

## ***Shatterproof: Education Cannot Wait provides safe learning environments for children impacted by the war in Ukraine***

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*"At first, I was scared during air raid alarms, but now it's kind of normal," says **Anastasia**.*

Sixteen-year-old Anastasia has gotten used to a sound no child should have to hear – a piercing siren signalling possible rocket attacks.

Anastasia is a student at Lyceum No. 1, one of the few schools in the Mykolaivska region of Ukraine that is fully operational. With over 700 students – including those coming in from neighbouring villages and internally displaced children from areas where shelling continues – the school in Kryve Ozero remains open thanks to dedicated teachers, administrators and support from government and international partners.

Education Cannot Wait ([ECW](#)), the UN fund for education in emergencies and protracted crises, and partners in Ukraine are working to ensure that children are able to continue learning and building towards a brighter future. Among its numerous holistic education supports, ECW funding to UNICEF has supported an initiative to install shatter-resistant window film at 23 schools in the Mykolaivska and Odeska regions of the country – including Anastasia's school.

### ***Conflict Rages on in Ukraine***

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 sparked a deadly armed conflict that continues to rage today. Civilians in Ukraine, including millions of children and adolescents, have been severely affected – suffering trauma, shelling, displacement, injury and death. To date, more than 1,300 schools have been destroyed. Around 5.3 million Ukrainian children face barriers to education, including about 3.6 million who are directly affected by school closures.

School is an important place for Anastasia. In the 11th grade, she dreams of becoming a doctor. But to continue her education amidst the daily threat of shelling, the school environment must be a protective one.

### ***Investing to Protect***

UNICEF Ukraine, with support from ECW, has added thin, durable, impact-resistant film to the windows of Anastasia's school. Often used on buildings vulnerable to attack or a shock wave, this special film holds the shards of glass together after a window is broken. This greatly reduces the chance of injury for those near the windows – thus protecting children and teachers inside of the classroom.

*"UNICEF's humanitarian response to education challenges is focused on establishing a safe education space. Shockproof film is a crucial element for the safety in schools. Without it, a school cannot be considered a safe place in the face of sporadic bombardment and rocket attacks. In this way, we significantly reduce the risk of injury from flying glass fragments," says Anatoliy Ihnatovych, Education Officer at UNICEF Ukraine.*

Schools receiving the shatter-resistant window film were selected based on a consultation which determined where needs were greatest.

## Learning Continuity in Crisis

ECW has supported education in crisis-affected Ukraine since 2017. To date, ECW investments in the country have reached more than 360,000 children and adolescents, including 65% girls, with holistic education support. ECW's recent catalytic grant focuses on protecting the well-being of conflict-affected children, providing continuous access to education, and mental health and psychosocial support.

*"When parents know that their child is safe at school, they are calm. This is a whole range of security measures – a warning system, shelters and protective equipment. Our task is to preserve children's health, both physical and mental," says Yevheniy, Principal of Lyceum No.1.*

As the brutal war continues in Ukraine, Anastasia's school is now systematically preparing for the power outages that could come, similar to last year, when missile attacks damaged the country's energy infrastructure.

In anticipation of these interruptions to schooling, the Kryve Ozero community has introduced a six-day school week. Until the end of December, students will attend school every Saturday. This will allow them to cover the full school curriculum and reduce learning gaps caused by inevitable blackouts, air raids and other new challenges faced by students and teachers.

Anastasia is grateful to sit in a safe classroom with her friends as she continues her educational journey – bringing her closer to medical school and her dream career. At school, she can be a teenager and get a brief reprieve from the difficult reality of growing up in an armed conflict.

*"When we go to the shelter, it's harder to sit in class. It's hard to hear, it's hot and it's harder to memorize information, but I feel safe at school," says Anastasia.*

ECW calls on government donors, philanthropic foundations and the private sector to join our collective efforts to mobilize a total of US\$1.5 billion over the next three years to provide quality education to 20 million crisis-affected children and youth – like Anastasia – so they can learn, grow and help rebuild their societies.

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