

Research of the Current Situation with the Education of Ukrainian Children and Their Mental Health

February 2024



About the research

Two years have passed since the conflict began throughout Ukraine on 24 February 2022. During this time, people who have evacuated to different countries have begun to get used to life there, gradually learning new languages. The same changes have taken place in the lives of Ukrainians who were evacuated to Japan because of the conflict, - the situation with work, language, education for children and other areas is gradually improving.

In the first half of last year, we prepared research that mainly focused on the difficulties faced by Ukrainian girls in Japan, as well as on the situation with the education of evacuated Ukrainian children. We were very concerned about some issues related to children's education and well-being, such as language learning, overloading children with two or three schools at the same time, etc. Because of this, we decided to conduct a second, more detailed research after a certain period to learn more about the varied factors, causes and reasons that affect the condition and well-being of children and to see the changes that have taken place during this period.

In the second research, in addition to education, we also paid a lot of attention to the state of children's mental health, as the conflict and the change in the environment could have changed the children's feeling. To find out about the current state of children and the changes that have taken place during this time, we interviewed and surveyed parents of evacuated Ukrainian children (5 interviews and 22 questionnaires). They shared their own stories, observations, and opinions on what could help Ukrainian children in Japan.

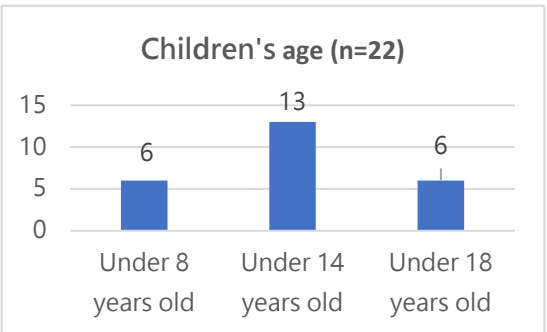
In addition, we asked the teachers at the Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce in Tokyo for their comments and opinions on this situation, as they work directly with about sixty Ukrainian children, half of whom were evacuated to Japan because of the conflict. We interviewed five Ukrainian teachers, one of whom is the principal of this school. They told us about their experience of working with evacuated Ukrainian children, some of their own observations of children's behavior, and shared tips and suggestions for improving the mental well-being and education of children from Ukraine.

Results of the survey of parents of Ukrainian school-age children (22 people)

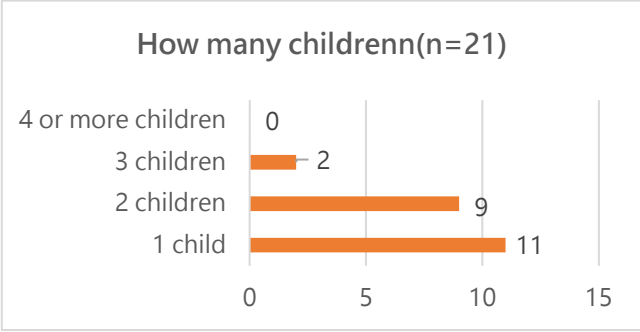
General information

The survey involved 22 adults who provided answers based on their own observations of their children's behaviour, however due to the small number of participants, the data may be different from the reality. The survey was conducted during the November-December 2023 completely anonymously, mostly distributed in groups for Ukrainians in Japan and on Ukrainians events in Tokyo. Respondents were able to skip any questions, and to certain questions they could choose several answers at once, therefore the number of answers may exceed the number of people interviewed.

The purpose of the survey was to find out what changes in children's learning, behaviour and emotional state have taken place since they were evacuated to Japan and started attending school. In order to see the overall situation in more detail and to understand the reasons and possible ways to improve their life in Japan, we asked the respondents questions about: the learning progress in Japanese and Ukrainian schools, changes in children's behaviour, emotional state and mental health now, difficulties faced by children and possible ways of support.

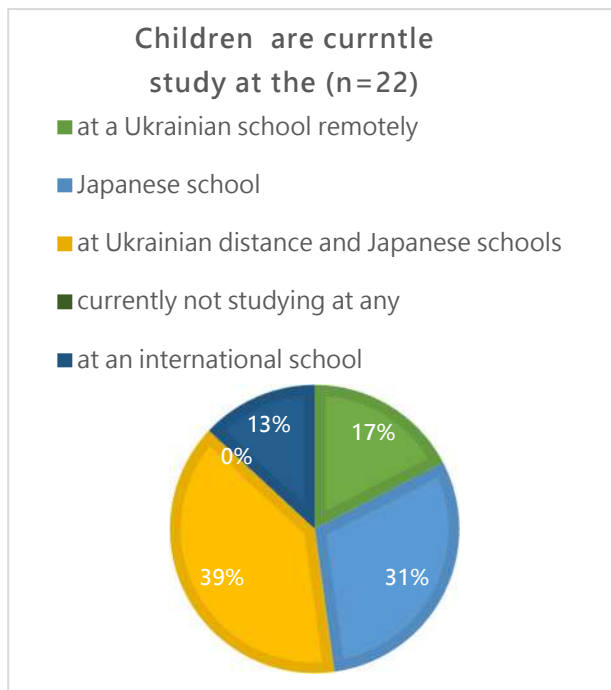


Most of the parents who took part in the survey have one or two children, mostly aged between 8 and 14. In addition, all of the parents and their children came to Japan more than a year ago, so they already have

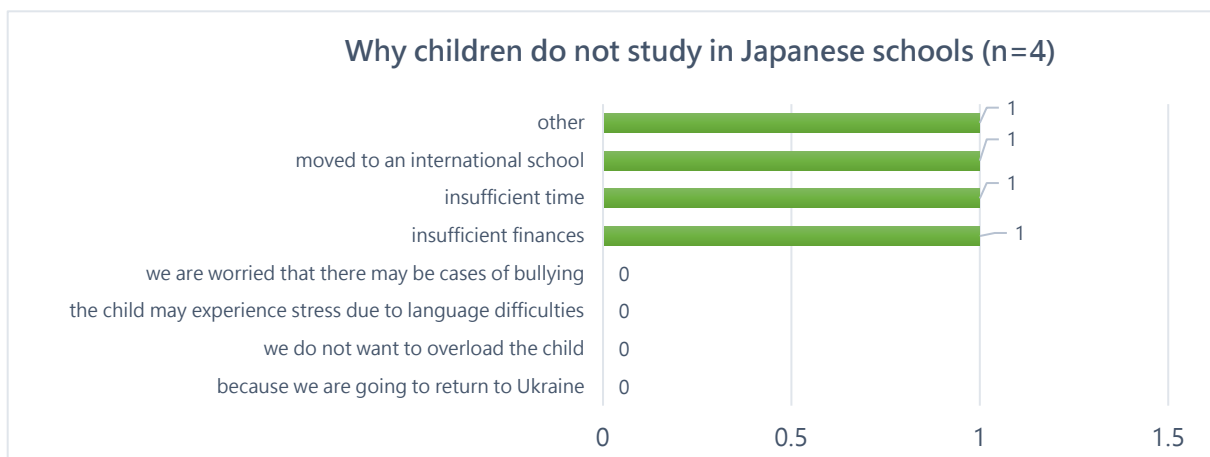


some experience of living here and can notice changes in their children's learning and behaviour that have occurred during this period.

Education of children evacuated from Ukraine: current situation

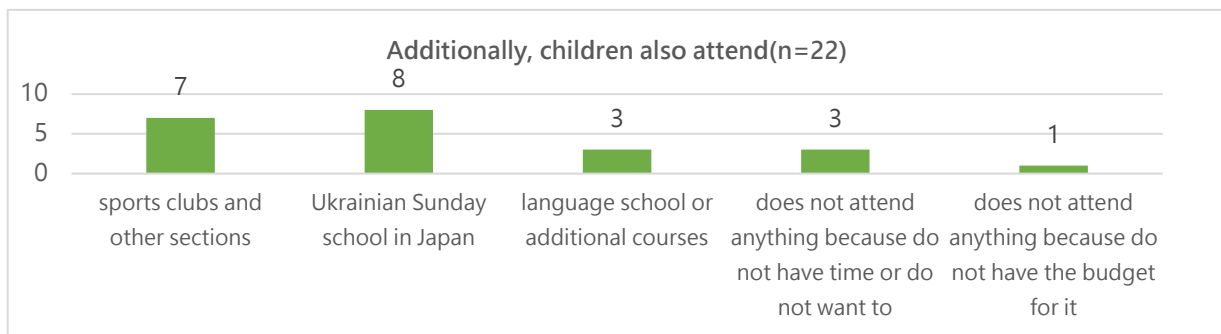


According to the survey, currently about 70% of children study in local Japanese schools. Compared to the previous survey, this figure has increased by 17%. This may have been influenced by the protracted conflict in Ukraine and the need to socialise children or they may change the future plans. In addition, less than 20% of children study only in Ukrainian schools (there was also a response about studying in a Ukrainian school only from time to time), and almost 40% of children continue to combine studying in both schools, which puts a heavy strain on their emotional, nervous and physical condition.



Despite the fact that most evacuated Ukrainian children are already studying in Japanese schools, but there are still some children who do not attend them. As the conflict in Ukraine drags on, it is very important to find out the reasons why some

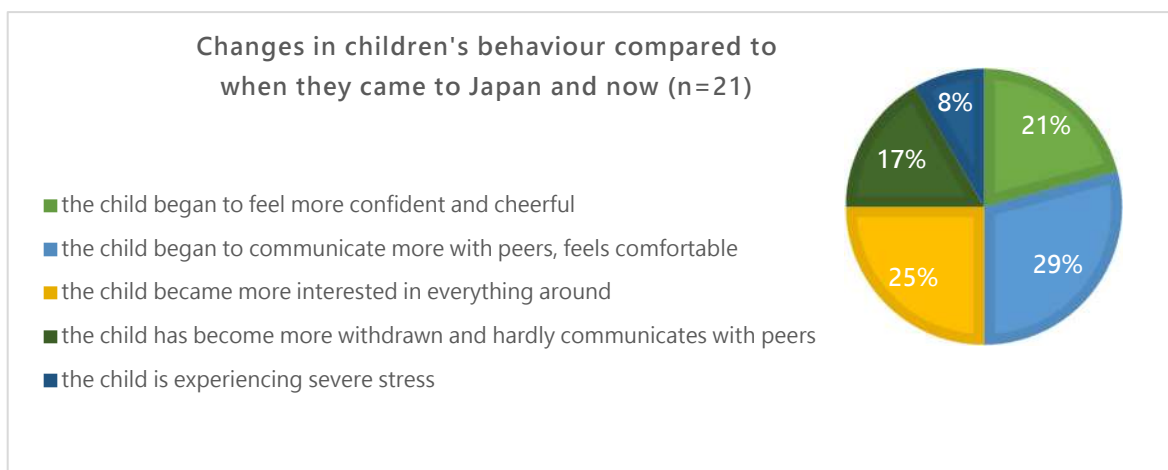
of them cannot attend local educational institutions, as children need socialisation for their full development. According to the survey, the reasons were lack of time and money, choosing to study at an international school, etc.



Most Ukrainian children do not limit their education to local schools. Many of them find time to attend sports clubs, sections and Ukrainian Sunday schools. Given that most of the evacuees live in Tokyo or in the near areas, they attend the Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce in Tokyo. Despite being overworked, the vast majority of children are very happy to attend this school and communicate in their native language, and parents say that their children need more such classes.

However, not all children have the opportunity to attend a Ukrainian school or clubs. In response to this question, some parents said that in their region of residence there are very limited activities available and they are not suitable for their child. There were also comments that the child was studying independently on the Internet, had additional teachers, and that there were children who were studying remotely in Ukrainian school clubs (for example, art classes).

Changes in children's emotional state and communication as a result of studying in Japanese schools



Since the Ukrainian children were evacuated to Japan, many changes have taken place in their emotional state and behaviour. Initially, it was difficult for the children to get used to life in a new country, but gradually their well-being began to improve. The vast majority of

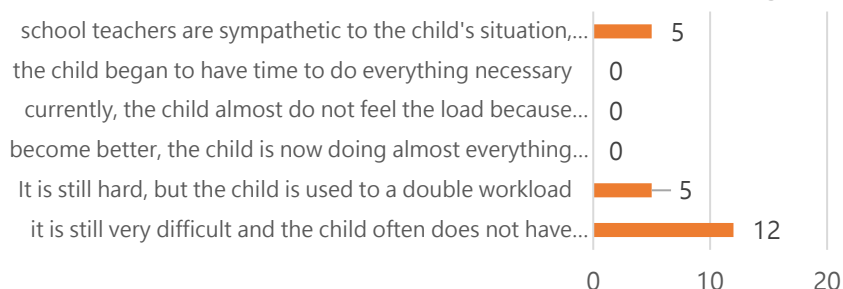
children (about 75%) began to feel more comfortable, cheerful and confident in Japan. They began to communicate more with their peers and take an interest in everything around them. However, according to the survey, about 25% of the children have

become more withdrawn and less social or experiencing severe stress. This situation could be due to the stress of being in an unfamiliar environment for a long time and the lack of communication in their native language.

Most of the children who were evacuated to Japan have the experience to studying in two or three schools at once and they still feel

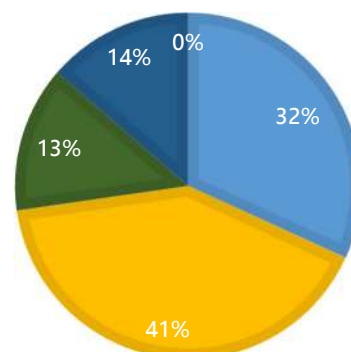
very stressed, almost without free time for rest. However, 23% of parents noticed that their children are already used to the double workload and therefore feel a little lighter. Also, about 20% noted, that teachers at school are sympathetic to the situation of evacuated children and try to relax their requirements, and therefore children have less load and feel better.

How the situation with children's education in several schools has changed (n=20)



Children's well-being in japanese schools (n=19)

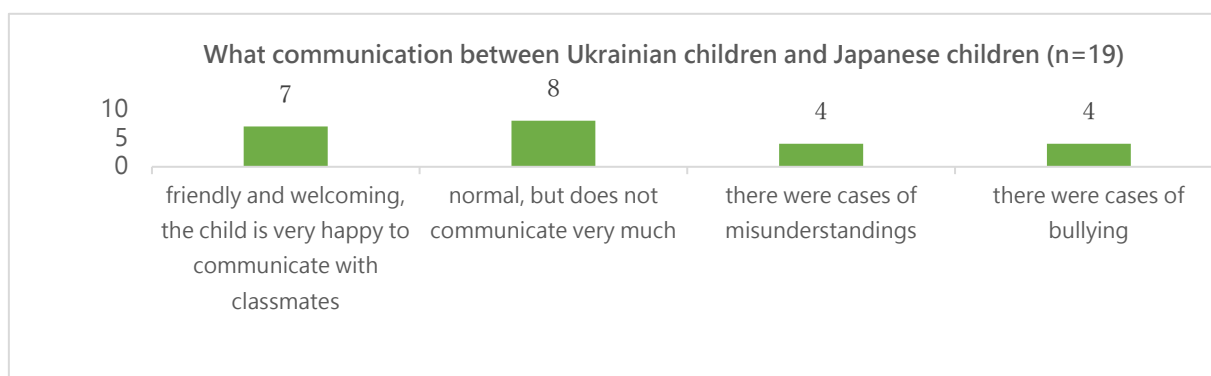
- the child feels confident and happy to attend school
- the child feels comfortable and well
- the child has language and matching surroundings difficulties, feels uncomfortable
- It is difficult for the child to adapt and to communicate with classmates
- the child has been bullied at school



While attending a Japanese school, almost 60% of evacuated Ukrainian children experience language, matching the surroundings and adaptation difficulties. Due to a lack of communication with classmates and other factors, many children feel uncomfortable while attending school. Also, according the survey, about 15% of children have experienced bullying at school, while in

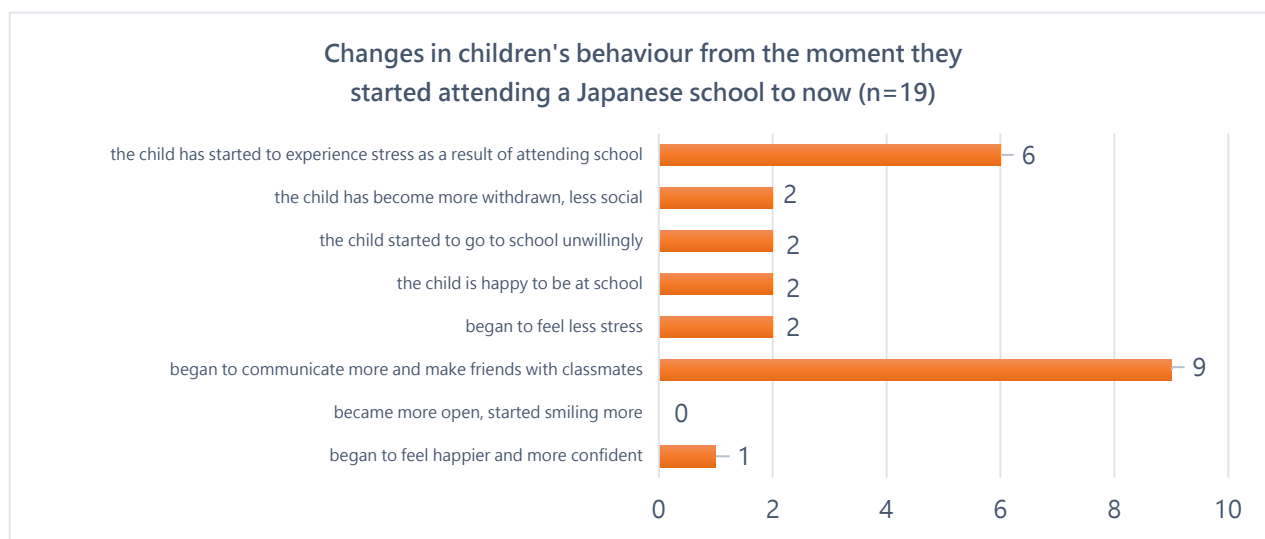
the previous one there were no responses about a child being bullied in a Japanese school.

And only 32% of children currently feel comfortable attending a Japanese school. They have adapted quite well to school life and learning together with Japanese children.



In most cases, the relationship between Ukrainian and Japanese children in Japanese schools is friendly or normal. Ukrainian children are happy to communicate with their Japanese classmates, but the majority of

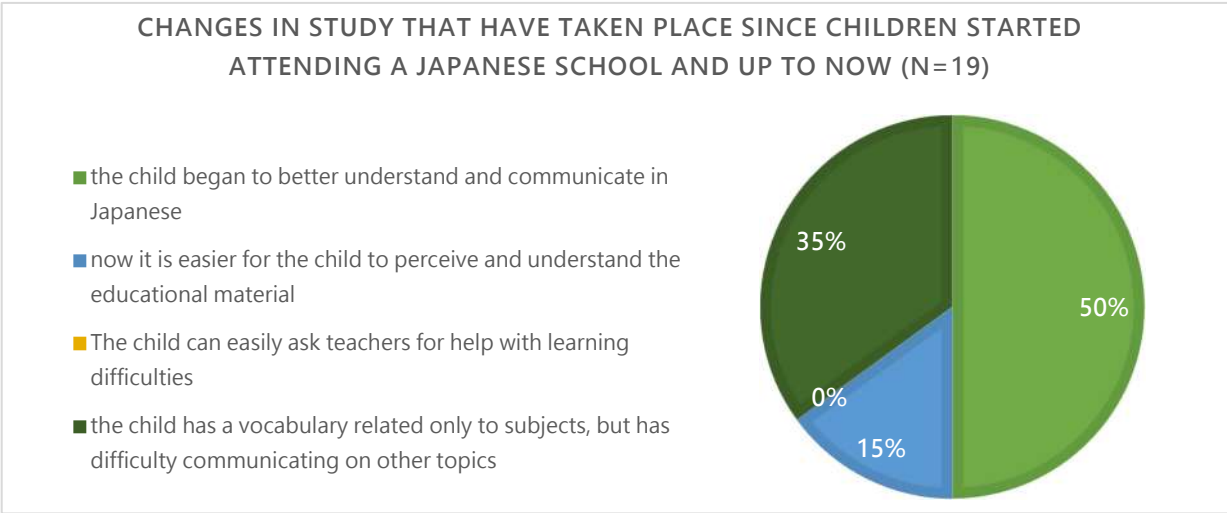
them cannot communicate with Japanese children very well because of language difficulties and there were cases of misunderstanding each other.



In addition to the children's current well-being while attending Japanese schools, the parents of the children also noticed some changes in their behaviour over time. The 60% of children began to communicate more with Japanese children at school, make friends and feel happy to attend the school. But at the same time, 25% of children began to feel stressed about attending Japanese

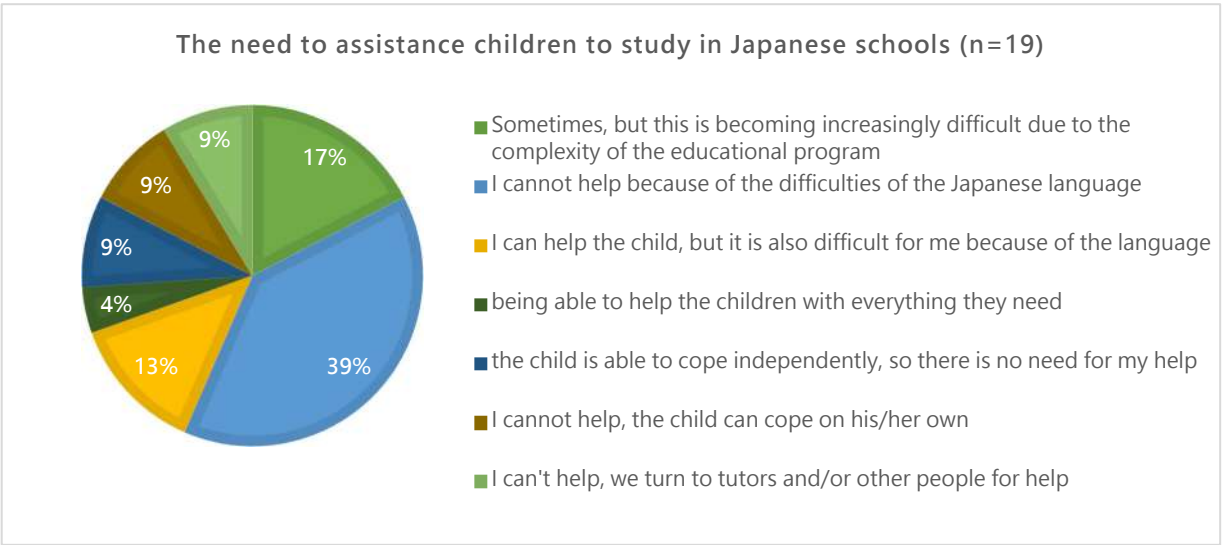
schools, 16% become go to school unwillingly or become more withdraw. This may be due to the length of time spent in a different environment where the child's expectations (e.g., the expectation of learning the language) were not fully met. Or the child gets tired of the environment in which they are studying, because they miss what they are used to in Ukraine.

Progress and difficulties with the education of evacuated Ukrainian children in Japanese schools



Gradually, Ukrainian children who attend Japanese schools are beginning to experience some progress in their studies. About a half of the surveyed parents said that their children's Japanese language skills had improved significantly as a result of attending Japanese schools. However, 35% of the children have mastered the vocabulary used in their subjects and classes, and have

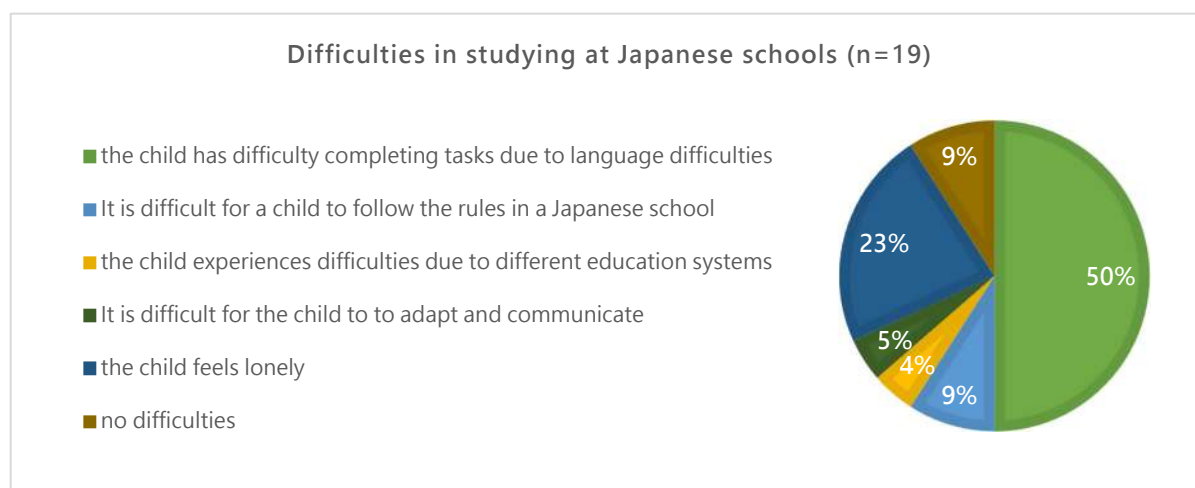
not made sufficient progress in everyday conversation. This was also pointed out by the children's parents during the interviews. However, due to the development of vocabulary related to school subjects, some children found it easier to perceive and understand the educational material (15% of respondents noted this).



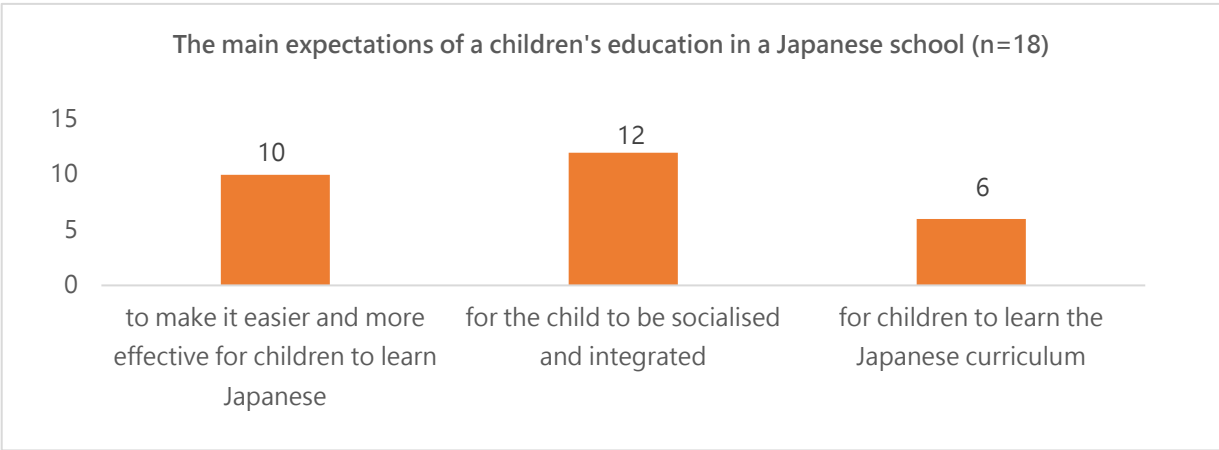
Despite their gradual progress in learning the language, many evacuated Ukrainian children need help with their studies, especially in Japanese schools. However, this caused a serious challenge for parents because the lessons are taught in Japanese and are becoming increasingly difficult. Almost 40% of respondents said their children needed help with learning, but they are unable to give it for them because of language difficulties. 17% of parents said that their children need support with their studies and they, as their parents, are trying to do so, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to help because of the large number of new Japanese words. And about 20% of children do not need help with their studies and their parents are unable to provide such

assistance. Almost 10% of children have tutors or other people helping them with their studies.

While studying in Japanese schools, Ukrainian children experience various difficulties, most of which may arise from language. Half of children have difficulty completing various tasks due to language difficulties, and about 23% of children feel lonely at school, which is likely to be caused by the difficulty of communicating in Japanese. In addition, there are other challenges faced by evacuated Ukrainian children. These include the complexity of matching the surroundings and the need to follow new rules and study in different educational programmes.

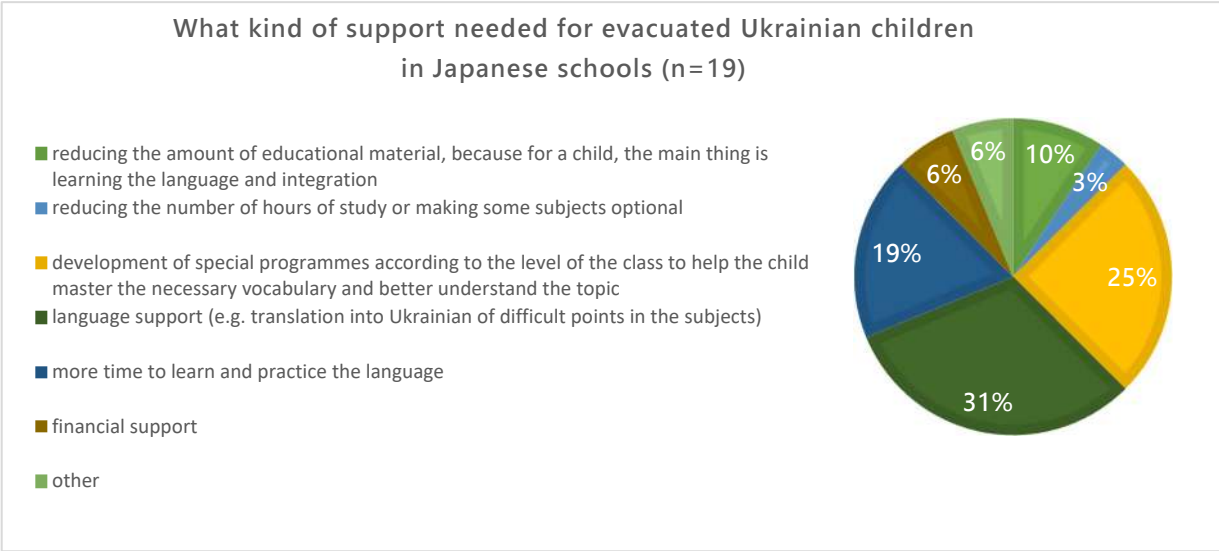


Possible ways to improve and facilitate the education of Ukrainian children in Japanese schools



In order to improve the situation and help evacuated Ukrainian children with their education and emotional state, is important to understand their main expectations and prospects from of attending Japanese schools. So far, about 43% have answered that the most important reasons for their children to study in Japanese schools are the opportunity to and adapt to Japanese

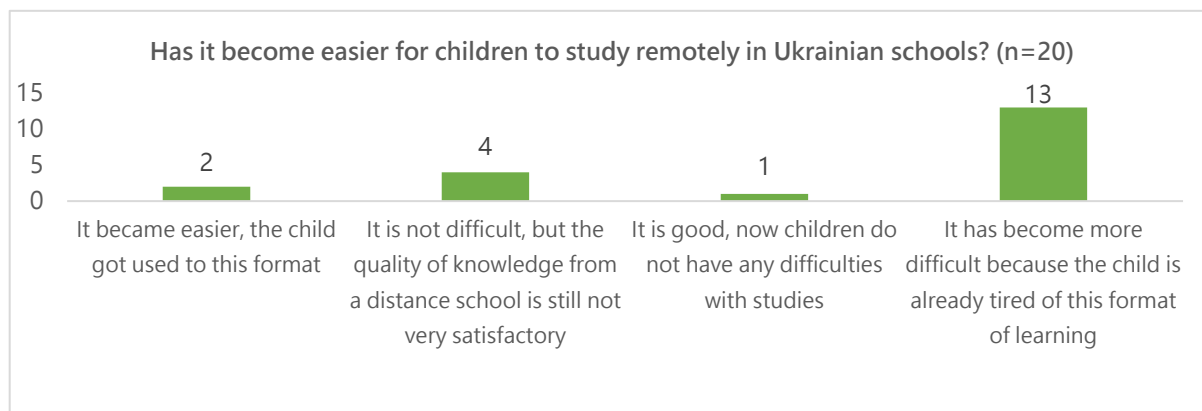
society. The goal is also to learn the language (more than 35% pointed), as it becomes much easier when a child is directly exposed to the Japanese environment. But mastering the curriculum in Japanese schools for many Ukrainian children is not currently a priority, as they can study similar material in Ukrainian schools.



In order to learn Japanese more quickly, parents are trying various methods for the good of their children. The majority of parents believe that evacuees need various support for learning Japanese. This includes language support (for example, printed translations into Ukrainian of difficult

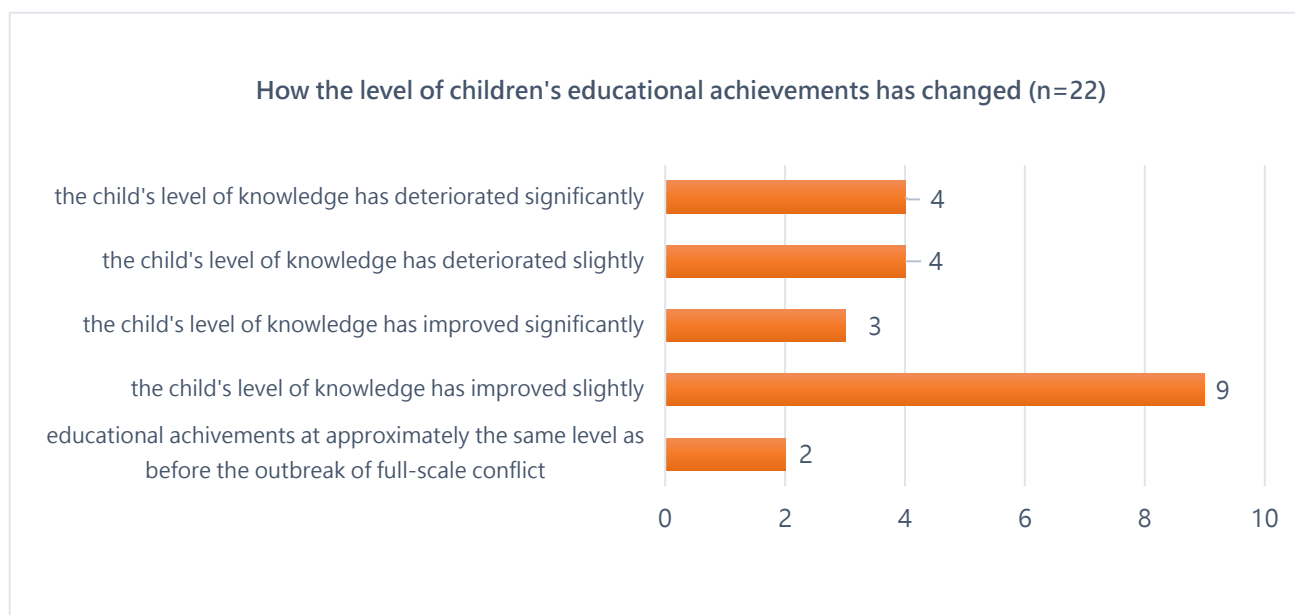
learning points and explanations of tasks, etc.), editing of curricula for Ukrainian children (to make them simpler and easier to understand, to include appropriate vocabulary) and more time for learning Japanese in general.

Changes in the education of children evacuated from Ukraine



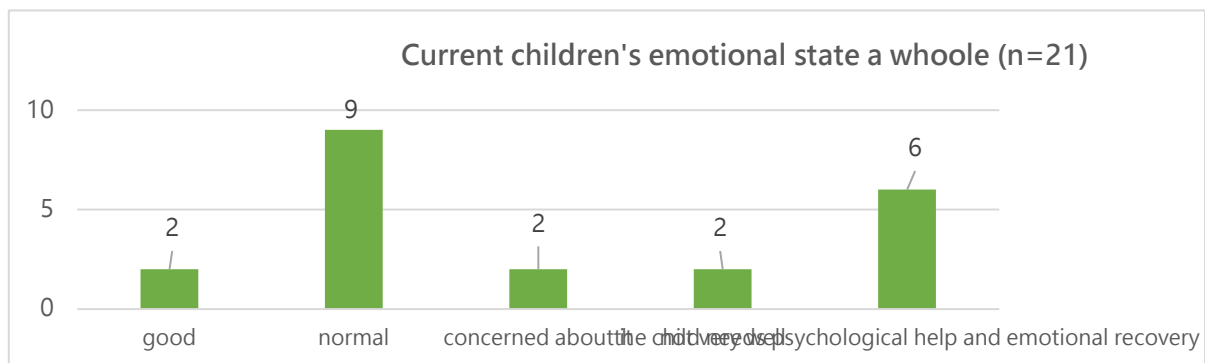
During the two years of conflict throughout the Ukraine, children who were evacuated abroad were able to study in Ukrainian schools only remotely. Children could have got used to this format, however, 65% of

respondents pointed, it is becoming increasingly difficult for children, as they are tired of remotely learning and need live communication in their mother language.



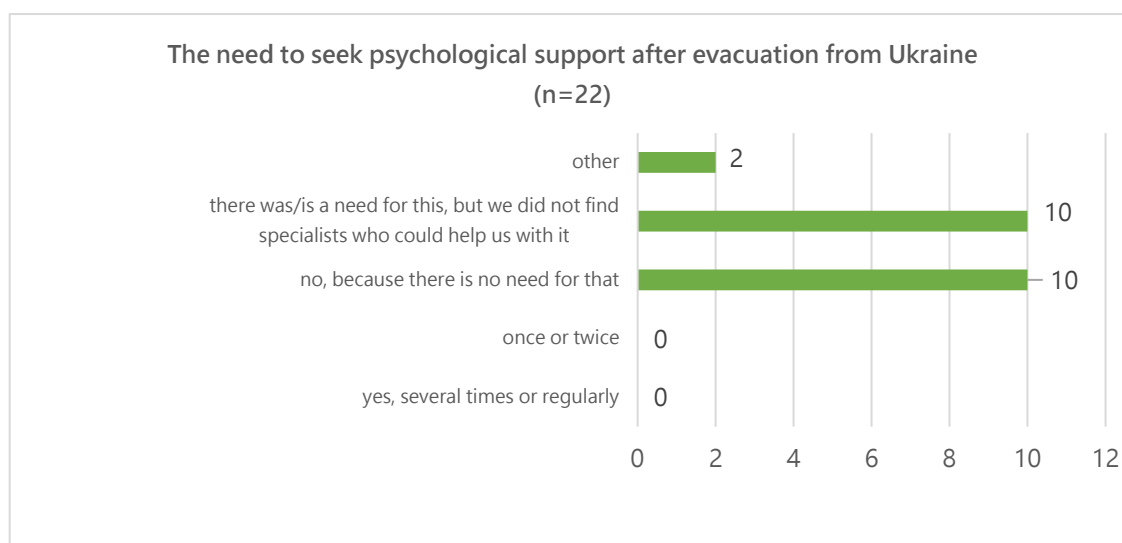
Despite these difficulties, one out of the two parents (about 55%), reported that their children's overall academic performance had improved slightly or quite markedly compared to previous years. This may have been influenced by the gradual adjustment

to life in Japan and the ability to manage time well between two schools. However, more than 35% of children still experience a strong or slight deterioration in their knowledge. This may be due to overwork and fatigue.



Current mental state and the need for psychological support for children evacuated from Ukraine

According to parents, the current emotional state more than half children is perceived to be normal or good. However, about 20% of the respondents noted that their children's mental health is not well or they are very concerned about it. And almost 30% of parents observe that their children currently need psychological help and emotional recovery as a result of the events and stress they have experienced.

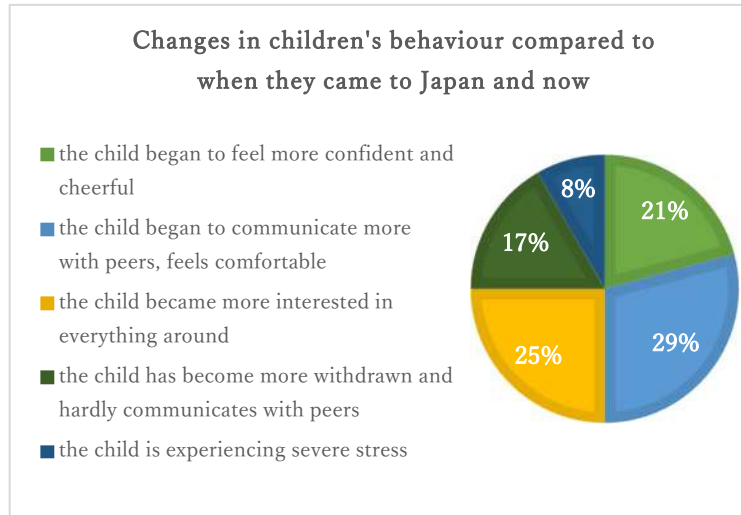


About 45% of the parents surveyed mentioned the need for psychological support for their children (in the past or currently), but they did not seek psychological help because they could not find specialists who could help their children.

This situation occurred due to the fact that very few psychologists specialise in psychological trauma and stress as a result of conflict, and the language barrier is also an obstacle.

The current emotional state of evacuated Ukrainian children and ways to address it

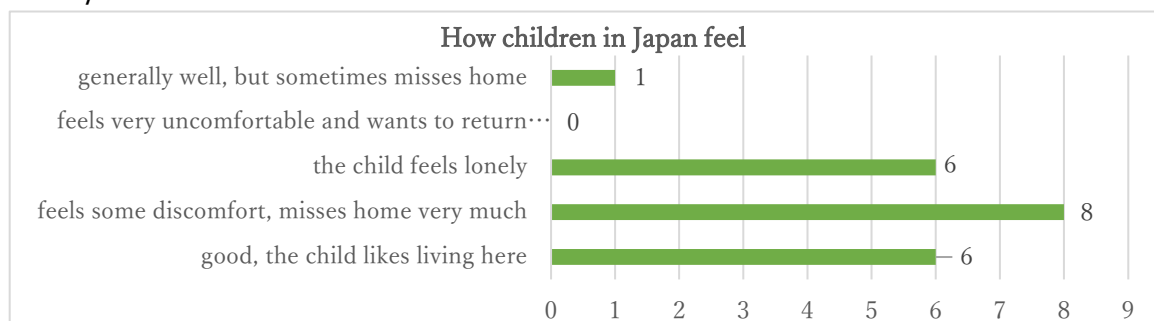
21 responses



From the moment the Ukrainian children were evacuated to Japan until now, many changes have taken place in their emotional state and behaviour. Initially, it was difficult for the children to get used to life in a new country, but gradually their well-being began to improve. Three out of four children began to feel more comfortable, cheerful and confident in Japan.

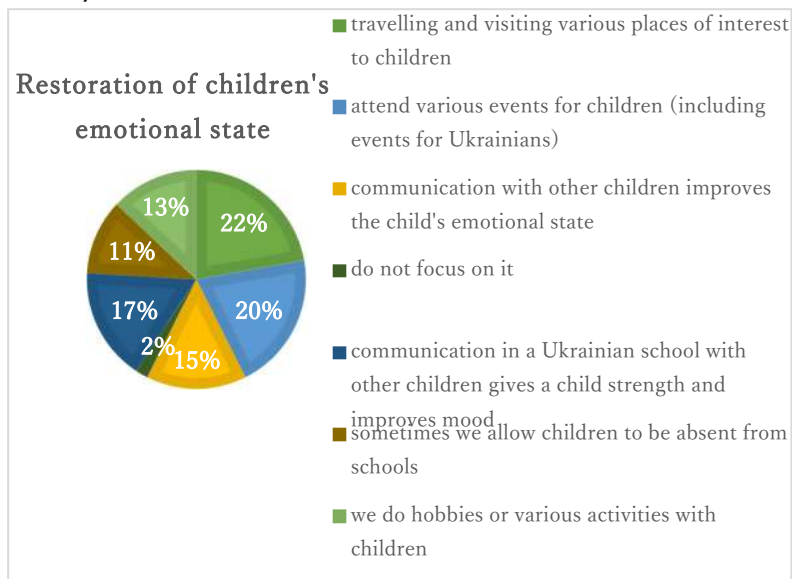
They began to communicate more with their peers and take an interest in everything around them. However, about 25% of children, according to the survey, are now more withdrawn and less social, or are experiencing severe stress.

21 responses



Although in general it may seem that most evacuated children feel quite normal and enjoy life as usual, their emotional state is still under severe stress. According to the survey results, 72% of children feel some discomfort, homesickness and loneliness. Therefore, they are very needed of emotional recovery, adaptation assistance and more opportunities to communicate with their Ukrainian peers.

21 responses



Parents help their children restore their emotional state in various ways. To do this, more than 40% parents travel and attend various events organised specifically for Ukrainians with their children. About 17% of respondents said that their children attend Ukrainian Sunday school, as communication with other Ukrainian children improves

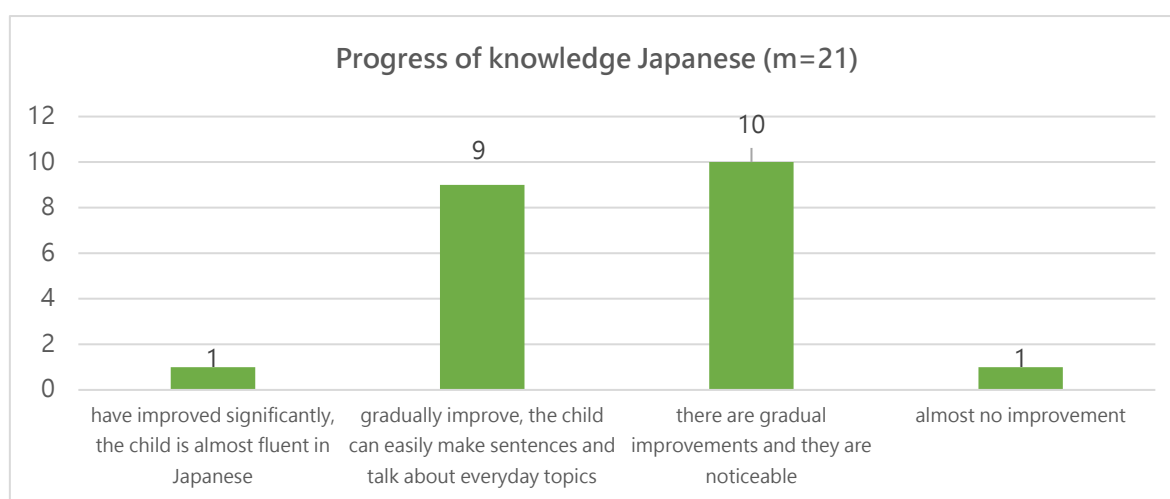
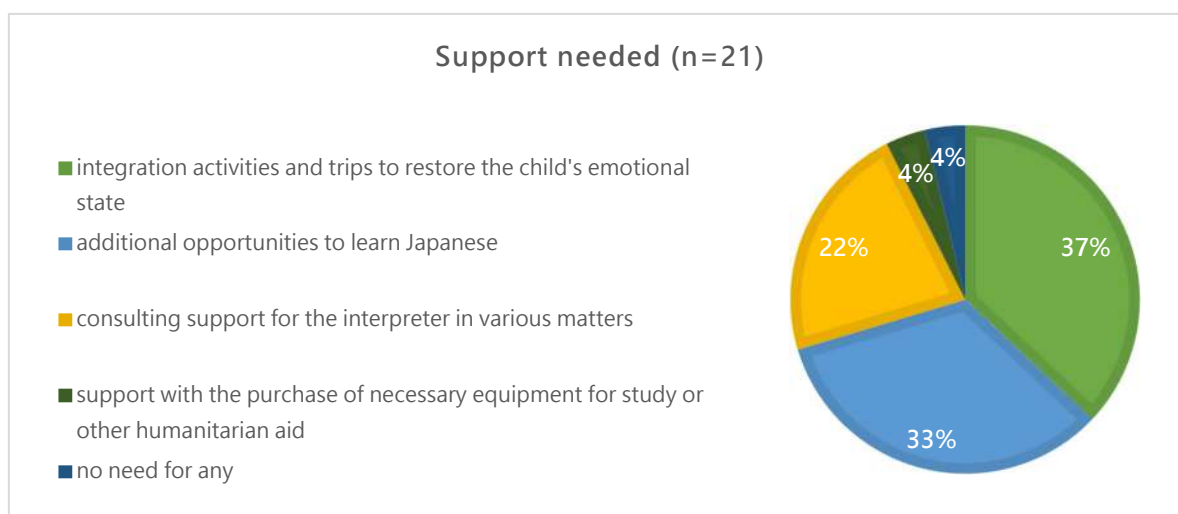
their mood and mental well-being. Parents also engage in various hobbies with their children, and if they feel that children are too tired to attend school, they sometimes allow them to skip lessons.

Support for evacuated Ukrainian children in Japan

According to previous research conducted in April-June 2023, 27% of respondents with children needed financial support for their children to attend various additional clubs, experienced difficulties due to transport costs (24%) and needed the necessary equipment for children's education or other humanitarian aid (12%). The need for support from interpreters in various matters was insignificant (5%).

However, this survey showed some changes. Now, most of the children need the opportunity to participate in various activities and travel to restore their emotional state (37%),

as they have a heavy study load, experience stress and lack of communication. Also, there is no longer an urgent need for assistance in purchasing equipment necessary for studying or humanitarian support (only 4%). However, compared to the results of the previous survey, the need for advisory support for interpreters on various issues has increased (22%). It can be assumed that over this period, some evacuated Ukrainians have moved from temporary accommodation, where they could consult with interpreters on various issues, to separate housing and now must cope with most of their daily issues on their own.

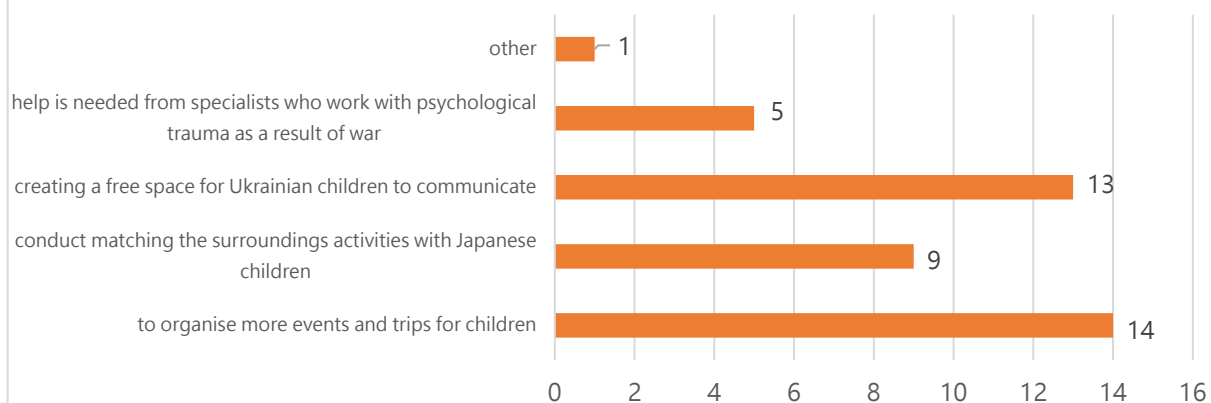


In addition to various activities to restore their children's emotional state, parents also noted that there is a need for additional language learning opportunities (22%). Because despite the fact that the vast majority (90%), of evacuated Ukrainian children are making gradual progress in Japanese, they still cannot express themselves freely and communicate on various topics.

Parents of evacuated Ukrainian children

believe that more events and trips, as well as the creation of a free space for Ukrainian children to communicate with each other at any time, will greatly help in restoring and improving their mental health (almost 65% mentioned). Also important are various matching the surroundings activities with Japanese children (22%), as well as the opportunity to seek help from specialists who work with psychological trauma as a result of the conflict (12%).

Thoughts on ways to help restore the emotional state of evacuated Ukrainian children (n=20)



Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce in Tokyo. Interview with the school's teachers



The Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce in Tokyo was founded in 2009 and has been operating to this day. Before the conflict began throughout in Ukraine, the school had about 30 students, and since 2022, their number has doubled, making Dzherelce the largest Ukrainian Sunday School in Japan.

The Dzherelce School mostly funded with the support of the NGO Kraiany and charges a very symbolic school fee for children who lived in Japan before the conflict (while evacuated Ukrainian children studied completely free of charge and received reimbursement for travel until the end of 2023 study year). The school is currently experiencing difficulties, the biggest of which is the lack of space for lessons.

Because the Dzherelce are attended by children of different ages from 2 years old, with varying levels of Ukrainian language acquisition. Some of them have lived in Japan for a long time or were born there, while others came here because of the conflict in Ukraine. Because of this, there is an urgent need to form more groups, each of which requires an individual learning program. The school's teachers try to group children according to their skills, but the lack of separate classrooms and additional space is very acute.

Due to the lack of permanent premises and storage space for educational materials,

teachers must take all the equipment home with them and then bring it back to class. Another challenge is the purchase of Ukrainian-language books, which teachers are purchasing and ordering them from Ukraine at their own expense. Currently, Dzherelce has a large collection of Ukrainian books for different age children, but the school does not have the space to place them so that children can come and use them at any time.



The Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce does not instruct children according to conventional academic programs and does not give grades, because its goal is to create an environment for Ukrainian children where they can feel like at home, communicate fluently in Ukrainian and make friends. Dzherelce holds lessons twice a month to help children learn about Ukrainian history, traditions, culture, improve their communication skills and creativity. For preschoolers there are

interactive and game-based lessons on speech development, and for school-age children, these are lessons in language, folklore, handicrafts, choreography, etc. They regularly hold holidays and various events, prepare theatrical performances with Japanese children that allow develop various skills and learn about Ukrainian and Japanese cultures in a fun and relaxed environment.



Teachers at the Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce in Tokyo



Natalia Kovalova,
school principal



Natalia Lysenko, teacher



Myroslava Dyachinska,
teacher



Kateryna Voloshenko, teacher



Iryna Chymak, teacher

The impact of conflict on the emotional state of children and the difficulties of providing psychological support. Adaptation and support

At the beginning of work with the children evacuated from Ukraine, the schoolteachers observed cases of panic attacks and psychological disorders because of the conflict in Ukraine.

It was such a stressful time for us too because we had to combine the new children with those who had already been studying in our school. And some of the evacuees were so psychologically traumatized that some of them would suddenly start screaming or biting in class. It scared the other children, and the domino effect occurred. The difficulty was that we did not know how to work with such children. In addition, we had to make sure that they did not cause psychological harm to other children.

- Natalia Lysenko, teacher

The fact that there were no specialists working with conflict-related psychological trauma added to the difficulties. Because of this, teachers had to take special courses to learn how to work with children with post-traumatic syndromes to help them adapt to the new environment and avoid causing them more harm.

However, such situations mostly occurred in the beginning when children had recently

evacuated from Ukraine. Now they feel better because they have realized they are safe and are gradually adapting to the new country. Teachers believe that this psychological state was provoked by a full range of events, including the consequences of the conflict, the stress of changing environments, a new language, a double workload in two schools, and many other factors.

Even though teachers see children in Ukrainian Sunday school as cheerful and joyful, they do not dismiss the idea that many of them need psychological support even now. In addition, parents have repeatedly asked the teachers to help them find psychologists for their children. However, because this is a new and little-known field in psychology, it is difficult to find specialists who can provide children with the help they need because of conflict.

After all, these are not ordinary everyday problems, but victims of conflict, so it should be a completely different approach and method. And we faced the fact that we did not know how to help such children. And it is very difficult to find psychologists who specialize in this area.

- Natalia Kovalova, school principal

Communication and adaptation of evacuated children. Changes in behavior and emotional state

Teachers at Dzherelce felt that in the first months after the evacuation from Ukraine, the children were under some stress and tension. However, gradually, this state began to disappear, and the children gradually calmed down and began to communicate more with each other.

Compared to last year, I noticed a change in the behavior of several children who I continue to teach now. Back then, they were unbalanced and unfocused, but as time has passed, the situation has changed a lot. They started to communicate more with their peers and wanted to do their homework, even though we do not rate them.

- Myroslava Dyachinska, teacher.

School teachers and parents see a positive impact on the emotional state of children because of attending a Ukrainian school and the opportunity to be in a familiar environment. Due to communication with peers in their mother language, children have become more open and cheerful. However, such meeting only twice a month is still not enough, and many children communicate with each other additionally, and older children even organize joint meetings outside of school.

The children are very happy to go to a Ukrainian school. After all, even if they attend a Japanese school and actively communicate with their Japanese classmates, Ukrainian children may lack some emotional moments due to the language barrier and mentality. Therefore, it is very important for them to be able to communicate freely and express their emotions to feel better.

- Iryna Chymak, teacher.

Some children found it extremely difficult to cope with post-traumatic stress disorder and adaptation in Japan. The schoolteachers shared the story of a child who was unable to

attend school due to stress and even went to Ukraine. But then, after returning to Japan, she continued her studies at Dzherelce and began to communicate with other Ukrainian children, which completely changed the child's emotional state for the better.

Her eyes now shine with joy and her face is always smiling and sincere. This child has changed a lot and now it is difficult to imagine that not long time ago she was under a lot of stress.

- Natalia Lysenko, teacher

In addition to their emotional well-being, the teachers also noticed a difference in the behavior of evacuees and those who were born here or have lived here for a long time.

Because of the different lifestyles, the children's behavior is slightly different. Those children who came to Japan recently because of the conflict in Ukraine express their emotions in a slightly different way - a little louder, brighter. But gradually they also get used to life in Japan.

- Kateryna, teacher

The impact of mental well-being on children's academic achievements. Difficulties in education for evacuated children from Ukraine

Many children who have been evacuated to Japan because of the conflict in Ukraine may find it exceedingly difficult to concentrate and comprehend educational material.

The stress they have experienced directly affects their ability to think and analyze. It is a physical process that takes place in the brain, and it affects concentration, memory, and of course it can be quite noticeable during the learning process.

- Natalia Lysenko, teacher

The teachers at Dzherelce always try to create a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom so that children do not feel any pressure or anxiety. The teachers have noticed that children begin to open more when they feel that their moral and psychological state, rather than their studies, is the most important thing. And since Ukrainian Sunday school is not aimed at evaluating children, it makes it easier for them to express themselves because they are not afraid to make mistakes.

If children are in a state of discomfort and constraint, in this case it can't be any learning process, because the child will not perceive any information. That is why we take great care of the emotional well-being of children and put it first, creating all the necessary conditions for this.

- Natalia Lysenko, teacher

The fact that Ukrainian children must study in several educational institutions at once adds to the difficulties of their lives. This is very

overwhelming for children, but in Sunday school they can relax. The schoolteachers believe that it is very important for Ukrainian children to continue their education in Ukrainian schools remotely, because the educational programs are quite different from those in Japan. And attending Japanese schools will help them learn Japanese very well, especially if they have recently arrived in Japan and do not yet have a sufficient level of proficiency of Japanese.

Support and assistance needed by children evacuated from Ukraine.

Most of the teachers at School Dzherelce have been living in Japan for a long time, so parents of evacuated children regularly turn to them for various advice, including educational troubles. According to the school's teachers, children and their parents who evacuated from Ukraine to Japan can be divided into several separate groups, according to their plans. This will help to understand what kind of help certain evacuees need. For those Ukrainians who evacuated to Japan and want to integrate and adopt into Japanese society, these children should go to a local school and learn Japanese.

will return to Ukraine as soon as it is safe to do so. These children should continue their education in Ukrainian schools, and it is advisable to attend a Japanese school for socialization.

A lot of support is needed for these children to ensure that they receive a quality Ukrainian education, even remotely. However, if these children refuse to go to Japanese schools because they understand that they are here temporarily, they may have problems with communication and there is a risk that they may become antisocial.

- Natalia Kovalova, school principal.

These children and their parents will need support to ensure that they do not lose their Ukrainian roots and identity in the future. To do this, they need to continue to communicate with other Ukrainians in their mother language, learn about Ukrainian culture and attend Ukrainian events.

- Natalia Kovalova, school principal

The other group of Ukrainians are those who realize that they are in Japan temporarily and

However, another problem is the overload of children because of studying in two or three schools. Despite this, children still need time for rest, emotional recovery and, most importantly, time for live communication with their peers in their mother language, a lack of which has been noticed by both schoolteachers and parents.

Interviews with mothers and grandmothers of children evacuated from Ukraine.

For a broader understanding of the situation regarding the progress in education and the mental state of children, we interviewed 4 mothers and 1 grandmother of children evacuated from Ukraine. Three of them have school-age children, and two women have a

child who is currently attending kindergarten. They shared their observations on the children's behavior, difficulties children faced, and suggestions on how to improve the learning and emotional conditions for evacuated Ukrainian children in Japan.

Yana Kovalenko, 37 years old



Yana was evacuated to Japan with her three daughters, Evelina (12 years old), Violeta (7 years old), and Antonina (2 years old), and her husband Roman. They came from the city of Pervomaisk, Mykolaiv region, over a year ago and now live in Chiba.

Studying at a Ukrainian school

Yana's older daughters' study at a Ukrainian school on a family basis. They made this decision because the school they attend alternates between online and on-site work. Under this form of education, children only must complete and submit tasks, but to better understand the material, the girls also try to attend online lessons whenever they have the opportunity.

Studying at a Japanese school

Yana's two daughters started attending a Japanese elementary school in October 2023 - Evelina is in the sixth grade and Violeta is in the first grade. The parents made this decision so that the children could communicate with their peers and learn the language more easily, so Yana and Roman do not have any direct requirements for their studies. The schoolteachers try to support and help their children in every feasible way, for example, they installed automatic translators on the children's tablets, allowed them to carry phones to school in case of emergency and provide individual Japanese lessons 3-4 times a week.

The mother of the children is very surprised at how loyal and understanding the schoolteachers are to her children. They regularly consult with her and ask if children are keeping up with their studies if they are not overworked and if they feel comfortable at school. At a parent-teacher conference, Yana was told that her children had made very good friends with their Japanese classmates. With Violeta, who is in the first grade, the children walk home together and go for a meeting after school. They do not feel any tension, although it is still quite difficult for them to study in a Japanese school and communicate with their classmates because of language difficulties.



Restoring the emotional state of children. Changes in children's mental health

To restore the children's emotional state, the family regularly attends various events with Ukrainians and travels nearby. This helps the children to relax and gain strength. In addition to attending Japanese and remote Ukrainian schools, Evelina and Violetta also attend a Ukrainian Sunday school in Tokyo. The parents noticed that thanks to attending Japanese and Ukrainian Sunday schools, their children's emotional state improved significantly, and they became more interested and

happier to live in Japan. They saw particularly noticeable changes in their eldest daughter's behavior because of communicating with her Ukrainian peers. When the family first arrived in Japan, Evelina hardly ever went out and did not talk to almost anyone, which worried her parents. However, after she started attending Sunday school, she found friends there with whom she enjoys socializing and travelling outside of school.

How time is allocated for studying at three schools and for leisure

To prevent the children from being overworked, their mother Yana, when she sees that her daughters are very overworked, sometimes allows them to skip school's lesson, both Ukrainian and Japanese. At the Japanese school, Evelina and Violetta rarely must do homework, and so they usually do not feel stressed about it. Sometimes the younger daughter is given simple tasks (for example, to write or read something), but this is not common and is not mandatory. However, in any case, when many tasks are required, the girls feel overworked. The children's mother says that despite studying at two schools, her children always find time to rest and play, so parents are confident that their daughters feel well.

Iryna Chymak, 36 years old



Iryna lived in Bucha, Ukraine, and evacuated to Japan with her 11-year-old son Mark in the spring of 2022 on the advice of her relatives. They left their home at the beginning of the conflict at the peak of the danger, so the child had to see and feel the consequences of shelling in and outside the city.

Studying at double schools

Since the conflict began throughout Ukraine, Mark has continued to study at a Ukrainian school remotely and is now in the 5th grade. When he arrived to Japan, he started attending a Japanese school within a few weeks.

Mark's mother notices that it is quite difficult for her son to study at two schools at once - he is very exhausted and has little time to rest. At the Japanese school, it is the language that makes it most difficult for the child, because every day he has to memorise new words in addition to his subjects, and when he comes home and has a little rest, he has to do his homework for the Ukrainian school. Sometimes it can be difficult for Mark to understand some subjects because of language difficulties, so Iryna does not demand that her son study well in Japanese school, because the most importantly, that he learn the language. The teachers are also

sympathetic to the child's double workload and try to make it easier for him, but he still has to do a lot of tasks. In addition to his regular subjects, Mark also receives additional Japanese lessons, as there are other foreigners studying at this school.

Mark wants to continue his studies at the Ukrainian school where he attended before the conflict. However, this school is currently operating face-to-face classes only and does not have online lessons. Therefore, the boy is studying at his Ukrainian school, but in the family form of education. This is a form of studying where parents or guardians organise the child's learning process on their own, and teachers only conduct different type exams and assess children in the middle and end of educational year. As Iryna is a teacher herself, she is trying to help her son with most subjects. However, the child lacks communication with his classmates, and Mark is gradually starting to communicate more with Ukrainian children in Japan.

Progress in language learning

Iryna is concerned that while studying at a Japanese school, her son mostly learns and can use vocabulary related to academic subjects, but has difficulties with ordinary everyday communication. It can be uncomfortable for Mark to approach and ask questions on his own, as he feels insecure in the language and this can be emotionally difficult for the child.

The child's mental state

After evacuating from Ukraine, Iryna and her son felt confused by the change of environment and irritated because of their experiences in Ukraine. At first, they were afraid of loud noises (such as fireworks and helicopters), but eventually their mental state returned to normal as they began to feel safe. However, Iryna still worries that the

Changes in the child's emotional well-being

Dzherelce, where his mother also works. Iryna noticed that during meetings with Ukrainian children, her son seems to unload and relieve stress. At this school, he has made Ukrainian friends with whom he is very happy to spend time. As a result, his mental state has improved significantly. However, Iryna believes that it would be good if there were more such meetings or trips, or if Ukrainian children could meet at a special centre at any time to communicate and spend time together.

Iryna and her son plan to return to Ukraine in the future, but only when it is completely safe. She doesn't want to put her child in danger or under constant stress. She wants Mark to have a normal childhood now and in the future, as he has already suffered psychological trauma.

Kateryna Voloshenko, 35 years old



international school, and also attend the Ukrainian Sunday School Dzherelce in Tokyo. In addition, her daughter also studies remotely at a Ukrainian art school.

Kateryna's children used to attend a Japanese school, but then they received an offer to study at an international school and decided that it would be better and easier for Anna and Andriy if school subjects were taught in English at the moment.

Mental wellbeing and emotional recovery of children

To restore the children's emotional well-being, Kateryna tries to organise small trips and visit interesting places on weekends, as they almost have no free time on weekdays. Andrii and Anna are also very happy to attend Ukrainian Sunday School, despite being overwhelmed by their studies. Before they started attending the Sunday school, they felt lonely and hardly

communicated, but now they have found common interests with their Ukrainian peers and enjoy the company.

Studying at a Ukrainian school remotely

Kateryna's children try to devote time to studying at a Ukrainian school every day. They complete the necessary tasks, but it can be difficult for them to connect to online lessons because of their studies at an international school in Japan. Andrii is particularly struggling to get used to the remote learning format, as he was attending kindergarten when he was evacuated to Japan and began his first school experience

in a Japanese school. Studying remotely makes it harder for children to focus and more difficult to get support, as they do not have the opportunity to communicate with teachers and classmates face-to-face.



Tetiana, (surname and age not listed due to respondent's request)

Tetiana was evacuated to Japan from the city of Kamianske, Dnipro region, in the spring of 2022 with her 6 year's old granddaughter Erika. The girl is half Ukrainian and half Japanese, but came to Japan for the first time as an evacuee at the age of 4. Now the child lives with her grandmother and mother.



This spring, Erika will start first grade at a Japanese school. Her grandmother is not worried about the her matching the surroundings, because during the almost 2 years she has been living in Japan, Erika attended kindergarten and mastered Japanese language very well, there were no

misunderstandings with other children. Sometimes the grandmother tries to explain to her grandchildren why Japanese children behave differently from her because of their cultural background.

Fluent communicate with peers, Erica has made Japanese friends in kindergarten, but she still lacks communication with Ukrainian children and misses her home in Ukraine. That is why Tetiana periodically organises meetings with Ukrainians with children. However, Erika's grandmother is unable to arrange similar meetings with Japanese families due to difficulties in communicating in Japanese or English. For the sake of her granddaughter's emotional health and all-round development, Tetiana accompanies her to events for Ukrainians, various children's activities, and tries to travel with her.



Alyona (name changed and age not listed due the respondents request)

Alyona was evacuated to Japan from Kyiv in the spring of 2022 with her daughter Yulia (name changed), 4 years old. Due to her young age, Yulia quickly got used to life in Japan. She started learning Japanese from scratch in kindergarten and now she making great progress.

Without using any translators and learning Japanese only through games and pictures, Yulia has already know how to explain her basic needs and can communicate well with other children in the kindergarten. The girl also closely observes the behaviour, emotions and actions of other children and tries to reproduce them. Yulia is eager to attend a Japanese kindergarten, which surprised her mother. Alyona is very impressed with the quality of the education

system and the methods of communication with children in Japanese kindergartens

The woman has no worries about her daughter's future education. After all, being in a Japanese speaking environment, young children perceive the language very well, even without any memorisation of words, and easily get used to life in a new country. However, despite this, Yulia still misses her home and periodically asks when they will be able to return to Ukraine. So while here, Alyona regularly takes her daughter to Ukrainian Sunday school classes. It is a great joy for the girl to be able to communicate in her native language with Ukrainian children, as it is easier and clearer for her to speak and express her emotions in Ukrainian.

Conclusions

After conducting a survey and interviewing the children's parents and school teachers, it can be seen that Ukrainian evacuees still face various difficulties. These include a lack of communication, severe homesickness, language and matching the surroundings difficulties, stress and overload from being in both schools. Some parents are concerned about their children's mental health and the difficulty of finding specialists who can help with the psychological effects of conflict. Also, many children need help with their studies, but most parents are unable to help them with this due to language difficulties.

However, beside this many children have gradually experienced many positive changes in their behaviour and well-being. They have found it easier to communicate in Japanese, many of them have made Japanese friends and they began to enjoy life in Japan

Language skills are highly dependent on the age of the children. Children who were evacuated to Japan at a preschool age very easily began to understand and

communicate in Japanese without experiencing any difficulties. For them, studying in Japanese schools in the future will be much easier and more effective. However, children who arrived in Japan at school age have a much more difficult time learning a new language and matching the surroundings into Japanese society.

Although most of the children have good relationships with the Japanese children, but they feel limited in their communication because of the language and may feel lonely. Despite the age of the children, they all need face to face communication with their Ukrainian peers, and the Ukrainian Sunday school is a great help with this. Such meetings have a positive impact on the mental state and overall well-being of the children.

According to the difficulties faced by the evacuated children and their needs, there are some ways to help and support them that could ease their study workload and improve their emotional state:

1. Holding more cultural exchange for Ukrainian and Japanese children, as well as creating opportunities (space and events) for Ukrainian children to communicate with each other. Children of all ages need this, as it will help them to recover their emotional state, not feel lonely and enjoy life in Japan more;
2. To create opportunities for language support in Japanese schools (e.g., translation of difficult learning moments, vocabulary for the lesson topic, etc.) This will help children to better orientate themselves, understand the material and learn the language more easily.
3. A conditional reduction in the subject load in Japanese schools to allow more hours for Japanese language learning. Since most children attend Japanese schools primarily to learn Japanese and socialization into Japanese society, mastering the subject matter itself is secondary because they study similar material in Ukrainian schools.
4. To help with finding specialists who work specifically with psychological trauma as a result of the conflict to those who need it. After all, a significant number of children have needed or need the support of psychologists, but they cannot find those who can help with their problems.



About Plan International

Plan International is an independent development and humanitarian organisation that advances children's rights and equality for girls. We strive for a just world, working together with children, young people, supporters and partners. Using our reach, experience and knowledge, Plan International drives changes in practice and policy at local, national and global levels. We are independent of governments, religions and political parties. For over 85 years we have been building powerful partnerships for children and we are active in more than 80 countries.

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