.”

Then came distance learning until late April, and afterward a practical pause because “no one was ready to study properly.”

Another blow came from within the system: their homeroom teacher in Kherson turned out to be a collaborator.

“Our homeroom teacher in that school turned out to be a collaborator. We were not informed about the resumption of online learning... so we decided to enroll in a school in Vinnytsia.”

This is a powerful marker: war destroys education not only with missiles, but with betrayal inside institutions, leaving children suspended.

In Vinnytsia, Rostyslav entered School No. 17 (a physics-mathematics school). There were entrance exams; the first three months were online, and from December – offline. He deliberately chose in-person learning, partly due to infrastructure problems:

“There were strong power outages, and I couldn’t always connect properly to online lessons.”

Later he changed schools again and now studies at Podilskyi Lyceum. He calls the reasons personal and unrelated to war, but repeated school changes are themselves part of the displaced experience – searching for a place where one can breathe and study.

4. Psychological State

Rostyslav reflects a common trait of children of war: he does not deny pain, but learns not to live inside it.

“Sometimes I miss Kherson... but I try not to think about it. I just switch my thoughts.”

He also avoids constant news exposure:

“I try to avoid the news. I already understand what is happening there.”

This is not indifference – it is psychological self-preservation.

Another occupation marker is “digital self-censorship.” Before leaving, they cleaned their phones:

“So that there was nothing unnecessary there.”

“I deleted everything anyway... we were warned that it was necessary.”

For a teenager, this means that even memory on your phone must be sterile – otherwise it becomes a risk.

5. Social Support and Resources

Their anchor in Vinnytsia was family:

“It was the only city where we had relatives.”

Sometimes simply having someone to open the door in the first months is what saves a family.

Another resource was involvement in shared action. Rostyslav volunteered with his parents:

“I went with my parents to weave camouflage nets.”

Children of war need not only services – they need to feel part of resistance and community support.

6. Friendship and Community Integration

He remembers Kherson warmly:

“We had just moved into a renovated apartment... I had friends.”

War broke those threads:

“Now I hardly keep in touch with anyone from Kherson.”

One friend moved to Ivano-Frankivsk, and Rostyslav even visited him. Geography, not conflict, dissolved many friendships.

In Vinnytsia, integration at school happened without humiliation:

“The fact that I came from another city didn’t really concern anyone.”

Friends know he is internally displaced, and treat it calmly. But even without stigma, exhaustion remains: constantly starting over – new city, routes, classmates, rules.

7. The Role of Family

Rostyslav’s family consists of his mother, father, and brother. His grandparents lived separately but evacuated together.

It was important not to separate:

“Dad couldn’t leave the country... and we didn’t want to split up.”

Sometimes “safety abroad” means breaking family unity – and children choose togetherness.

Today his grandparents have returned to Kherson:

“It’s very dangerous there.”

They visit, but part of the family again lives under risk – a background anxiety that never disappears.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Rostyslav thinks pragmatically. He understands that Kherson after the war will be different:

“A lot is destroyed, many areas are mined.”

He dreams of victory, but sets concrete goals:

“To finish school, enter a higher educational institution, preferably a prestigious one, and get a good education.”

He has not chosen a profession yet, but he knows his interests: physics most of all; if five subjects – physics, algebra, geometry, geography, and informatics.

His message to the world is not a plea for pity, but a logical appeal:

“Ukraine needs help. By helping Ukraine, other countries help themselves.”

He adds that everyone can contribute – through donations or volunteering.

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are mentioned. But vulnerabilities are typical for teenagers who

experienced occupation and displacement:

direct exposure to fighting in the early days (Antonivka, basement) and life under occupation;
departure through numerous Russian checkpoints: “there were many checkpoints... it lasted very long,” overnight stay in Uman;

digital self-censorship (cleaning phones) as a trauma marker;

educational rupture and institutional betrayal (collaborator teacher);

loss of most friendships from Kherson;

limited access to hobbies: he takes guitar lessons, but “I don’t have a guitar at home” – a small detail that reflects broader access barriers for displaced families.

Rostyslav’s story is about occupation that forces a child to grow up quickly. About basements becoming the norm of safety. About phones wiped clean before departure, as if erasing part of oneself. About schools disrupted not only by missiles but by collaboration.

And about a teenager who already understands: helping Ukraine is not charity – it is protection of a future where children wake up to school, not war.

Unique Markers

Educational rupture as chaos: “for a month there was no schooling at all.” Collaboration inside school – homeroom teacher as collaborator, no information about resuming education. Power outages as an educational barrier – online failure not from laziness but infrastructure collapse. Portrait of calm adaptation – arrival from another city “didn’t particularly concern anyone.” Intellectual anchor – physics and mathematics as a framework for the future. Civic voice – articulates clearly why supporting Ukraine matters globally.

Quotes (“Voices”)

“...our homeroom teacher turned out to be a collaborator. We were not informed about the resumption of online learning...” “There were strong power outages, and I couldn’t always connect properly to online lessons.” “What I like most is physics...” “If you could address the whole world... – ‘Ukraine needs help...’” “Like everyone, I dream of victory... I dream that Kherson will be rebuilt...”



TYMOFII, 11 YEARS OLD



Sloviansk → Uzhhorod → Vinnytsia (first a dormitory, later living in the city with his mother)

Tymofii, 11 — From Sloviansk, he moved to Vinnytsia with his family because of the war. He adapted to his new life, made friends, and continues learning with a practical approach to the world. His story is about calm acceptance of change, caring for loved ones, and a dream of restoring order at home after victory.

1. The First Days of the War, Evacuation

Tymofii remembers the beginning of the war in fragments – not as a “big event,” but as a child’s action: “I don’t remember well, but I remember hiding in the cellar during the first air raid alerts, and later we stopped hiding.”

It is also important what he does not remember:

“Loud noise... no.”

Sometimes this “blank space” in memory speaks about stress more than detailed recollections.

The decision to leave was quick: “about a day” to pack. And, like many children, the first things he chose were very personal:

“Toys, a tablet, books.”

He thought the departure would last “a year, maybe more.” This is typical child logic in wartime – as if there is a “term” after which life will simply return.

They did not arrive in Vinnytsia immediately. First there was Uzhhorod, and only later Vinnytsia. But Tymofii says he always believed the family would not leave Ukraine:

“Yes, I thought we wouldn’t go abroad.”

And still – “Yes, it was scary.”

2. Housing and Daily Life After Displacement

Tymofii’s first experience as an internally displaced child was a dormitory:

“We lived in a dormitory. There were friends there, for example, Misha.”

They still communicate – an important detail: even short-term friendships in temporary shelters can become threads of stability.

A quiet but painful loss: the cat remained in Sloviansk.

“There was a cat, but we didn’t take him. Dad took care of him.”

In the new place, there are no pets: “No, there aren’t.” A home without a cat is also a different home, and a child feels this even without dramatizing it.

When asked about daily difficulties, Tymofii answers honestly and revealingly:

“I don’t know, Mom protects me from information.”

This is analytically significant: children often live in a “zone of silence,” where adults do not discuss money, documents, or fears – and the child senses it as background tension without having words for it.

3. School / Education / Language Issues

In Sloviansk, Tymofii studied offline (only “a little” online during quarantine). After relocation, he entered 6th grade in Vinnytsia and studies in person.

The class accepted him:

“Yes, I told them, they received it well, we became friends.”

He has many friends, including a close one:

“There’s a friend Yura... sometimes we walk after school, I walk him home.”

For Tymofii, the language issue was not theory, but the fear of first contact:

“The first main fear was how I would communicate with people.” – “Yes.”

He knows both Ukrainian and Russian and switches naturally:

“Now more Ukrainian, but with friends at school – Russian... sometimes we mix.”

This is typical for children from eastern Ukraine: language is not a “position,” but lived practice, and it requires acceptance, not pressure.

He evaluates school simply: “normal.” Favorite subjects – “nature studies and physical education,” because they are “easy” and he “knows them well.” Other subjects he approaches pragmatically:

“Little. I do homework and that’s it... for the teacher.”

This sounds less like laziness and more like adolescent fatigue and reduced intrinsic motivation – which in wartime may reflect emotional exhaustion after losing stability.

4. Psychological State

Tymofii does not describe panic attacks or nightmares. But he carries another trauma marker – longing for his father and for a simpler life.

“Sometimes I miss him because we used to spend time together, walk, go to the river.”

“How often?” – “Yes.”

And more honestly: positive warmth in these memories is limited –

“No, not really.”

Memory does not comfort; it hurts.

He follows the news “a little” and knows that explosions happen nearby:

“In Kramatorsk something explodes.”

Even in relative safety, he lives with a mental map of nearby danger.

5. Social Support and Resources

His strongest resource is his mother. When asked who his hero is, he answers without hesitation:

“Mom. She raised me, took care of me, provided the home and everything necessary.”

His mother notes that the children became more independent after relocation:

“They adapted... now they go to school on their own and do everything independently.”

But systemic instability remains:

“Last year the assistance was suspended, now we are waiting for documents.”

Support is not stable – it appears and disappears, and families live in anticipation of paperwork decisions.

6. Friendship and Community Integration

In Vinnytsia, Tymofii integrated relatively well: friends, walks after school, shared time.

But connection with his pre-war classmates is completely broken:

“No, with no one.”

This is one of the most underestimated losses of war: even if a child integrates into a new class, former ties vanish – and with them, part of identity.

His grandmother remained “there,” because of his grandfather and their vegetable garden, which they continue to tend “even despite hostilities.” Tymofii considered asking her to move but thinks pragmatically:

“It would be hard for us in the city.”

Even a child reasons in terms of survival capacity.

7. The Role of Family

Before the war, Tymofii lived in a large household: mom, dad, grandmother, grandfather. After relocation – “only with Mom.”

His father stayed in Sloviansk and took care of the cat. He is not described as being at the front, but his physical absence is what hurts most. Tymofii misses the walks, the river, the ordinary life.

Family compression – from many to two – is a key psychological rupture.

8. Dreams and Plans for the Future

Tymofii speaks about the future in a surprisingly pragmatic tone:

“I will quickly become independent, study to become an electrician, get a job somewhere, save for an apartment and survive.”

The word “survive” is striking. War shifts children’s horizons from “what I want to be” to “how I will

manage.”

He chooses professions for financial stability:

“A massage therapist or an electrician, because they earn well... I analyzed their salary levels.”

For an 11-year-old, this reflects early adulthood imposed by war.

His biggest dream is simple:

“That the war ends.”

Peace, for him, means agreement and Ukraine’s right to manage its own affairs:

“That everyone agrees... and then there will be no war.”

If victory came tomorrow, he would return home practically, not romantically:

“I would go to a new school because there you don’t need to pay rent... I would be glad the war ended and all relatives are alive.”

But he also says he does not want to return now – because “everything is overgrown... mosquitoes... and war... it’s scary to return.”

For children, return does not always equal happiness. Sometimes return equals fear.

9. Vulnerabilities

No medical or inclusive needs are reported, but vulnerabilities are evident:

family separation (relocated only with his mother; father and grandparents remained in a dangerous area);

loss of a pet (cat left in Sloviansk);

initial fear of communication as an adaptation barrier;

back problems from prolonged sitting (“I sat for a long time and something got pinched”) – a common consequence of distance learning and stress;

instability of state support and documentation processes;

emotional fatigue and reduced learning motivation (“homework – for the teacher”), potentially reflecting psychological exhaustion.

Tymofii speaks calmly, without dramatization – and precisely for that reason his story is powerful. War does not always shout. Sometimes it sounds quiet:

“I miss him... often.” “Mom protects me from information.” “I will save for an apartment and survive.”

If the world truly wants to support children of war, it must hear these quiet sentences and recognize behind them not “minor household issues,” but systemic needs: family unity, stable support, safe development – and the right to remain a child, not a survival plan.

🌀 Unique Markers

Beginning of war through “domestic memory” – hiding in the cellar during first air raid alerts. Two relocations (Uzhhorod, then Vinnytsia) – double adaptation. Natural bilingual reality – switching between Ukrainian and Russian without ideological framing. Family separation – relocation only with mother. Return framed as fear rather than romance. Dream reduced to a basic need: the end of war.

🌀 Quotes (“Voices”)

“I remember hiding in the cellar during the first air raid alerts...” “First we moved to Uzhhorod, and then to Vinnytsia.” “Now more Ukrainian, but with friends at school – Russian.” “Only with Mom.” “Mom. She raised me, took care of me, provided the home and everything necessary.” “...I don’t want to return... and war... it’s scary to return.”

QUANTITATIVE OVERVIEW:

INDICATORS OF TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCE AND NEEDS OF CHILDREN OF WAR

Across the 20 stories, we documented not only testimonies but also recurring indicators of wartime experience: shelters/bunkers, occupation, loss of home, educational disruption, psychological symptoms, school bullying, separation from parents, and (lack of) access to extracurricular activities and inclusion.

The counting was conducted conservatively: an indicator was included only when it was explicitly mentioned in the testimony.

Counting principle: below are only those elements directly recorded in the interview texts (without assumptions). For each indicator, an example excerpt is provided as confirmation.

Important: due to a technical search error at one stage of processing (query failure), some indicators may be undercounted. Therefore, the values presented should be read as “confirmed in at least X cases,” rather than as an absolute zero where not indicated.

Table 1. Quantitative Overview Across 20 Stories: Indicators of Traumatic Experience and Needs of Children of War

Indicator	What Exactly Is Counted (No Assumptions)	Confirmed Mentions (N/20)	Example / Evidence (Case + Short Quote)
1. Bunker	Direct mention of “bunker”	1	Roma: “...we were in the bunker for a month...”
2. Shelter/Basement During Air Raids	“shelter/basement,” “went to the basement”	3	Myroslav: “...we looked for a shelter...”; Mykola: “...went to the basement...”; Zakhar: “...go down to the shelter...”
3. “Got Used to Danger”	Direct wording “got used to,” “later it wasn’t scary”	2	Mykola: “At first I was afraid, then I got used to it”; Myroslav: “...the first time it was scary, and then not anymore.”
4. Occupation as Source of Anxiety	Direct mention of “occupation” + consequences	1	Ivan’s mother: “This anxiety remained from the occupation.”
5. Evacuation via Russia/Crimea/Belarus	Explicit route through these territories	1	Nastia: “...through Crimea... Russia... Belarus...”
6. Housing Damage (Strike/Impact)	House/windows damaged, “hit,” “it landed”	2	Artem: “...it hit the house...”; Andrii: “...the house was damaged...”
7. Pets Left Behind	Direct mention that animals remained	2	Mykola: “...three cats... stayed there”; Ivan: “...the pets... stayed there.”
8. Toys Left Behind	Direct mention “didn’t take toys”	1	Violeta: “I didn’t take my toys – I didn’t have time.”
9. Panic / Acute Anxiety	“panic/hysteria/very scared”	3	Viktoriia: “...panic started...”; Mykola: “...very scared...”; Ivan: “...real hysteria...”
10. Sleep Disturbances	“I wake up,” “sleeps with me”	2	Viktoriia: “...I wake up...”; Ivan: “Now he sleeps with me...”

11. Psychological Support	Direct mention of working with psychologists	1	Violeta's mother: "Yes, we worked with psychologists..."
12. Loss of Sense of Future	Explicit "I don't see a future"	1	Violeta: "...I don't see a future..."
13. Integration in New Community	Direct mention of making friends	2	Kseniia: "...a best friend appeared..."; Zakhar: "...one friend, also displaced..."
14. Loss of Previous Social Ties	"I don't communicate with friends"	1	Violeta: "...do you communicate? – No..."
15. Online Learning	"studied/studies online," "distance learning"	3	Violeta: "Studied online"; Mykola: "...studies online..."
16. Lack of Internet	Direct mention of no internet	2	Oleksii: "...there was no internet..."; Milana: "...they turned off the internet..."
17. Discrimination / Stigma	Direct offensive labels	2	Kyrylo: "...you are Russians..."; Olesia: "...the war started because of me..."
18. Teacher-Induced Trauma	Direct humiliation from teacher	1	Olesia: "...the teacher said..."
19. School Change	"transferred to another school"	2	Kseniia: "When I transferred..."; Olesia: "...went to another school..."
20. Father at War	Direct mention father serving	2	Roma: "...dad is military..."; Viktoriia: "...dad is at war..."
21. Separation from Father	"dad couldn't leave / stayed behind"	2	Rostyslav: "...dad couldn't leave..."; Mykola: "...they can't leave because of the father..."
22. Military Relative	Uncle/officer serving	2	Ivan: "...uncle officer..."; Artem: "...uncle officer..."
23. Special Needs (Autism Spectrum)	Direct mention of autism	1	Roma: "...my brother is on the autism spectrum..."
24. Adapted Educational Program	Direct mention of program adaptation	1	Artem: "...they adapted the program..."
25. Inclusive Initiative	Mention of Special Olympics	1	Artem: "...Special Olympics Ukraine..."
26. Multiple Relocations	More than one stage of movement	2	Kyrylo: "...first... then..."; Oleksandr: Kharkiv → village → Vinnytsia
27. Living Only with Mother	Direct "only with Mom"	2	Tymofii: "...only with Mom..."; Ivan: "...only Mom..."

28. Child Relocated Alone	Direct “traveled alone”	1	Mykola: “...Alone.”
29. Volunteering / Rear Support	Direct support to military	1	Myroslav: “...helped pack food... bulletproof vests...”
30. Extracurricular Activities as Recovery	Mention of clubs/sports/dance	3	Kseniia: dance; Myroslav: swimming; Zakhar: dance
31. Financial Barrier to Development	Direct “it’s expensive”	1	Kseniia: “...equestrian sport... expensive...”
32. Refusal of Activities	“I don’t want to, on principle”	1	Violeta: “No, I don’t want to, on principle.”
33. Dream of Peace	“for the war to end,” “peace”	3	Ivan; Myroslav
34. Desire to Stay in Ukraine	Direct wish to remain	1	Mykola: “...wanted to stay in Ukraine...”
35. Ambivalence About Return	“would like to, but...”	1	Mykola: “...if everything is destroyed – no...”

KEY CHALLENGES FACED BY CHILDREN OF WAR: RECURRING PATTERNS FROM THE STORIES

These 20 stories differ in geography and fate, yet the same knots of pain repeat across them. Together, they form a map of needs – what must be heard globally and reflected in support programs.

1. Traumatic Start: Explosions, Basements, Bunkers, Occupation, and a “Road Without Guarantees”

For some children, the war began as a moment of shock, followed by survival: corridor, basement, shelter, darkness, queues, hurried packing of an emergency bag.

The Mariupol experience sounds the most exposed: “We were in the bunker for a month... we heard everything.” (Roma)

Occupation routes themselves became trauma: departure was not simply “a road,” but control, humiliation, fear (Nastia from Kherson: route through Crimea–Russia–Belarus; “they insulted us”).

There are cases where a child effectively left “alone” or with minimal support – a distinct risk zone (Mykola: “Alone.”)

Key implication: trauma does not begin after relocation – it begins on day one and “travels” with the child into the new city.

2. Loss of Home as Loss of World: Housing Instability, Crowding, “Life in Boxes”

For children, displacement is not just a change of address. It is separation from familiar space, belongings, pets, courtyards, friends.

Many experienced temporary living arrangements: dormitories, short-term shelters, “just for the night,” cramped rooms.

Some families have lived in rented housing for years and feel its fragility. Milana describes “life on the edge”: a small apartment, humanitarian aid, boxes, “nowhere to put things.”

Children often carry household burdens. Oleksii (8) helps care for younger siblings, effectively taking on adult roles.

Key implication: housing instability and lack of private space hinder recovery – children have nowhere to “exhale.”

3. Education Disrupted: Online Schooling, Power Outages, Learning Gaps, and “Getting Used to Missing Classes”

War disrupted educational trajectories physically (danger, evacuation) and systemically (online without conditions, interruptions, lack of access).

Mykola articulates one of the most dangerous shifts: “Then you get used to missing [classes]” – due to unstable internet.

Milana studies “through willpower”: power banks, online school, electricity cuts.

Rostyslav highlights the value of offline learning directly: online “lags,” and occupation brings institutional chaos (schools failing to provide information, systemic breakdown).

Key implication: without educational support (equipment, electricity, flexible formats, individualized attention), children accumulate gaps or devalue learning altogether.

4. Discrimination and Bullying in the Rear: Secondary Trauma Where Safety Was Expected

A painful pattern: some children experienced secondary trauma not from shelling, but from school environments.

Olesia endured what should be zero-tolerance: bullying over language that began with an adult. “The teacher said that the war started because of me.”

Nastia from Kherson heard: “You’re not from Vinnytsia” – and the homeroom teacher “did nothing.”

Milana was called “moskalka.”

Oleksii (8) became more withdrawn after aggression from peers “because he came here”; his family sought professional help.

Key implication: integration does not happen automatically. If schools fail to intervene, they multiply trauma.

5. Mental Health: Fear, Emotional Numbness, Social Anxiety, Panic Attacks, Fatigue, and Premature Adulthood

Many stories reveal not only fear, but adaptation through “getting used to it.” This is not normal – it is a psychological defense.

Mykola: “I’ve seen more. So I kind of don’t care.” – a classic marker of emotional numbness.

Nastia (17): “The scariest thing is that you get used to it.”

Oleksandr (Kharkiv): panic attack during class.

Milana: “The war took my childhood,” “I have social phobia,” eating and health issues.

Key implication: even “successful” children (Olympiads, sports, high grades) may carry hidden trauma that remains invisible until crisis.

6. Separation from Loved Ones: Father Far Away/Serving/Under Occupation, Relatives “There,” No Contact

One of the most persistent themes: fractured families.

Roma cried at night when his father joined the army.

Sasha from Kherson misses his father, who remained and cannot visit.

Tymofii lives only with his mother and often misses his father and the “simple life” they had.

Milana has no contact with her grandmothers: “No one knows what happened to them.” This creates a constant background terror of uncertainty.

Key implication: family separation is not merely emotional – it is chronic stress affecting learning, behavior, anxiety, and motivation.

7. Loss of Friendships and Social Isolation: “They Moved Away,” “I Don’t Communicate,” “I’m Afraid of How They Look at Me”

War dismantled children’s support networks: friends relocated, contact broke, social skills weakened. Tymofii: with former classmates – “No, with no one.”

Rostyslav: almost no contact with Kherson peers; one friend remains “in another city.”

Milana fears people’s looks and does not feel “like everyone else.”

Key implication: for many children, the issue is not only trauma from war – but facing it alone.

8. Access to Development and the “Right to Joy”: Sports, Clubs, Arts as Healing – But Not for All

A powerful pattern: where sports, clubs, and community exist, children recover faster. Where they do not, psychological strain deepens.

Oleksii regained stability through swimming and competition success.

Oleksandr (Kharkiv) relies on swimming to “drive away bad thoughts.”

Milana wants to join a club, but distance and logistics prevent it.

Olesia “stopped drawing – no inspiration.” When development is unsupported, creativity is often the first loss.

These recurring patterns form a structural map of needs – not episodic pain, but systemic consequences of war that require coordinated, long-term, multi-level responses.

What matters: a child needs more than lessons and food. They need safe environments of joy, play, movement, and creativity – as an integral part of recovery.

9. Inclusion and “Invisible” Vulnerabilities: Autism Spectrum, Disability, Barriers to Evacuation

In several stories, vulnerability doubles when special needs are present.

In Roma’s family, his younger brother is on the autism spectrum – this creates distinct language and behavioral needs that the school must support.

In Oleksandr’s (Kharkiv) story, relatives cannot evacuate because there is a child with a disability who requires constant care.

Olesia herself has a disability and depends on limited forms of support.

Key implication: programs designed “for everyone” often do not work for those with more complex needs. They must be intentionally designed, resourced, and adapted to ensure accessibility and inclusion.

CONCLUSIONS

The 20 stories demonstrate that supporting children of war is not a matter of “one-time humanitarian aid.” It is a system that must function every day: a safe school free from bullying, accessible psychosocial support, stable education with functioning infrastructure, opportunities for development (sports, arts, youth spaces), inclusion, support for mothers/caregivers, and specialized programs for families separated by war.

If the world truly wants to help children of war, it must respond not with a single act of kindness, but with long-term systemic care – for different children, with different needs, and in different life circumstances.

War does not end at the city border – it “moves” with the child. Even where planes no longer fly and shells no longer explode, the war continues inside: in the body’s memory, in the habit of “listening to the sky,” in anxiety, in fatigue, in loss of trust. Children from Mariupol carry the experience of bunkers and the sound of war through concrete; children from Kharkiv carry basements and missiles; children from Kherson carry occupation rules and departures that sometimes turned into humiliation.

But even in safer cities, the war returns at night through sirens, at school through peers’ words or adults’ silence, in daily thoughts: “Is everyone alive?” The cost of this “internal front” is often invisible: not always tears, but sometimes emotional numbness, social withdrawal, loss of motivation, or conversely – hyper-responsibility, when a child becomes “adult” earlier than their psyche is ready for.

One of the most alarming signals is how children “get used to” danger. “Getting used to air raid alerts” is often interpreted as resilience, but in reality it may be a symptom of exhaustion and protective blunting. A child says, “I’m not scared anymore,” but this does not mean they are not hurting – it means their psyche is learning to survive.

School can become either a place of recovery or a place of repeated trauma. For many children, school became the key to returning to life: routine, friends, supportive teachers, clubs, competitions. But in some stories, school became a space of additional harm – through bullying, discrimination, stigma related to origin or language. Most painful is when trauma begins not with peers, but with an adult authority – a teacher or homeroom teacher who did not protect, or even humiliated.

These are not isolated incidents – they are a systemic signal: without response protocols, teacher training, and real accountability, integration will not happen on its own.

Education during war is not only about curriculum – it is about access to light, internet, and stability. Some children sustain their learning through power banks and unstable connections, describing outages and technical disruptions. Here lies a dangerous turning point: when absences become normal, motivation erodes and belief in the future weakens.

War has made one thing clear: education is infrastructure. If infrastructure fails, a child pays with their future because “there was simply no internet today.”

Children’s mental health is a central need, not an optional extra. Across the 20 stories, different manifestations of trauma appear: fears, panic reactions, social isolation, sleep and eating disturbances, loss of inspiration, emotional numbness, premature adulthood. An important conclusion: even one or two timely consultations can have a significant effect if help is quickly accessible. But many families lack the resources to search for specialists, pay privately, or wait for months. Therefore, psychosocial support must be embedded within schools and communities, not outsourced as a “private family issue.”

Children’s recovery is uneven – and directly depends on parental resources. Where families have

time, money, and strength, children recover more easily: sports, creativity, clubs, warm adults, and community function as a bridge back to life. Where parents are exhausted, overworked, searching for housing, living in overcrowded conditions, or rebuilding from zero, children often remain alone with the war – not because they are unloved, but because the family is operating at the edge of human capacity.

This means: supporting children must include supporting adults, otherwise recovery will not be sustainable.

Mothers are a separate frontline of this war – and must be made visible. Behind children’s voices stands the maternal path: evacuation under shelling, bags and documents, medicines and cat carriers, nights in basements, searching for any housing “just to be safe,” fighting for a school place, finding doctors and psychologists, decisions at checkpoints, living without contact with relatives, financial instability, constant anxiety for the child.

Children often sensed adult panic even in silence, and mothers “unloaded” through tears to endure. The conclusion here is direct and uncompromising: helping a child is impossible without helping the mother/caregiver – without rest, psychological support, social accompaniment, stability, and accessible services.

Separation from fathers and relatives is a background pain that does not switch off. For many children, fathers are far away, serving, or remained in danger; some have no contact with grandparents or relatives; some have experienced loss. This is not an episode – it is a condition: waiting for a call, night tears, trying not to think in order not to break.

Therefore, targeted programs are needed for families of military personnel, children with occupation/filtration experience, and children facing loss or prolonged uncertainty regarding loved ones.

Inclusion and “invisible children” represent the highest vulnerability zone. Autism spectrum conditions, disability, and the need for inclusive support double the complexity of evacuation, education, and adaptation. Some families with special needs cannot evacuate or cannot access services in a new city due to a lack of specialists and services.

This means support must be differentiated; “one program for all” leaves some children outside assistance.

And despite everything – children have not lost the ability to dream, but their dreams have become adult. They speak of rebuilding, education, contributing to Ukraine – yet often in the language of survival: “to earn,” “to save,” “so that everyone is alive,” “so that we can sleep.”

This is both hope and a warning signal: childhood has accelerated, and therefore requires special protection and long-term care.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. For Government Authorities

Children’s mental health as a core service, not an “optional extra.” Implement a multi-layered support model in schools and communities – from basic psychosocial assistance to specialized services. This aligns with the widely recognized IASC MHPSS pyramid approach.

Zero tolerance for bullying and discrimination against displaced children (IDPs). Mandatory response protocols, teacher training, and monitoring of implementation.

Educational continuity as infrastructure: electricity, internet, devices. Support “school-based stable internet/electricity hubs” where children can study during outages.

Access to extracurricular activities, sports, and arts as part of recovery. Transportation or voucher solutions for children from remote areas; subsidized places in clubs and sections.

Targeted support for families with special needs and families of military personnel. Expanded case management services (social accompaniment), respite programs for parents, and priority access to inclusive services.

2. For Social Services

Case management for displaced children (not a one-time consultation, but ongoing support): Needs assessment, individualized support plans, and referrals.

Early identification of risks: Anxiety, social isolation, bullying, eating disturbances, aggression as trauma symptoms.

Parental support: Short parenting-in-stress programs and peer support groups – as parental exhaustion often limits a child’s recovery potential.

3. For Civil Society Organizations

Child-friendly spaces and after-school programs: Safe environments where a child can simply be a child (play, sports, arts, communication). The “Child-Friendly Spaces” model is widely used in humanitarian responses as a protection and psychosocial mechanism.

School-based structured psychosocial activities (art, movement, music, drama elements): Group formats that strengthen resilience. Evidence supports school-based programs such as PSSA in conflict settings.

Inclusive programs (autism spectrum, hearing impairments, disabilities): Adapted clubs, parental support, and communication tools for schools.

Adolescent clubs and mentoring: For those who have withdrawn, lost friendships, or carry the burden of war along with shame or fear of contact.

Support for military families: Groups for children whose fathers are serving, work with night anxiety, stabilization practices.

4. For International Organizations and Donors

Multi-year funding: Child-focused programs do not work on a “three-month grant” cycle. Recovery takes years.

Integration of MHPSS across all sectors (education, protection, health): International standards recommend psychosocial support as a minimum response standard.

Strengthening primary mental health care: Training non-specialists in basic child and adolescent support protocols in humanitarian settings (mhGAP-HIG approach).

Targeting “invisible” groups: Not only the “poorest,” but families that formally do not meet eligibility thresholds yet live on the edge (e.g., losing assistance due to minimal income differences), as well as families lacking time or resources to ensure children’s development.

5. For Local “Helpers”: Schools, Businesses, Communities, Volunteers

Support points within schools: “Quiet rooms,” stabilization corners, peer support groups, trusted adults.

Partnerships with clubs and studios: Scholarships/free placements for displaced children, especially adolescents.

Transport and logistics as support: Sometimes a child does not need a psychologist – they need the ability to get to a club.

Communication without stigma: Labels such as “not from here” or ethnic slurs must disappear from children’s spaces. This is not only a matter of morality, but of protection.

ROADMAP FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN OF WAR

Table 1. Roadmap for Supporting Children of War: Coordinated Actions and Performance Indicators

Stakeholders	Problem (From the Stories)	Solution (What to Do)	Expected Effect	Indicator (How to Measure)
Government authorities (Ministry of Education; regional and city administrations)	Bullying/discrimination against displaced children; language stigma; adult inaction	Introduce a mandatory anti-bullying/discrimination response protocol + teacher training + monitoring and compliance audits	Reduced secondary traumatization; increased school safety	% of schools with protocol; number of registered/reviewed cases; response time; student safety perception surveys
Ministry of Education + school principals	Children afraid to attend school; anxiety; panic episodes	In every school: a “trusted adult” + quiet room/stabilization space + regular group sessions on emotional regulation	Fewer breakdowns; higher attendance; improved well-being	# of schools with quiet rooms; # of support requests; change in absenteeism; self-reported stress levels
Government authorities (education/digitalization/social policy)	Online learning disrupted by electricity/internet; children “getting used to missing classes”	Establish learning hubs with electricity and internet (schools/libraries/service centers); provide devices for the most vulnerable	Educational continuity; reduced learning gaps	# of hubs; # of children using them; % of absences due to technical reasons; academic progress trends
Government + social services	Vulnerable families excluded due to rigid eligibility thresholds; unstable assistance	Introduce flexible criteria (“buffer thresholds”) for displaced families; prioritize families with children	Fewer families excluded due to formal criteria; greater household stability	# of denials due to minor income excess; % of families regaining access; beneficiary satisfaction rates
Social services (child protection/social service centers)	Child withdrawal, isolation, social phobia, trauma-related aggression	Introduce case management: needs assessment → support plan → referrals (psychologist/clubs/medical/legal)	Early intervention instead of crisis response	# of cases with support plans; % of families receiving ≥2 services; % of cases stabilized
Social services + healthcare	Psychosomatic symptoms (sleep, eating, panic attacks) without specialist access	Referral to child psychologist/psychiatrist as needed + brief crisis intervention protocols + queue monitoring	Fewer acute episodes; prevention of chronic conditions	Average waiting time; # of referrals; % of repeat crises
Schools/ educational institutions	Language barrier; fear of speaking; stigma related to origin	Soft language integration programs: conversation clubs; peer mentoring; no humiliation or pressure	Reduced stigma; faster adaptation	# of participants; survey: “I feel comfortable speaking”; reduction in language-related conflicts

Stakeholders	Problem (From the Stories)	Solution (What to Do)	Expected Effect	Indicator (How to Measure)
Schools + Inclusive Resource Centers	Children with autism spectrum conditions/ disabilities face barriers in learning and communication	Individual educational plans; assistant support; teacher training; adaptations (sensory breaks, visual cues)	Genuine inclusion, not formal presence	# of IEPs; # of children receiving support; progress on IEP goals; attendance
Communities/ local authorities	Lack of access to clubs due to cost, distance, logistics	Vouchers/benefits for extracurriculars + transport solutions (partnered routes, fare compensation)	More children engaged in sports/arts → improved recovery	# of vouchers; % of displaced children enrolled; changes in well-being/ stress levels
Civil society organizations	Loss of “right to joy”; lack of safe spaces; screen replacing real interaction	Establish child-friendly after-school spaces: sports, arts, games, peer support, mentoring	Reduced isolation; restored routine; new friendships	# of visits/month; % of children who “found a friend”; retention 3+ months
NGOs + schools	Parental exhaustion; limited capacity to support children	Parenting support programs: peer groups; short “parenting in stress” trainings; respite care	More stable parents → more stable children	# of groups/ participants; parental stress level (pre/post); % of families continuing participation
International organizations/ donors	Short-term grants insufficient for recovery	Multi-year funding for integrated MHPSS + education + development programs	Sustainable programming; fewer interruptions	Average funding duration; % of projects renewed; year-to-year child coverage
International organizations + government	Unequal access; “ordinary” displaced children excluded	Program requirements: quotas/targeting for displaced children, military families, inclusive cases; proactive outreach	Fewer “invisible children”	% of target group participants; share of inclusive cases; geographic coverage
Business/ local donors/ philanthropists	Financial barriers: clubs, equipment, travel	Scholarships/support packages: sports/arts/ educational equipment + competition fees	Access to development not dependent on income	# of scholarships; # of supported children; participation/ achievement rates; documented success stories
All stakeholders	Fragmented assistance; no recovery trajectory	Unified pathway: “displaced child → assessment → plan → services” with cross-sector coordination	Systemic support instead of isolated aid	# of children with individual plans; % of plan steps completed; reduction in crisis referrals



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