

Putin's Invasion of Ukraine:
The Psychological Impact.



↑ Mother and children pass remains of destroyed Russian tanks. Bucha, August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

The Authors.



Roger Mullin is a former member of the UK Parliament and former Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Explosive Threats. He now chairs REVIVE Campaign. Prior to becoming an MP, Roger ran a number of specialist research firms, and undertook 27 international assignments for United Nations agencies and individual governments. Many of his assignments took him to countries recovering from or currently experiencing periods of conflict, ranging from Namibia to The Yemen. Roger is an honorary professor at the University of Stirling in Scotland, where he supports the university's MSc degree on Human Rights and Diplomacy.



Marina Kedrova (Марина Кедрова) is a research psychologist and journalist, she recently specialised in the psychological adaptation of demobilised military personnel. Married with a young daughter, Marina lives in the western region of Ukraine near the Slovakian border while her husband is fighting the Russians.



Sergii Ugrum (Сергій Угрюм) is a psychologist and psychoanalytical psychotherapist with 20 years experience. Sergeii possesses a Masters in Psychology and is working towards his doctorate. He is currently in Paris as a displaced Ukrainian, and acts as a counselor on the Ukrainian National Psychological Association hotline for Ukrainians suffering from the war (Funded by the United Nations Development Programme).



Nigel Ellway is the founder and executive director of the REVIVE Campaign, he is also the Head of Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Explosive Threats. Nigel is a former journalist and Whitehall advisor. He has worked in the mine-action sector for over a decade and regularly speaks on the politics of mine-action and victim assistance at international meetings – including in the UK Parliament, the European Parliament and the United Nations.



David Pratt has spent almost four decades working as a war correspondent and covering foreign affairs for a number of outlets including the BBC, The Scotsman, Sunday Times, The Independent, Daily Telegraph, The New York Times, Channel 4 News, and Al-Jazeera. David has been named Journalist of the Year in the Scottish Press Awards, has twice been Reporter of the Year and twice Feature Writer of the Year and is a five-times finalist in the Amnesty International Media Awards for human rights reporting. As this report went to print, David was on his second assignment to Ukraine since the invasion.

Table of Contents.

Foreword.	3
<i>Chapter 1</i> Introduction.	4
<i>Chapter 2</i> Early displacement experiences.	6
<i>Chapter 3</i> Perceived barriers to effective engagement.	8
<i>Chapter 4</i> Other early impacts of war on women and children.	12
<i>Chapter 5</i> The process of adaption.	14
<i>Chapter 6</i> Views from professional counsellors and psychologists.	18
<i>Chapter 7</i> Reflections on trauma.	20
<i>Chapter 8</i> The United Kingdom's humanitarian response.	22
<i>Chapter 9</i> Discussion.	24
<i>Chapter 10</i> Recommendations.	26
References.	28



↑ Uncleared mine field. Bucha August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

Foreword.

Vladimir Putin's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 shook the world and created a whole new paradigm in geopolitics.

It also destroyed the peaceful way of life for millions of Ukrainians.

Government's around the world reacted by searching for a diplomatic solution to bring about a peaceful resolution. While this has had little success a number of countries have supplied defensive and humanitarian materials. Many have taken in thousands of Ukrainian refugees.

Few governments are giving due consideration to how to cope with the victims – essentially the entire population of Ukraine – once the conflict comes to an end.

Conflicts do end, and politicians 'move on', but the victims of conflict, so often talked about, are in reality often overlooked and quickly forgotten.

The impact of conflict on innocent people however can last an entire lifetime: Particularly the psychological impact.

For those that fled the country, they find themselves in alien environments, surrounded by well-meaning but often inexperienced or naïve people – while living with anxiety and fear for those they left behind.

Those who remain, live under the constant threat to their lives, their livelihoods, their homes and their freedom.

Putin's ambition is to eradicate the identity of Ukraine. Centuries of evidence point to a loss of identity as being one of the most personally traumatic occurrences and a prime cause of mental distress. Where Putin has failed is that the Ukrainian identity is if anything, stronger. Their resilience has been astounding.

This piece of research represents the tip of the iceberg with regards to the scale of psychological harm caused by Putin's aggression towards the people of Ukraine. It is not just the statistics that make this report so powerful, but the human stories behind those statistics.

We at REVIVE have been humbled by the extraordinary work of our Ukrainian researchers, who will themselves be suffering the same anxieties of those they surveyed for this study.

I would like to personally thank Marina and Sergei. Our thoughts are with them and the Ukrainian people – with our fervent desire for the swift end to this appalling war.

This is the first piece of research undertaken by REVIVE during an active conflict – an experience we hope not to have to repeat. What this work must do is convince politicians in the UK and around the world to think harder about the victims of conflict, and to devise and implement appropriate and robust policies that will help the people of Ukraine – and indeed, victims of all conflicts – to rebuild their lives, their communities and their country.

My final thanks go to our chairman, Prof. Roger Mullin for authoring this report, to Zoe Clack for her contribution and to Mr Leonard Ilka of Institut Dr. Foerster GmbH for his unwavering support for this project.

Nigel Ellway
Founder & Director
REVIVE Campaign

Introduction.



↑ Mother weeps over grave of newly buried son who was killed in action. Lviv, March 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

The innocent.

Too often in war and in the aftermath of war, the most innocent of those affected, children and young mothers, have the greatest of long term needs accompanied by the weakest of voices. This is no less true of the Ukraine-Russia war as of other wars. This report is a small but hopefully significantly attempts to raise issues affecting the most innocent, in the hope that they will not be forgotten..

Study challenges.

This is no standard report. Trying to find the voices of the dispossessed, of refugees continually on the move, and amidst the chaos created by war does not create circumstances amenable to highly controlled and structured academic study. But such difficulties must not become excuses.

As this report is published, it is still under a year since Russian troops invaded Ukraine. The long run ramifications are still not clear. No one knows what type of peace will follow nor when. At this time we having to look into a very uncertain future, whereas in years to come researchers will have the advantages of hindsight.

“ Every war
is a war against
children.”

Eglantyne Jebb

A chance encounter.

At the outbreak of war, REVIVE Campaign was convinced of the need to understand the humanitarian consequences. But it was by chance rather than by design that we set off on a path to capture the early insights of the vulnerable and dispossessed.

By a remarkable coincidence, the daughter of REVIVE Campaign’s chairman called him only a few days after the invasion to ask if he had any advice for a friend who had a friend in Ukraine. Our chairman quickly emailed his daughter’s friend asking her to pass on his contact details and ask if there was anything REVIVE Campaign could do to help. This stimulated the most remarkable response on 11 March which is discussed more fully later in this report. Save to say, the result was a young psychologist in Ukraine volunteered her services to conduct investigations on REVIVE Campaign’s behalf.

Our approach.

This eventually led to almost 100 people being interviewed or more informally being included in discussions. Within a month we were in contact with some internally displaced women and also refugees in neighbouring countries. They came from various towns and cities including Bucha, Izyum, Kharkiv, Kyiv, Irpin, Lviv, Kreminna, Kostiantynivka, Ovruch, Zhytomyr, and a number of smaller villages.

We had worked out a semi-structured interview schedule, with the aim of capturing qualitative insights. As we began to engage, although our efforts may have primarily focused on standard elicitation of personal histories, there were also some aspects that (albeit by happy coincidence) began to resemble what academic researchers would understand as ‘Appreciative Inquiry’¹. That is, as well as capturing the immediate impacts of war, there began to be discussions about needs and aspirations that contained an element of reframing a future reality, and beginning to think more clearly about future aspirations. For example, through recognising trauma, questions arose about what the needs would be for a better equipped education service dealing with severely traumatised children.

Moving forward.

Our report therefore does not suggest any final answers, but rather on the basis of our work suggests some initial ways in which we can do more to raise the voices of those in need and take practical steps to support the moving forward of the most innocent victims of this barbaric war.

Early displacement experiences.

“We have a legal and moral obligation to protect people fleeing bombs, bullets and tyrants, and throughout history those people have enriched our society.”

Juliet Stevenson

Early stages of war.

For the people of Ukraine, this is no distant war. The early days of the Russian invasion saw swift Russian advances on multiple fronts. Indeed, as the following timeline reminds us, the first week of the campaign saw unrelenting Russian military progress.

On 24 February 2022 Russia launched a full-scale assault by land, sea and air on Ukraine. The Ukraine president ordered a general mobilisation. Many feared Ukraine was very ill-prepared and ill-equipped to offer much more than token resistance, with talk of a relative short period of conflict.

The following day on February 25, Russia vetoed a UN Security Council resolution calling for it to unconditionally pull its troops out of Ukraine. By February 27, a mere three days into the conflict, Russian troops were pressing towards Kyiv, Kharkiv and Kherson, and by March 1 in a large offensive move a Russian military convoy some 65 kilometres long was headed for Khiv.

In a major military success, on March 2, some 6 days only since the invasion began, the southern city of Kherson with a population of 250,000, was invaded by Russian tanks and the city fell under Russian control.

Marina Kedrova.

Under such circumstances, it was remarkable that by 11 March REVIVE Campaign received an approach by email from Marina Kedrova including the following message,

“I left Kharkiv on 24 February, the first day of the attack on Ukraine. On that morning, I was awoken by the sound of explosions at 5 AM. Currently, I’m located in the western region of Ukraine, near the border with Slovakia.”

Please let me know how I and my colleagues can help you in researching the psychological impact of explosive violence, communications, and the promotion of humanitarian programs.”

Here was an already displaced young woman with a 4-year-old daughter who had to leave her husband behind, but despite the undoubtedly stressful circumstances who wanted to assist us in understanding the impact of war. It is as a result of Marina’s subsequent in-depth interviews and enrolment of Sergii to assist with interviewing professionals, counsellors and psychologists, that we can report on the early impact of war on those displaced women and children.

Early feelings.

On hearing news of the deaths of acquaintances and neighbours, interviewees from Irpin experienced grief. Grief is often an early reaction to such events, and may invoke feelings of shock, disbelief and even panic. They carried such feelings with them as they were evacuated in March. This speaks to the fact that people carry burdens from the direct effect of war on others.

Women from Kharkiv suffered severe stress when their multi-storey apartment houses shook during the airstrikes. They talked of hiding in the corridors of apartments, covered themselves with blankets, their bodies tossed from the tremors. Other interviewees hid in the cellars of their private homes or basements of high-rise buildings. During explosions from artillery and bombs our interviewees described feelings of horror, strong fear and despair.

Such experiences were carried with them as they evacuated.

Understandably, interviewees were distraught at the thought of leaving homes and possession such as cars behind. Some had already been destroyed and others damaged, but the fact of having to relocate to an area of safety meant their most precious possession, a home, was being left behind to unknown consequences.



↑ Ukraine’s railways have been a lifeline for civilians escaping the fighting and have been targeted by Russian strikes. Lviv, March 2022. All photographs ©David Pratt

Some women had relatives remaining in occupied territories. The bonds of love were often strong, which had impact on the extent of stress and worry. Although in the early stages some remained in contact by phone with their loved ones, hearing about the continuing bombing and shelling would heighten mental stress.

A number of women and children expressed concerns about pets that were left behind with grandparents who were choosing not to evacuate.

An early and understandable reaction of children was the impact of separation from their fathers. They would often speak of their dad, how they spent time together and even what their dad used to say about things. They were retaining an awareness of loss, even extending to concerns about pets that had to be left behind.

Moving away.

All respondents had waited at home for the Russian attack and hoped that everything would soon be over within the first week or two. However, this hope soon became untenable and they evacuated from their cities in the first weeks of March. They had become part of the displaced.

In the early days of displacement, those interviewed primarily journeyed in cars with family and friends, with a minority using trains. This of course was not without risk, and some were inevitably caught up in dangerous journeys.

Initially, like our interviewer Marina, they are likely to have moved to safer areas in west Ukraine, until such time as they realized their safety was best guaranteed by crossing borders to friendly European states.

Many experienced support and a friendly welcome from their new host countries, but so too were there difficult experiences as they sought a place of safety in a society with a different culture, language and norms from those they were used to in Ukraine. Inevitably, some came across barriers to effective engagement and it is to this aspect we now turn.

“It is the obligation of every person born in a safer room to open the door when someone in danger knocks.”

Nadia Hashimi

Chapter 3 |

Perceived barriers to effective engagement.

Overview.

Those involved in our study were very grateful for the place of safety being offered to them by other countries. They were also very grateful for the love and support offered to them by individuals, families and local institutions. This has to be kept in mind as we explore some of the barriers to engagement that have been faced. Some of these barriers are cultural in nature, some administrative.

Although our interviewees for this section were primarily based in the Czech Republic, we note that other countries share similar barriers. To take but one example from Germany, in October 2022 it was reported, ¹¹

“The bigger challenge for Cottbus (a city in eastern Germany) is integrating newcomers into city life, especially in terms of providing adequate education and health care.....The city lacks interpreters and staff to offer extra help...medical practices (are) struggling to keep up with their regular patient load and the addition of war refugees”

The report went on to highlight issues affecting children and education in particular, noting that,

“About 1,500 have been resettled (in Cottbus), according to city statistics. One-third are of school age. That means about 500 children and young people, with various education levels, language abilities, and war-borne traumas, needed to be quickly incorporated into the local school system.”

We highlight the issue of trauma, to which we will return later.



↑ Man shelters for warmth in resilience centre. Borodyanka January 2023.

All photographs ©David Pratt

Language barrier.

It will come as no surprise that a major barrier faced by some of our interviewees is that of language. For example, some based in the Czech Republic faced considerable problems. There are multiple dimensions for language barriers.

In the best case situation, there was an ability to communicate directly using the medium of English. This required both Ukrainian refugees and Czech officials to have sufficient English skills to communicate complex issues ranging from clearly describing particular financial and health problems to describing in detail local administrative requirements.

However, the best case does not appear to be particularly common. Not all Ukrainians have sufficient skill in English and many local officials similarly lack such skills. This makes the task of communication both difficult and stressful. As our interviewer put it,

“A significant percentage of public officials do not speak English well enough / or do not speak English, which means that Ukrainian women who do not yet know Czech cannot solve urgent issues with the help of English.”

Particular difficulty is faced by Ukrainian women who do not speak English or Czech. This strips individuals of the ability to take part in effective communication adding to their stress. At the time of our interviews there were few language classes available locally.



↑ Recovering soldier at Next Step Ukraine rehabilitation centre. Irpin January 2023.

All photographs ©David Pratt



↑ An elderly woman collects water from an emergency standpipe. Mykolaiv, August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

Other communication issues.

On some occasions Ukrainian women experienced deficiencies in empathy on the part of local officials, with an inability to understand their experience and problems.

Practical barriers to effective engagement included difficulty in getting answers to questions, and/or a failure to pass messages on to someone who may be able to provide answers.

This of course is not a unique phenomenon, but when it involves people under severe stress or even trauma, in an unfamiliar environment, it becomes much more difficult an issue.

Cultural issues and pre-school education.

We explored by observation and interviews examples of day to day living to gain an insight into cultural challenges. The following highlights the area of education for young children.

For many families in the Czech Republic, it is considered normal and indeed good practice for a mother with a pre-school child to stay at home and not take their child to kindergarten or to a part-time group. Observations during the day on playgrounds suggest that mothers are often helped to look after their children by their husbands, grandmothers, or significant others. There is a belief among many Czechs that in the Czech Republic it is not so easy to place a child in kindergarten, and they put up with it. Therefore, both in Mikulov and in other cities, they are in no hurry to help Ukrainian women with finding places in kindergartens.

However, many Ukrainian families who have obtained refuge in the Czech Republic include working mothers, children who had been in kindergarten and now both adults and children bore some of the hallmarks of severe stress and even trauma due to a loss of all that was commonplace and familiar to them in Ukraine.

In addition, whereas most families in host countries will be nuclear with a husband and wife caring directly for their children, many Ukrainian families had due to the war become single parent families as the male adult had to stay behind in Ukraine to serve in some capacity as part of the war effort. Some families were extended in nature to include grandparents and other relatives. But for most, the war had torn asunder the familiar family ties.

Ukrainian families were very grateful for the humanitarian financial support they received, but the wider stresses on families were very considerable.

More widely, Ukrainian refugees in many countries face prejudice of the outsider. Inevitable, stereotypes are created which are often wide of the mark, such as seeing refugees as relatively unskilled fit only for more menial jobs.

In a few cases interviewees had experienced some verbal aggression.

These are only a few examples of cultural barriers often making integration difficult.

Other early impacts of war on women and children.

“ For every wounded warrior, there is a multitude of family, friends, and communities who are forever changed. ”

Diana Mankin Phelps

Women and war.

Our study has not focused on those families caught up in the direct violence of war and direct confrontation with the enemy. The huge trauma of war has been the subject of much comment elsewhere.

We know that war creates acute and long-lasting health problems in men and women, but many aspects of war affect the health of women disproportionately, partly through societal changes that may subordinate them and lead to a lack of prioritization of their life and health.^{III}

In areas of war and conflict, women are more likely to face the threats of community violence outside the home.^{IV} Women may experience violent acts, including rape and torture as seen in the actions of Russian troops in Ukraine.

But, it cannot be assumed that women and children who have sought places of safety beyond Ukraine are immune for stresses and challenges of war.

Heroic acts.

In times of war, women often bear the sole responsibility and risk of getting their families and themselves out of harm's way^V Often, a conflict's gender dynamics reflect sexist social norms: Men are expected to fight; women are forced to flee. REVIVE Campaign believes that escaping while protecting yourself and your children is itself a heroic act, if an unheralded one.

But, such heroic acts are not without deep consequences. There is much research that suggests women pay a particularly high burden in terms of long term stress and resultant depression and other mental health challenges. Children too can carry burdens from trauma affecting them long term unless they receive affective care and interventions.

Families who have lost a father to war or to long terms debilitating injury are often required to rebuild economically, socially and in terms of relationships, led by a burdened mother. Little wonder then that Murthy and Lakshminarayana^{VI} have concluded that, “*women have an increased vulnerability to the psychological consequences of war*”.

Even at relatively early states of the Ukraine-Russia conflict, we can clearly see these stresses playing out.



All photographs ©David Pratt

† Nadezhda Kalashnikova and her surviving child. She lost her daughter and a leg after a pro-Russian separatist rocket attack. Triokhizbenka, 2015.

Stress.

Some of those women interviewed were under stress due to a wide variety of factors. This may be due to their everyday situations or feelings for loved ones who remain in Ukraine or in the occupied territories. The lack of communication clearly contributed to stress and anxiety at an early stage of the war.

Stresses revealed themselves in different ways. For example, some women were emotionally agitated, tense, irritable, or depressed. What appeared to help was where there was an effective focus on constructive communication, mutual support and tolerance for each other.

Child regression.

Pre-school and school-age children in April 2022 had marked signs of child regression, although after some weeks the children had become somewhat calmer in many cases.

The following example highlights the type of impact on child development. One girl (5-6 years old, attending a preparatory class at a school in Mikulov) stopped using self-care skills she had already acquired. This caused concern to teachers and from her mother. The girl's mother asked our interviewer about the possibility of a free consultation with a child psychologist, but she did not subsequently follow up.

This example may seem mundane, but was clearly adding to the challenges faced by both mother and teachers.

Education.

For children who go to school in a new country, it has become a significant burden to study school subjects in a new language. Those who stay at home lack the attention of peers and according to our interviewees often were bored, had unspent energy as a result of lack of play, all adding to the regular challenges faced by mothers unsupported by absent fathers.

Professional Support.

While most women were coping with the added stress according to our interviews, it was already clear that some recognised the need for psychological or psychiatric support. This was particularly true for those who appear to have been in severe stress or even suffering trauma. In a later chapter we review the result of interviews with professional counsellors and psychologists.

Thankfully, all of our interviewees had access to regular health care support, and were highly appreciative of host country support. Such early impacts clearly affected the process of adaption to new circumstances and it is to this we now turn.

The process of adaption.



Adaption.

Adam Smith, cited opposite, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* pointed to the need in us all to care about the fortune of others. But our understanding of people's needs can vary just as cultural norms can vary. Having a concern for the fortune of others in itself is not enough, it needs to be realised in practical form.

Some of the evidence from our interviews presented earlier in this report already point to the challenges of adaption to new circumstances at times of war, and specifically for those families who have sought safety beyond Ukraine.

Adapting to a new country as a refugee is rarely straightforward. This is hardly news, but sadly can be forgotten, including by policy makers. Cultural norms can determine what is acceptable behaviour. Women who are refugees or live in war zones are sometimes under social control, expected to follow the social patterns of host countries, while retaining their attachments to those at home. This is not a new phenomenon: There are many examples from previous conflicts^{VII} of how established cultural values can be impediments to adaption and development.

Women being hosted in a variety of European countries were interviewed and provided their perceptions of assistance provided by the state. Invariably our interviewees were grateful for such support as they received. According to our interviewees the following was being provided to assist them individually and which was also contributing to their adaption to the host country.

Please be aware we have not sought to verify the claims made as we are particularly interested in the perceptions of our interviewees.

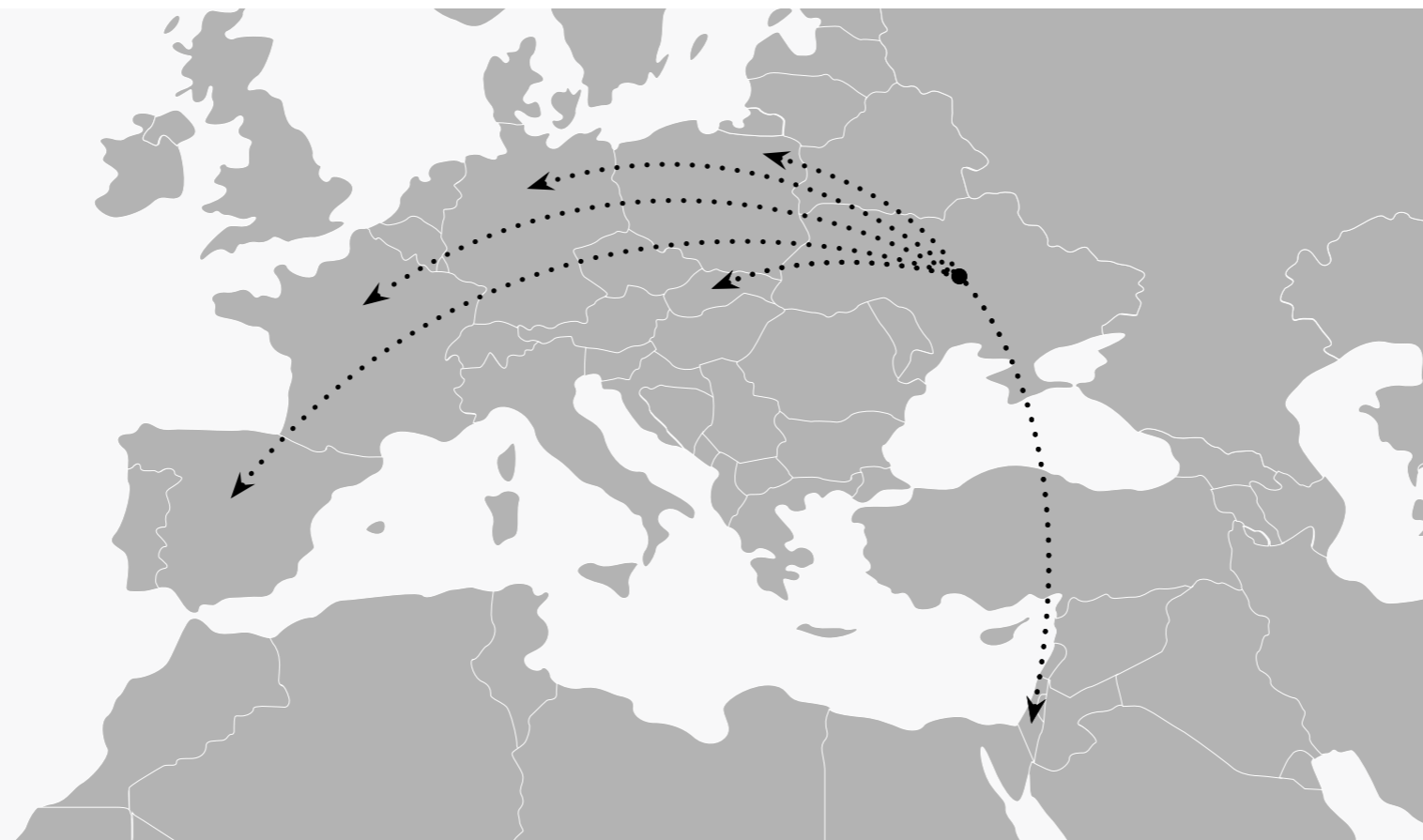
↑ Exhausted child among Ukrainian refugees at railway station on Polish border. Przemysl, March 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

→

“How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, through he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it.”

Adam Smith



Chapter 5 |

The process of
adaption.

Thus our small sample of interviewees spread across a number of countries suggests that there is considerable practical support being provided to Ukrainian refugees, and that there is evidence of some psychological services, including trauma related services, being available in some locations.

That said, it is very clear from discussions that many of our respondents had anxieties and fears. For some, this has led them to engage with psychological services, and it is to considering this that we now turn to hear from those providing psychological services directly to those in need.

Germany.

Ukrainian refugees in Germany receive a wide variety of practical support. This includes 450 euros/per month for adults, and reduced amounts for children thought to be around 200 euros per month.

Social housing is provided contingent upon the number of inhabitants, and medical services are available. Both pre-school and school education is available for children, and free German language courses for adults. Job Centres provide job search support. Free psychological support is also available from Ukrainian speaking therapists.

France.

Financial payment for an adult person – is reported to be 400 euros per month. However, it is thought the provision of assistance to Ukrainians is not as well organized as in Germany and the Czech Republic.

“The communication system is not clearly structured. Attempts by Ukrainians to figure out what’s what, takes a lot of time.”

In general, Ukrainians appear to receive similar assistance as in Germany, including free psychological support from Ukrainian speaking therapists..

Spain.

According to our interviewees, financial support is not available to all Ukrainians under temporary protection. Only people in special need can count on money from the state. Doctor’s appointments are free of charge, and there are medicines for which a preferential coupon is issued. There are hotlines in the Ukrainian language. Language courses in Spain are free.

In Catalonia, the Red Cross registers Ukrainians and supplies them with food, clothing, hygiene items, and other small items. It also provides accommodation in hotels, where there are rooms for several people and 3 meals a day. There is a prospect of getting free social housing for Ukrainians., however, the exact timing was unknown at the time of our interviews.

Poland.

Currently, humanitarian centres are still operating on the border and border cities of Poland, and free food is provided for Ukrainians. Free accommodation is initially provided in refugee camps.

There is one-time aid reported to be 300 PLN (60 EUR) per adult, 500 PLN (100 EUR) per child. Also, when applying, many Ukrainians received assistance from the UN - 700 zlotys (150 euros).

Ukrainian children go to Polish schools and kindergartens with Ukrainian pedagogues. They are treated with care and with fewer demands than Polish children. But there is a perceived need for Ukrainian-speaking tutors for children to aid their adaption and inclusion. Ukrainians have access to a limited amount of free psychological assistance.

According to our interviewees, in Poland they actively help Ukrainians and show a lot of care.

Slovakia.

From an early stage there was free accommodation in hotels and hostels. At first, food and clothes were provided by volunteers. There is financial assistance for adults and children. For our respondent a place was offered for their child at a local school, but the child continued instead to study online at a Ukrainian school. Slovak language courses are available free of charge.

Ukrainians have the opportunity to work in Slovakia, however the perception of our respondent was that workers are mainly required for low-skilled work.

Israel.

Israel does not grant the status of refugees to citizens of Ukraine, they are given the status of tourists who have come to visit their relatives or friends. Ukrainians with Jewish roots have the right to repatriation.

Upon arrival in Israel, Ukrainians are given 700 shekels (approximately 196 euros) for food packages. Insurance for 2-3 months is provided free of charge. Ukrainians can rent apartments in Israel, but as a rule they are unfurnished.

Ukrainians are actively helped by public organizations and volunteers, who provide clothes, food and other humanitarian aid.

The Israeli Trauma Coalition has trained several streams of Ukrainian psychologists in the crisis response program. This training is given free of charge.

Views from professional consultants & psychologists.

The majority of interviews were conducted by Sergii Ugrium, Sergii is a psychoanalytically oriented therapist and a member of the National Psychological Association of Ukraine (psychoanalytic division).

The key issues needing to be addressed included the following:

Radical change.

A radical change to the refugee's way of life, a change to their usual order and routine responsibilities has led to a number of issues including: Difficulties in adapting to new conditions, rejection by strangers, idealisation of their home country and an obsessive desire to return home to Ukraine.

Such challenges were often compounded by separation from spouses/partners, and wider family separation. This invoked relationship and communication problems associated with being apart (and often a failure to maintain relationships at a distance).

Key issues.

- Emotional instability, unexplained anxiety, fear, panic attacks and aggression, disengagement, stupor and apathy.
- The inability to perform habitual actions, lack of concentration.
- Lack of a clear sense of the future with an inability to make long-term plans.
- Survivor's guilt.
- Fear of aggression on returning home from Ukrainians who remained in the country.
- Pseudo-adaptation - maintaining "popular" behaviour for fear of condemnation or being misunderstood.
- Fear of human trafficking, physical violence and psychological abuse.
- Problems with supporting children, a lack of balance in parenting.
- Perception of a lack of resources and endurance.
- The inability to find a safe place, loss of faith or trust in the world.
- Signs of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, such as reaction to sudden noises, nightmares and distress.
- The Inability to take care of oneself and loved ones.
- Feelings of loss (home, friends, family, homeland, often generalised).

“ To close your
eyes will not ease
another's pain. ”

Chinese Proverb

The specific symptoms that refugees and internally displaced people displayed included the following:

Observed symptoms.

- Excessive emotional instability, overly reactive, disproportionate response to stimulus and emotional reactions indicative of an inability to control one's own emotions.
- Low levels of motivation; loss of former interest in life; state of despondency (depression) and signs of distress.
- Inability to "turn on" in the morning and start routine activities.
- Uncontrolled aggression.
- High levels of general anxiety, especially anxiety about unpredictable things including low tolerance for uncertainty due to emotional exhaustion.
- Acute feelings of loss, within a grieving process.
- Dissociation in the emotional sphere.
- Difficulty falling asleep, superficial and unstable sleep.
- Exacerbations of somatic symptoms.
- Panic attacks.
- Inability to analyse a situation and make decisions, including fragmented thinking.
- Inability to establish links between events.
- Severing habitual relationships with loved ones.
- Change of self-concept, a sense of feeling unsuccessful or useless.
- An obsessive sense of guilt, self-punishment, denial of pleasure.
- Splitting in the perception of reality, black-and-white thinking, categorical judgments and conclusions, paranoid tendencies.
- Absence of the father in the family creating shifts in the balance of parenting.
- Regression by a parent to a childlike position.
- Idealisation of the absent father (especially if he is at the warfront), idealisation of their former life.
- Difficulties in adapting to new conditions, provoking reactions of self-isolation, rather than seeking help.
- Loss of critical thinking, flight into illusion.
- A complex of symptoms associated with violation of boundaries: fuzzy separation of oneself, differentiating one's own experiences from the experiences of other people, intrusive behaviour, perception of the behaviour of others as intrusions, low tolerance for differences, the desire to merge as an attempt to establish a connection.

The above clearly demonstrate a very wide array psychological issues, affecting many refugees and internally displaced people. The depths and extent of issues will of course vary from person to person, but some of those involved in receiving support from psychological specialists, are displaying some of the signs of trauma.

Although this report does not claim professional expertise in such matters, we have found it instructive to consult with trauma specialists, including within the UK and briefly consider some key issues in the following chapter.

Reflections on trauma.

“Long-term trauma... is a haunting reminder that health issues and depression can follow decades after the war.”

Zainib Salbi

The burdens of war.

This introductory quote is very apposite for a report on the consequences of war in Ukraine. The innocent victims and particularly women and children, often carry the burdens of war for many years and in some cases for the rest of their lives. For them even victory on the battlefield is at best a very incomplete victory, as the scars and mental injuries from war are long lasting.

Furthermore, while the physical and mental health injuries from war for returning combatants are understandably often the focus of much attention, there is however often a failure to recognise the burdens on mothers and children in particular as they struggle in the ensuing years of so-called peace. They need help in having their voices heard, particularly in the corridors of power.

While heroes of the battlefield are rightly honoured, there are no honours for the women who are often burdened with building the peace amongst broken families and communities.

The professionals view.

Writing for World Psychiatry back in 2006, R. S. Murthy and R. Lakshminarayana argued that,

“Among the consequences of war, the impact on the mental health of the civilian population is one of the most significant. Studies of the general population show a definite increase in the incidence and prevalence of mental disorders. Women are more affected than men.”^{viii}

Marianne Kastrup has explained that,

“women and men are exposed to different traumata in times of war. They may exhibit different psychological problems, cope in different ways, and have different thresholds for entering treatment. Thus, the gender perspective is both challenging and needed... many aspects of war affect the health of women disproportionately, through societal changes that may subordinate them and not prioritize their life and health.”^{ix}

Symptoms of trauma.

We refer the reader to the preceding chapter where many of the symptoms identified by the psychologists treating Ukrainian refugee women clearly match many of the known traits present in trauma sufferers. We know that many women will carry most of the burden of rebuilding families, of rebuilding communities and where they have been bereaved or having to care for a physically or mentally damaged returning husband, will also have to take on the role of being the main or sole breadwinner.

All this creates a context where already traumatised children may find family life does not return to the peacetime past, with parents carrying the scars of war and places such as schools or playgroups requiring trauma informed practice rather than returning to traditional approaches.

We have much to learn, and society needs to understand and care more. Regarding children, we agree with the analysis of David Bürgin et al., who have recently pointed out in relation to children,

“The impact of war on children is tremendous and pervasive, with multiple implications, including immediate stress-responses, increased risk for specific mental disorders, distress from forced separation from parents, and fear for personal and family’s safety.”^x



↑ A local woman prays over new graves of civilians killed by Russian forces. Bucha, August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

Such impacts do not vanish when war ends. Our own interviews have revealed some of the particular problems including:

- Difficulties processing new information.
- Under performance or over-dependence on academic perfection.
- Difficulties planning, organising and completing tasks.
- Struggles with transitions, loss and change.
- Extreme reactions or zoning out for reasons not obvious to others.
- Difficulties in forming and maintaining friendships.
- Inability to effectively communicate.
- In school settings needing help over compliance or disruptive behaviour.

Developmental trauma.

Much of the trauma being experienced can be categorised as developmental trauma. Beacon House Therapeutic Services and Trauma Team have written compellingly on the topic including pointing out that

“Our experience of working with children who have suffered early trauma and loss is that they are often misdiagnosed and misunderstood by professionals, friends and family who have the best interests of the child at heart, but who don’t yet know

about the impact of early trauma. Labels of being ‘naughty’, ‘autistic’, ‘ADHD’ or ‘behavioural problems’ often lead to adult responses which, at times, can hold back the child from progressing and developing.”^{xi}

Our discussions with a range of professionals suggest that there is need to build developmental trauma expertise amongst professionals ranging from teachers, to counsellors, to speech and language therapists and others.

It is not the purpose of this report to go into such matters in greater depth, but merely to recognise that our interviews strongly indicate the need to address trauma in adults and children, with a particular focus on long term impacts on those women and children who are part of the “misunderstood” and whose voices as quietened by the focus on the physical, economic and other more obvious rebuilding needs post war.^{xii}

United Kingdom's humanitarian response.



↑ View through shell hole in a village where 85 percent of houses were destroyed or damaged. Moschun, August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

“ A refugee is not only in need of physical safety. Many will be traumatised and vulnerable. We need to ensure that psychosocial support is available, both during the first six months and beyond, as refugees establish new lives here in the United Kingdom. I know from my own experience how difficult it is. ”

Baroness Helic

Alongside other European countries, the United Kingdom was quick to condemn Putin's aggression against Ukraine.

A three-year £100 million package of aid, was announced, including, £220 million to provide humanitarian assistance, medical supplies and other necessities to the Ukrainian population and for refugees in neighbouring countries.

By May 2022, the UK had disbursed £85 million of the £220 million.

The Government's initial response focused on supporting British nationals living in Ukraine and their families. It has since introduced an expanded visa route for Ukrainians and relatives who have family in the UK.

According to UNHCR up to December 2022, the UK has taken in 147,800 Ukrainian refugees.^{xiii}

Humanitarian crises have a significant effect on the mental health of those affected. The conflict in Ukraine has brought the wellbeing and mental health of asylum seekers and refugees into focus in the UK.

A survey by the Refugee Council in England found that 61% of asylum seekers experience serious mental illness and they are five times more likely to have mental health needs than the UK population.^{xiv}

The mental health charity MIND states there are significant challenges in the UK for refugees and asylum seekers to access mental health care and support.

REVIVE asked MIND whether UK NGOs were providing mental health support to Ukrainian refugees, and whether NGOs were receiving support from the UK government. The answer came back: “Unfortunately, this isn't an area that we are working on at present, so we aren't able to help with your research on this occasion.”

The government does however provide guidance to healthcare practitioners on coping with the mental health issues facing migrants, updated in September 2022^{xv}

The mental health needs of refugees from Ukraine were debated in the House of Lords in April 2022. Baroness Helic, who 30 years ago fled from conflict in former Yugoslavia to resettle in the UK, insisted there is a pressing need for psychological support for refugees in the UK.^{xvi}

The Home Affairs Select Committee conducted an inquiry into the Government's policy on refugees from Ukraine. Witnesses gave evidence on the healthcare needs of refugees from Ukraine on their arrival to the UK, in addition to their need for housing, benefits and specialist support^{xviii}.

Despite this, inquiries by REVIVE of Ukrainian refugees in the UK and the families who are housing them lead to the conclusion that more could be done to develop a coherent strategy across the United Kingdom for dealing with the mental well-being of our Ukrainian guests.



↑ Indiscriminate Russian tank, artillery and rocket attacks have caused massive destruction across many towns and cities. Borodyanka, August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

“ When the peace treaty is signed,
the war isn’t over for the veterans,
or the family. It’s just starting ”

Karl Marientes

Whose voices count?.

Whose voices are heard in post war rebuilding efforts? Despite being disproportionately affected by conflict, women are often denied participation in peace talks and conflict prevention or reconstruction.

In 2020, women represented only 23% of delegations in UN-supported peace processes, according to UN Women. In countries affected by or rebuilding from conflict, women’s representation in elected office stood at just 19% in 2020. ^{xiii}

Understandably, children are not involved in post conflict building decision making and we would argue that mothers in particular are likely to be the most articulate advocates for children.

There is therefore compelling evidence from our study that there is a particular need to ensure the voices of women and children are given better platforms to help shape better informed post war policy development.

We acknowledge that there are conferences, consultations and discussions that take place internationally and include consideration of humanitarian needs. REVIVE Campaign directors have over recent years taken part in many of these. However, we believe that they have often failed to give voice to the most in need and that this needs urgent addressing.

In late 2019, for example, we attended a conference dedicated to considering rebuilding needs in a west African country. At one point it was announced there was to be new multimillion dollar project for landmine clearance. When Revive Campaign asked how much would be devoted to supporting the humanitarian issues involved, the answer was a sad if unsurprising indication that the money was to be solely focused on mine clearance work. Throughout the two day conference there were no opportunities to discuss the types of issues raised in this report.

What policy responses are required?.

Furthermore, if our relatively brief researches have revealed such a profound range of problems for Ukrainian refugees and internally displaced people, it begs the question of what the policy responses should be, and what further issues remain to be captured by further research?

But given what we already know, there are some areas where we need not wait for further research. It is already clear there is a need to provide increased psychological and psychiatric support for the innocent victims of war. This will be particularly challenging as refugees return to a war torn Ukraine with a vast array of reconstruction needs.

We contend therefore that work on identifying the scale of need, the extent of required services and the resourcing thereof should start as soon as practicable.

Finally, as a result of our work, we are particularly concerned about the vulnerability of traumatised children, and particularly concerned about their development. We therefore argue that there is a need to develop trauma informed education practices.

In the light of these comments we finally turn to a set of connected recommendations.

Recommendations



↑ Khreshchatyk Street turned into a massive open-air museum of burned-out and captured Russian armour ahead of Ukraine's Independence Day. Kyiv, August 2022.

All photographs ©David Pratt

“ Before acting on
any recommendation,
know the rationale.”

Frank Sonnenberg

We believe the following recommendations logically flow from our research findings and the arguments presented in the earlier sections of this report.

Recommendation 1: International Conference.

There is a need to convene a major international conference or other forum solely devoted to considering the innocent victims of conflict and with a particular emphasis on the needs of women and children. This should be a forerunner to pressing individual states to embed the needs of the innocent in their contributions to post conflict reconstruction and development.

Recommendation 2: Further Research.

There is a need for further research to scope out the scale and types of need being presented, particularly by women and children, as a result of conflicts. This should have a policy and practical focus to better inform governments and international agencies regarding the types of policies, practices and interventions likely to deliver the best outcomes for the victims of conflict.

Recommendation 3: Mobilising Professional Expertise.

There is a specific and urgent need to bring together the professional communities having to deal now or very soon with the effects of trauma on women and children. This will include, but not be restricted to counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, speech and language therapists, pre-school specialists, teachers and medical staff. The manner of best accomplishing this is perhaps best started by facilitated discussions amongst mixed expertise groupings, which can then feed into appropriate policy fora.

Recommendation 4: Trauma Informed Education.

There should be specific support provided to the education sector, particularly from kindergarden through all school years, to encourage the adoption of trauma informed good practice in education provision.

References.

- I** Hammond S.A., *The Thin Book of Appreciative Inquiry*, Thin Book Publishing (1996)
- II** www.dw.com - Ukrainian refugees push German cities to their limits.
- III** Arcel LT. Kastrup M. War, women and health. *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*. 2004.
- IV** World Health Organization. *World report on violence and health*. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2002.
- V** www.equaleverywhere.org - 5 Ways Conflict Prevents Girls and Women From Being Equal Everywhere.
- VI** Murthy R.S., Lakshminarayana R., *Mental Health Consequences of War: a brief review of research findings* Psychiatry, 2006.
- VII** Ramphele M. Political widowhood in South Africa. The embodiment of ambiguity. In: Kleinman A, Das V, Lock M, editors. *Social suffering*. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1997.
- VIII** Murthy R.S., Lakshminarayana R., op.cit.
- IX** Kastrup M.C., *Mental Health Consequences of War: gender specific issues* Psychiatry, 2006.
- X** David Bürgin et al., www.springer.com
Impact of war and forced displacement on children's mental health - multilevel, needs-oriented, and trauma-informed approaches.
- XI** www.beaconhouse.org.uk - Developmental Trauma Close Up.
- XII** www.beaconhouse.org.uk - Developmental Trauma Close Up.
- XIII** UNHCR Operational Data Portal, Ukraine situation.
- XIV** www.refugeecouncil.org.uk - Mental health support for refugees and asylum seekers.
- XV** www.gov.uk/guidance - Mental health migrant health guide.
- XVI** www.parallelparliament.co.uk - Lords Grand-Committee debate 6 Apr 2022, Ukraine refugees.
- XVII** www.parliament.uk - Ministers questioned over Home Office response to Ukraine refugee crisis.
- XVIII** Arcel LT. Kastrup M. op.cit.

REVIVE is immensely grateful for the generous sponsorship of this report by *Institut Dr. Foerster GmbH & Co. KG*



FOERSTER – *We make the hidden visible*

Since 1948, the name FOERSTER has been synonymous with highest quality and precision. We develop and produce instruments and systems for the non-destructive testing of metallic materials, metal detection and magnetics. FOERSTER's detection systems support the investigation of contaminated sites for landmines, unexploded ordnance and other abandoned hazards.

Institut Dr. Foerster GmbH & Co. KG
In Laisen 70
72766 Reutlingen
Deutschland

t +49 7121 140 0
f +49 7121 140 488
info.de@foerstergroup.com



The **REVIVE Campaign** is an advocacy body with not for profit status. Our mission is to promote at international government level the pressing need to reduce the level of explosive violence against innocent civilians, to push for effective policy, and encourage long-term support for victims. REVIVE also supports the needs of those who work to diminish the threat of explosive weapons and those working with the victims. We are recognised as a global thought leader on explosive threat mitigation and victim assistance. REVIVE acts as the secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Explosive Threats.



The **All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Explosive Threats** is an independent group of backbench MPs and Peers, it was first created as the APPG on Landmines in 2011 to draw attention to the humanitarian consequences of the manufacture, possession, sale, purchase, transport and unlawful use of explosive weapons. The group raises the profile of the humanitarian benefits of mine action, explosive ordnance disposal, and victim assistance. The group campaigns for appropriate policy change and acts as a focal point for debate and the exchange of ideas, views and information.

This is not an official publication of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. It has not been approved by either House or its committees. All-Party Parliamentary Groups are informal groups of members of both houses with a common interest in particular issues. The views expressed in this document are those of the Group.

Photographs: David Pratt

Design & Layout: Angus Ellway

ISBN 978-I-3999-4400-7

All rights reserved ©REVIVE Campaign 2023