

IMPACT REPORT 2023





Dear Friends,

As we approach the two-year mark since the onset of the war in Ukraine, I would like to share a heartfelt update on the impact of the SOK Foundation's work. The war has cast a long shadow over the lives of millions, and it is the **children who bear the heaviest burdens**. We see this clearly in Poland, which has opened its arms to the largest number of refugees since World War II. **SOK Foundation has focused on helping the youngest – 400,000 Ukrainian refugee children**. Your generous support and donations have been instrumental in these efforts.

Reflecting on my own journey as a refugee child, when my family left the country during martial law in 1983, I understand the challenges of displacement, but the struggles faced by Ukraine's children today are on a different scale. I am humbled by their resilience.

In 2022-23 we've implemented programs that have significantly improved the lives of thousands of children. The programs described in this report are made possible by individual donations. Two other programs – The Learning Passport and Akelius, are made possible through our work with UNICEF.

Our initiatives center on two fundamental aspects of a child's well-being: mental health and language acquisition, particularly through the teaching of Polish as a second language. By addressing stress levels and providing language support, we offer stability, enhanced educational opportunities, and meaningful connections within communities.

While our ultimate dream is for Ukrainian children to return home in peace, the reality is that, for now, their lives are in Poland. **Our commitment is to make their lives as stable and sound as possible**. To achieve this, we focused on the adults who play a crucial role in their lives – the teachers. **1,650 Polish and Ukrainian teachers took part in intensive trainings and over 10,000 were reached through our partnership with UNICEF and WHO**.

In addition to teacher training, **our Mobile Psychologist program directly addressed the mental health needs of Ukrainian children.** Our psychologists traveled to schools and kindergartens in Warsaw, providing therapy in their native language.

Furthermore, we continued our initial response to the war by **providing direct humanitarian aid, including food assistance and the distribution of essential items.** Refugees, alongside our team, have cooked in our kitchen to support their families and others in need.


Our hope for the war to end remains steadfast, but the reality of that war is less hopeful than ever. After two years of holding off the Russian invasion with the help of the international community, Ukraine is worn down. Meanwhile, the world has shifted its attention to other conflicts and needs drying up the river of support that initially flowed into our region to assist in both the war effort and the people it has displaced.

The refugee children sheltering in Poland cannot go home and their families cannot start rebuilding their devastated country. They need foundations like SOK and our community of donors to continue supporting their efforts to heal and rebuild themselves in preparation for a very uncertain future.

We are committed to this work and deeply grateful to everyone who has made it possible through donations. We cannot, as a foundation and individuals, will this war to end. **But we can and are making sure that the Ukrainian children in Poland's care become stronger, wiser and more capable.** Though it may seem that we are focused on the things that children desperately need today, what we believe we are doing, is ensuring that **they become the future leaders and rebuilders of Ukraine tomorrow.** Your support is the heartbeat of our mission.

Thank you and warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a profoundly hopeful 2024!

With gratitude,
Katia Roman-Trzaska
SOK Foundation CEO



SOK was founded in 2018 to help children in Polish orphanages lead resilient lives, have better self esteem, and sense of agency. We did this by teaching basic life skills like cooking, and connected kids with volunteer mentors.

February 24, 2024 will mark two years since Russia invaded Ukraine and displaced millions, the vast majority being children and women. SOK Foundation organizes large scale, impactful programs to support refugee children with mental health and language acquisition. Our premise is simple - helping kids with war trauma and enabling them to communicate effectively in school builds their resilience and helps them thrive. We are helping those who will one day rebuild Ukraine.



This report does not include financial information. SOK Foundation financial report will be prepared in accordance with Polish law by March 31st 2024.

PARTNERS & DONORS

Our work would not be possible without people and institutions who put their trust in us. We are deeply grateful for your support this past year. Our thanks go especially to:

Mason Erdoes & family

Jessica & Jerry Seinfeld

Joanna Kalinowska

Wanda OBrien-Trefil

C L I F F O R D
C H A N C E

Clifford Chance international law firm provides pro bono legal counsel to SOK Foundation.

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Warszawa



Ministry of Education and Science
Republic of Poland



TECH TO THE RESCUE

J.P.Morgan



POLISH-AMERICAN
FREEDOM FOUNDATION



FUNDACJA
EDUKACJA
DLA DEMOKRACJI



UKRAIŃSKI
DOM

THREE PILLARS OF SOK FOUNDATION'S HELP FOR UKRAINIAN REFUGEES

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

Trainings for teachers in how to help children with war trauma and high stress levels and psychological support for refugees.

SUPPORTING LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Intensive programs for teachers in how to teach Polish as a foreign language specifically designed for Ukrainian speakers.

HUMANITARIAN AID

Providing food assistance and participating in community building initiatives for families and children in Warsaw area.



MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

SOK's psychosocial support program alleviates the negative psychological and social impacts of challenging and traumatic experiences, particularly in the context of war and forced relocation to a foreign country. Refugee children are especially prone to post-traumatic stress due to a sense of powerlessness and extreme changes affecting their families. Our programs are for Polish teachers because they are the ones who spend most time with children and whose work can make the biggest impact.



"The training exceeded my expectations and came at the moment I MOST needed help! I started teaching refugee kids that just came to Poland. Now I can do my job better, I can help better. Thank you for supporting teachers at a time when few remember about us..."

In 2023 we reached **10,000 teachers** with our MHPSS program during:


- **7** "Quiet Mind" trainings
- **6** workshops
- **2** webinars
- **3** online courses (Learning Passport)
- **5** online microcourses (Learning Passport)

Our graduates impacted the lives of **200,000 children** by implementing innovative methods and tools in their schools.


LEARNING PASSPORT PLATFORM

In 2023, SOK Foundation partnered with UNICEF in an initiative to implement the Learning Passport platform in Poland. LP enables continuous access to education for children, youth, and teachers around the world and drive improved learning outcomes through **high-quality, online education**.

Combined efforts of UNICEF Refugee Response Office and SOK Foundation engaged **10,000 teachers. learners** joining the platform.



"I sincerely recommend this training. It was one of the best I have ever attended. Topics chosen for the workshops were exactly what my class needed (stress, trauma, PTSD). My work suddenly became more complex when refugees started coming here and I didn't know how to take care of these children. I am a better teacher after the training. Thank you very much SOK."



"We all need more trainings with SOK! Teaching is very high quality and practical. The content made me realize how much more I can learn and do for Ukrainian children. The emotional regulation component is unique to SOK programs and stands out from others. Please keep it going. There are so many more teachers who need this kind of help!"

"QUIET MIND"

Teachers struggle with unprecedented refugee crisis in Polish schools. This course helps them to find practical solutions to mental health problems faced by Ukrainian children affected by the trauma of war. The program's **holistic approach** also addresses the importance of intercultural communication and inclusivity techniques to **counteract discrimination**. By equipping educators and caregivers with these skills, the program strives to create a positive impact on the mental and emotional **well-being of children** facing the aftermath of war and forced displacement.

During **7 editions** of the training this year, we trained **2,000 teachers**.

MOBILE PSYCHOLOGIST

The "Mobile Psychologist in Ukrainian" project is **a response to mental health problems and traumas experienced by refugee children and teenagers** who came to Warsaw to escape the war in Ukraine.

Experience of war and fleeing one's country significantly impacts children's psychological well-being and contributes to **the deterioration of mental health**. This may manifest as, e.g., verbal and physical aggression towards both peers and adults, withdrawal from relationships, problems with concentration and learning, tearfulness and irritability, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and attempts.

Parents and caregivers are unable to provide specialized care. Children can receive support mainly in schools and kindergartens they attend where most staff are not fluent in Ukrainian - this language barrier makes it difficult or sometimes impossible to receive help. Psychologists who go to schools on an "on call" basis provide steady and invaluable help.

Between June and August 2023, the Mobile Psychologist project has reached almost 400 Ukrainian children, provided 400 hours of specialized care in over 60 Polish schools and kindergartens.



MOBILE PSYCHOLOGIST - STORIES



Weronika, 5 years old

Moved to Poland at the beginning of the war. She goes to a kindergarten with a Polish group - it was very difficult for her to adapt. Weronika is sensitive and absentminded and does not initiate contact with other children easily. Every morning when the day starts she feels tense and breathes hard, speaks in a hushed voice and only when absolutely necessary. The girl's father has left the family which was yet another stressful experience for her. Since the beginning of the work, the girl has put a great trust in the psychologist from the project "Mobile Psychologist". Frequent individual classes with her and her mother, in the form of psychological games, art therapy, psychological techniques, had a beneficiary effect. Weronika willingly goes to kindergarten and has established more enthusiastic contacts with the girls in the group. She draws clear, bright pictures. The tone of voice has changed, she is braver. Life has color again.

MOBILE PSYCHOLOGIST - STORIES



Margo, 13 years old

Margo came from Ukraine at the beginning of the war. Her home in Donetsk region was destroyed in 2014. In 2022 during the large-scale invasion, the family decided to move to Poland. At school, the girl was often depressed. Her classmates did not like her because Margo was often in a bad mood. The girl became withdrawn and often thought about suicide. She drew bloody and crying figures. Due to the language barrier, Margo avoided contact with the school psychologist. The school applied for the "Mobile psychologist" project. It was decided that the girl should be under the supervision of a psychiatrist. For two weeks Margo received support in the hospital, but when she returned she said they didn't understand what the doctors were saying. The school provided a psychologist working with her in Ukrainian, who helped the girl return to normal life.

Thanks to their meetings, Margo's approach to life has changed a lot. She is happier and has found like-minded people. The psychologist helped her get out of her depressed state, the girl participates in various activities in organizations supporting Ukrainian children. Margo has begun to regularly meet with other teenagers. A lot of work has been done, but she still needs continuous, individual support.

MOBILE PSYCHOLOGIST - STORIES



Ivan 14 years old

Ivan has been living with his mother in Warsaw for more than a year. Their move took place a few months after the war broke out, when the Russians began occupying Mariupol. As a result of bombings in the city, the boy's grandparents were killed, and the boy's dad decided to move to Kiev.

Ivan, upon arriving in Poland, could not come to terms with the thought that he had lost his loved ones, his home was destroyed and that he could not return to Mariupol. He rejected learning the Polish language and avoided making new relationships, still hoping that the war would end quickly.

Consultation sessions under the "Mobile Psychologist" project played a key role in the process of Ivan's adaptation to his new environment. The specialist's help allowed the boy to find himself in his new environment and understood that it was better to stay in Poland for his safety. Thanks to this, Ivan is slowly becoming more motivated to learn, opening up to making new friends and regains the will to live.

POLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

Children who speak the local language will feel stable and thrive in school. Recognizing the urgent need for **effective language education** tailored to non-native speakers, our organization responded swiftly by developing a comprehensive support system for teachers in Poland.



"I am glad that I could have participated in SOK's training. I was lost, the Ukrainian kids that came to my school were lost – everyone was lost. I wanted to create a space that will help them build a sense of belonging but I was failing because I didn't know what to do and was facing a language barrier. One of the teachers in my school informed me about the SOK's initiative and it was exactly what I needed. It was intense but well-planned and professional. My Ukrainian students do better in school now, they understand more and I'm glad I could be a part of that change – thanks to you!"

Our program shows how to teach Polish as a foreign language – a skill which few Polish teachers needed before the war. In addition, it shows how to help with emotional problems unique to refugee war experience. It is extremely practical, creates a community of teachers who share experiences and integrates **modern glottodidactic methodology with emotional regulation techniques**. This innovative model ensures that educators, regardless of their location, can benefit from pre-recorded lectures at their convenience, while real-time workshop sessions and consultations facilitate direct interaction between instructors and participants. With a focus on providing practical tools, such as workbooks and study materials, our initiative equips participants with the skills needed to **effectively teach Polish as a second language**, contributing to the holistic development of children facing language-related challenges in the aftermath of war.

POLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS

14,000 children receiving language and emotional support

1,000 teachers trained



9 editions language instruction for teachers, each edition – **12 days**

1,300 hours of language instruction for teachers

“I am impressed with this training. I’ve been a teacher for 30 years and still I learned so much! [...] Thank you and bravo! I started applying SOK teaching methods in my class and I can see improvement – my kids have more confidence in speaking Polish and make more friends between Ukrainian and Polish groups.”

“Extremely valuable, informative, enriching. Great training for teachers of Polish as a foreign language, it is like a bright signpost for teachers. I struggled with teaching Polish to new students in my class and it impacted all of the children there. Now I have tools to be a better teacher and I’m making a positive impact.”

SOK ACADEMY



SOK Academy started in June 2023 organizes meetings with best experts in the fields of education, resilience, migration, language acquisition etc. This is know-how which everyone who works with refugee children needs but has no way to access. To date, SOK Foundation has successfully organized five SOK Academy webinars for **500 live participants** and reaching a broader **audience of 1,500 viewers overall**. The impact of SOK Academy lies in its ability to facilitate meaningful conversations, hear expert insights, and help in professional development of educators, fostering a more inclusive environment for teachers.



photos: Kamil Witkowski

CONTINUOUS SUPPORT: COOKING FOR REFUGEES

8 months of food assistance, cooking with
and for Ukrainian families and students






Ukrainian Easter in Warsaw, April 2023
Together with Ukrainian, House SOK Foundation organized the Easter celebration for **1,500 refugees** and distributed **300 care packages** containing food, personal care items and toys.





CREDENTIALIALS

On December 12, 2023, SOK Foundation received the results of Micro Assessment commissioned by UNICEF and performed by BDO Jordan. SOK received "low risk" rating.



MICRO ASSESSMENT OF
SOK FOUNDATION
POLAND
COMMISSIONED BY
UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (UNICEF)

December 2023



CREDENTIALS

Organizations that have been validated by CAF International have completed an extensive application and due diligence process with one of CAF International's Global Offices.

The CAF International Validated Organization Badge is awarded to organizations that are structured and operated as nonprofit entities. This is confirmed by a validation process that goes far beyond a simple reliance on a foreign government database.

The CAF International validation process includes a review of an organization's key operational elements such as their governance structure, registration status, annual financial statements, online and media presence, and their board members and senior staff. This validation process ensures that all funds sent to the organization will be used charitably, and it allows CAF International and their donors to mitigate the risk of fraud, money laundering, and other criminal activities.





THANK YOU FOR YOUR ONGOING SUPPORT!

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