

Childcare in Ukraine: A systems approach to building back better

For many parents, returning to work depends on something as basic as having a safe, affordable, and accessible place for their child. In Ukraine, that choice has become much harder: the war has displaced families, separated them from support networks, and disrupted childcare services in communities across the country. For those raising children with fewer options and less support, especially in rural and frontline areas, the lack of such care can mean having to choose between earning a living and caring for their family.

When a parent is forced to stay out of the workforce simply because there is no safe place for their child, a household loses its financial stability, and Ukraine loses valuable talent needed for its national recovery.



The war and demographic shifts are reshaping Ukraine's workforce, creating severe labour shortages and shrinking the talent pool across key sectors. Parents and caregivers, particularly IDPs, rural residents, and those in frontline regions, face some of the greatest barriers to re-entering the labour market. Without affordable childcare and viable pathways into work, even those ready to rebuild a career or start a business simply have no way to do so.

Through this project, which forms an integral part of the Decent Work Country Programme 2026–2029, the ILO expands access to productive and decent employment, supports entrepreneurship, and helps address childcare-related barriers to employment. The project operates across Chernihiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Kharkiv, Mykolaiv, Odesa, Sumy, and Zaporizhzhia regions.

By advancing gender-transformative policies, strengthening regulatory frameworks, and connecting local childcare solutions with broader labour market opportunities, the ILO helps turn policy into practice. In doing so, it ensures that enabling more people to work strengthens not only individual livelihoods, but also the businesses, communities, and economy that Ukraine's recovery depends on.

► 1. Expanded access to employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, with fewer childcare-related barriers

The ILO supports practical solutions for women to enter, return to, and stay in the workforce or grow their own businesses. Particular attention is given to IDPs, and frontline communities. By addressing childcare constraints alongside job and business support, the project helps women build sustainable livelihoods while unlocking Ukraine's workforce potential.

Interventions include:

- developing practical quality, accessible and affordable childcare solutions that enable parents to enter, return to and remain in employment
- supporting women in starting, developing and sustaining their own childcare businesses
- formalizing and institutionalizing the nanny sector to establish professional standards, recognition, and quality childcare
- building the capacity of the public and private sectors to expand early childhood development and care services for children aged 0–3
- strengthening skills and capacities that respond to labour market needs and improve women's employment prospects
- supporting employers in introducing inclusive, family-friendly practices and advancing gender-transformative policies
- promoting awareness of equal rights and strengthening multi-stakeholder cooperation to address barriers to women's labour market participation.

► 2. Stronger policies and social norms that enable parents to combine work and care

The ILO supports legal and policy reforms that make it easier for parents to balance work and family responsibilities, while promoting a more equal sharing of care between women and men. By improving access to childcare, strengthening maternity and parental protection, and challenging gender stereotypes around work and care, the project helps create lasting conditions for more women to enter, return to and remain in the workforce.

Interventions include:

- advancing reforms in preschool education and childcare to better respond to the needs of working parents
- strengthening parental leave policies that support a more equal sharing of care responsibilities between women and men
- supporting the development and implementation of gender-transformative employment policies
- promoting workplace policies and practices that better support workers with family responsibilities
- raising awareness of gender biases that influence how paid work and unpaid care are shared

- advancing the ratification and implementation of relevant international labour standards, including ILO Convention 183 on maternity protection, C-189 on decent work for domestic workers, and C-190 on the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work
- engaging governments, employers' and workers' organizations and other stakeholders in promoting gender equality at work
- helping shift social norms towards greater recognition and sharing of care responsibilities.

Implemented in partnership with:

- Ministry of Social Policy
- Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
- Ministry of Economy and Environment of Ukraine
- State Employment Service
- Federation of Employers of Ukraine
- Confederation of Employers of Ukraine
- Association of Organizations of Employers of Ukraine
- Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine
- Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine
- TVET institutions
- Key childcare stakeholders



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for Ukraine
2026-2029**

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