



KIND's *Suzir'ya* Project December 2024

What is *Suzir'ya*?

As the war in Ukraine continues, children displaced from Ukraine are increasingly at risk—or victims—of child trafficking, abuse, and other violations of their basic rights. Civil society organizations (CSOs) dedicated to helping children can play a vital role protecting these children by providing specialized support and working in partnership with state actors responsible for child protection and access to justice.

“*Suzir'ya*” means “constellation” in Ukrainian. It embodies the project's aim of fostering national and transnational cooperation and partnerships across sectors and agencies and embracing innovative solutions. *Suzir'ya* strives to provide essential protection, support, and access to justice for children displaced from Ukraine in Europe.

Project Objectives

- Improve skills and knowledge of CSOs, governments, and other key stakeholders to identify, document, and preserve evidence of conflict-related crimes committed against children displaced from Ukraine, who are now living in Czechia, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia.
- Establish coordinated interagency hubs in Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia to provide legal and psychosocial assistance.
- Strengthen integrated child protection systems.
- Coordinate key actors and systems at the transnational level.

Why *Suzir'ya*?

Children are disproportionately impacted by conflict such as the war in Ukraine, giving rise to acute child protection risks. Since the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022, the UN Refugee Agency estimates that nearly 6.7 million Ukrainians and foreign national residents of Ukraine have been forced to flee the country. Approximately one-third of these refugees are children, including an unknown number who are unaccompanied or separated, making this the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II.

The needs of children displaced from Ukraine are becoming increasingly complex. Organized criminal groups and human traffickers thrive in times of conflict, and displacement makes individuals, particularly children, highly vulnerable to exploitation, abuse, and trafficking. Also, many children on the move have witnessed or been the victims of human rights violations because of the war. Further, the risks of human trafficking have evolved as many displaced children go online for social interaction and schooling, rendering them vulnerable to trafficking in new ways. KIND's innovative *Suzir'ya* project is designed to counter and respond to these needs.

We are working with other key stakeholders to support coordinated interagency national and transnational child protection systems. We do this by providing training; and direct, psychosocial and case management services that center children. Government and CSOs can play a vital role in protecting children from, and helping them respond to, human trafficking and other crimes related to the war. By emphasizing the



importance of sharing key information, resources, and implementing new tools (including open-source intelligence tools), we are working to protect children systematically.

Activities to Achieve Goals

- 1. Providing training:** KIND developed—and is now delivering—a pioneering training curriculum to civil society organizations (CSOs), government actors, and other key stakeholders across Europe. KIND’s training materials will improve knowledge and skills to identify children who may have been impacted by grave human rights violations and crimes linked to the war in Ukraine, including child trafficking to improve accountability efforts. KIND’s training materials also address how to protect and realize the rights of children displaced by war. KIND is presenting its training curriculum in Slovakia in December 2024, followed by Poland, Czechia, and Romania in 2025. The curriculum addresses country-specific challenges, needs, and policies, ensuring local ownership and relevancy for stakeholders.
- 2. Establishing multidisciplinary, inter-agency “hubs”:** The hub teams, consisting of lawyers and case managers, work with children displaced from Ukraine and liaise with CSOs, as well as government actors, to protect a child’s best interest and support accountability efforts. The teams focus on strengthening protections and ensuring access to justice for at-risk children displaced by war. They do so by providing direct, trauma-informed, child-friendly legal assistance and support in a range of matters impacting displaced children. When children are supported to participate fully in their cases, they are better able to access justice and more likely to obtain comprehensive, secure and sustainable solutions that protect them.
- 3. Strengthening integrated child protection systems:** Building from our training curriculum, KIND is rolling out additional stand-alone workshops in the region designed to strengthen child protection systems and foster a better understanding of the complex legal frameworks, structures, safeguards, and standards meant to protect children. KIND is also coordinating a new, 20-member Regional Child Protection Advisory Group, to support system-strengthening activities. The group will leverage its combined expertise to collaborate, share good practices, and jointly promote necessary change with key players in the hopes of facilitating national and transnational understanding and cooperation.
- 4. Coordinating key actors and systems at the transnational level:** KIND will convene key, multidisciplinary stakeholders at two regional workshops and one simulation-based training between 2025 and 2026. These workshops will explore employing larger, transnational referral mechanisms that are better at sharing information and managing cases. KIND supported Child Helpline International in 2024 to organize regional workshops and learning exchanges to increase the knowledge of actors charged with protecting Ukrainian youth. Moreover, the exchanges seek to foster partnerships focused on protecting and advancing the best interests of children at risk—or victims—of abuse, exploitation, trafficking, and other grave rights violations.

KIND’s experience with unaccompanied and separated children, coupled with our partnerships with CSOs and pro bono partners in Europe since 2016, provides us with deep expertise in protecting children displaced by conflict. Looking forward, we aim to support cross-border solutions centered around the best interests of the child.