



“We have a collective responsibility to ensure education plans take into account the needs of some of the most vulnerable children and youth in the world – refugees, internally displaced children and children whose right to education has been compromised by war and insecurity. These children are the keys to a secure and sustainable future, and their education matters for us all”.

António Guterres, United Nations Secretary General
(quoted in 2015 as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees)

FSD is a humanitarian NGO based in Geneva, working for a safer future through different types of programs. In Ukraine, FSD has been working with children since 2015, delivering mine risk education sessions in 645 schools and 208 kindergartens. In these four years, close to 160,000 children were taught how to keep safe should they encounter mines or unexploded ordnance. FSD works in several other countries across the globe, clearing landmines and explosive remnants of war, decontaminating sites polluted by toxic waste and carrying out various interventions to improve security in contexts of violence and instability. Over the past 22 years, FSD has conducted operations in some 30 countries.

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An armed conflict has been ongoing in eastern Ukraine since 2014, leading to a de facto partition of the country. Close to three million civilians living along the so-called “contact line” (between the areas controlled respectively by the government and the separatists) are in need of humanitarian assistance. Many have to deal with psychological trauma, severe mine contamination and lack of access to basic services. Among them, 400,000 are children, whose right to education is compromised by war and insecurity.



OMNIPRESENCE OF WAR



The daily morning routine in the Troitske village is the distribution of humanitarian aid followed by lessons at school, the distant sound of machine gun rattling somewhere beyond the horizon. Childhood still exists on the front line, but it has changed. These children looked forward to a puppet show given by FSD even though the stories were about mine safety rather than fairy tales.



RESTRICTED ACCESS TO SCHOOL

In the morning, Rita and her mother listen intently to the noise of distant shooting – this daily exercise helps to determine which of the two roads leading to the school will be the safer. When school buses are available, they are often in bad condition: children regularly miss school due to the breakdown of the bus.

30% Children and youth in fragile and conflict affected countries are 30 per cent less likely to complete primary education.
(Source: Education Cannot Wait)



LACK OF ADEQUATE FACILITIES

Crumbling infrastructure, outdated equipment and textbooks, sanitation facilities and canteens destroyed... Parents sometimes have to collect money to buy chairs as children have nothing to sit on.



CONSTANT FEAR

24-year-old teacher Leonid Makarov with his pupils in the school of Zalizne Vilage. Just as the students were finishing their 9th grade, one of them, Dasha, was killed in a bombing.



DECREASED SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

These boys of Bilytske town should be at school. Instead, they are collecting pieces of scrap metal that they will try to exchange for money.



BULLYING & VIOLENCE

Adolescents at schools living in areas near the “contact line” report greater readiness for political violence, higher normalization of bullying and reduced quality of life.