# Scaling Training on Trauma-Informed Education in Ukraine During Crisis

**Joshua L. DeVincenzo**
*Columbia University*
**Shuyang Huang**
*Columbia University*
**Sumana Palle**
*Columbia University*
**Syeda Kainaat Jah**
*Columbia University*
**Linfan Gan**
*Columbia University*
**Michelle Rozenfeld**
*Rutgers University*
**Chloe Chung**
*University of Pennsylvania*

*This descriptive implementation case study examines how trauma-informed education was operationalized and scaled through an online learning modality during the ongoing war in Ukraine. The course was developed through a critical collaboration between the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University, the Ukraine Children's Action Project (UCAP), and educational stakeholders in Ukraine and Poland. The course was designed to equip educators with practical, relational strategies to support children as they navigate education amid war, displacement, and prolonged crisis. Grounded in the dual frameworks of Trauma-Informed Education (TIE) and Education in Emergencies (EiE), the curriculum development process emphasized localization, accessibility, and learner engagement through an iterative approach with expert teachers, psychologists, trauma specialists, and instructional designers from Ukraine, Poland, and the United States. Early evaluation findings from 172 teacher respondents indicated high levels of perceived value and satisfaction. Qualitative analysis further identified ongoing professional development needs related to child-centered trauma recovery, teacher well-being and burnout prevention, inclusive education, and sustaining human connection among teachers, students, and families. These findings suggest that online learning serves as an effective, scalable modality for trauma-informed education during active conflict, while highlighting the broader, long-term support needs educators face in navigating crisis environments.*

*Keywords: Trauma-Informed Education, Ukraine, Crisis Context, Mental Health and Well-Being, Online Learning/E-Learning*

© 2026, DeVincenzo et al. CC BY 4.0. 

**Introduction**

Trauma-informed education, understood as the application of trauma-informed care principles to educational practice, offers a framework for providing educators with information and tools to address the needs of children who have experienced potentially traumatic events (Carello & Butler, 2015). Operationalizing it at scale during an active crisis, however, requires careful attention to delivery modality, cultural and linguistic localization, and design choices that sustain learner engagement across geographically dispersed and emotionally taxed audiences.

This report describes findings from the critical collaboration between the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University, the Ukraine Children's Action Project (UCAP), and educational stakeholders in Lviv, Ukraine, and Warsaw, Poland, to produce a web-based course providing educators across Ukraine with training on the effects of trauma faced by thousands of students who are navigating education in wartime. The year-long partnership resulted in *The Impact of Trauma and How It Affects Behavior and Learning: What Teachers Should Know*, a web-based, interactive course offered in both Ukrainian and Polish. Within the first month of the course launch, in time for the Fall 2023 school year, the online modality enabled trauma-informed classroom training to reach 1,921 teachers, who completed it for a certificate.

The purpose of this article is to contribute a descriptive implementation case study of how trauma-informed education was operationalized and scaled through an online modality during active conflict in Ukraine, to analyze and interrogate the design decisions and affordances that made rapid scaling possible, and to report early implementation evidence on the course's reach from its initial delivery, perceived value, and the ongoing training needs identified by participating teachers operating in these conditions.

**Context**

Children in Ukraine have lived with the direct impact of war with Russia since 2014, when Russia invaded Crimea and pro-Russian separatists began seizing territory in eastern Ukraine. The full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022, sharply escalated violence, destruction, forced evacuation, injury, and death across the country and triggered the largest forced migration of refugees in Europe since World War II (International Rescue Committee, 2024). Women and children began to escape from the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine to the west of the country as internally displaced persons (IDPs) or left the country altogether as refugees. At the start of this project in Fall 2022, there were 6.9 million IDPs within Ukraine and 7 million Ukrainian refugees located in more than 20 countries (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2023). As of 2026, more than a third of Ukraine's children, estimated at 2,589,900, continue to be displaced as the war in Ukraine enters its fifth year. More than 791,000 children are displaced inside Ukraine, and nearly 1,798,900 children are living as refugees outside the country.

Schools themselves have become targets of violence and sites of military occupation, with artillery strikes and the use of school buildings as encampments disrupting children's education (Gorbunova, 2023; UNICEF, 2026). For children who have left Ukraine, access to education has not been straightforward. The International Rescue Committee (2024) reports that nearly half of school-aged Ukrainian refugee children were not enrolled in schools in their host countries during the 2022 to 2023 academic year. Children inside Ukraine and across the diaspora are therefore experiencing varied but consistently disrupted educational pathways shaped by sustained exposure to violence, dislocation, and loss.

The cumulative trauma of war exposure affects children's cognitive and non-cognitive development, including their capacity to learn, engage, and form relationships within school environments (Samara et al., 2020). These effects extend to long-term educational aspirations and outcomes (Zakharchenko et al., 2025). Teachers in Ukraine, Poland, and other host countries have been positioned as frontline witnesses to these challenges, often without formal preparation in trauma-informed pedagogy. The project team weighed and drew from insights on the academic debates on trauma-informed education, such as risks associated with deficit model approaches in which trauma-informed education can potentially perpetuate marginalization of students by labeling based on their identities (Venet, 2021), lack of consensus, lack of empirical work informing trauma-informed teaching and teacher education, and lack of clear operational guidance on the terminology (Thomas et al., 2019). The course described in this article was developed firstly in response to an urgent challenge in practice and secondly to address these gaps and inform future practice.

**Theoretical Foundation**

The term "Trauma-Informed Education" (TIE) has gained popularity since 2015 to refer to the application of components of trauma-informed care (TIC) to educational contexts (Carello & Butler, 2015). Trauma-Informed Educational practices are important in addressing the impacts of trauma, not only on individual students but also on the entire school community, including teachers, administrators, family members, and caregivers. By recognizing and responding to the effects of trauma, educators can create supportive environments that promote healing, resilience, and academic success. For supportive educational environments to be effective for all students, regardless of backgrounds or experiences, social justice and equity should be key concerns in the design process (Venet, 2021). While Trauma-Informed Education allows teachers to provide key support, Bastian (n.d.) notes it is not intended to be therapeutic in a clinical sense and should not require instructors to take on more than their typical roles and responsibilities. In this paper, the concept of Trauma-Informed Education provides information and tools to address the needs of children who have experienced potentially traumatic events.

In addition to TIE, Education in Emergencies (EiE) is a critical and growing discipline and set of guidelines for understanding the nuances of school and

learning systems under emergency conditions (INEE, 2018). EiE has evolved since the mid- to late 1900s, with origins advocating for educational aid to be recognized as a fundamental humanitarian need (Burde et al., 2017). EiE now supports the emergency planning phases that examine education as physical, psychosocial, and intellectual welfare, with the aim of a better life for millions of students learning in emergencies (Akkari & Radhouane, 2023). Teacher well-being is central to educational quality in crisis settings, demonstrating that teacher-student relationships function as a bidirectional resource that shapes both student well-being and the well-being of teachers who are themselves living through the same crisis (Falk et al., 2022). At the same time, EiE implies imperial entanglements, and external actors designing interventions in crisis contexts must remain reflexive about how programs are framed and on whose terms (Novelli & Kutan, 2024). This project contributes to a foundational goal of EiE: enabling quality, safe, and relevant education for all in emergencies and crisis contexts through prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery, with an emphasis on the thematic area of mental health and well-being (INEE, 2018). It also offers implementation evidence on how trauma-informed education can be operationalized and scaled through an online modality during active armed conflict, extending the EiE evidence base, which has largely been generated in post-conflict recovery and protracted displacement settings.

As the urgency of educational services for populations affected by crisis and emergencies grows, applied implementation case studies that combine TIE and EiE components offer key lessons and considerations for scholarship and practice. Both the TIE and EiE frameworks were critical in approaching the project's curriculum development process. With this theoretical framework and understanding, the project objective was to examine how a trauma-informed curriculum could be implemented and scaled through an online modality to support educators operating in crisis-impacted educational contexts during the war in Ukraine.

**Curriculum Development Process**

*The Impact of Trauma and How It Affects Behavior and Learning: What Teachers Should Know* is a web-based, self-paced, and interactive course. The course carries a TIE approach into an online learning environment. The course teaches educators how to develop trauma-informed practices and interventions in their classrooms to support and assist students who have experienced traumatic events, especially trauma related to war and displacement. Teachers are presented with content, knowledge checks, interactive activities, and a curated list of resources in an Educators' Resource slide. The course consists of four self-paced modules as described in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Overview of Training Modules: Titles, Descriptions, and Theoretical Foundations*

| Module | Title | Description | Theoretical Foundation |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction to Trauma | Introduces foundational concepts of trauma, including definitions, types of potentially traumatic events, and the prevalence of trauma exposure among children in crisis-affected contexts. Establishes shared vocabulary and frames why educators are positioned to recognize and respond to trauma in the classroom. | Trauma-informed care principles applied to education (Carello & Butler, 2015); education in emergencies thematic area of mental health and well-being (INEE, 2018) |
| 2 | What Are the Symptoms of a Traumatized Child? | Examines how trauma manifests in children's behavior, learning, and relationships across developmental stages, with attention to symptoms that may present in preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students. Uses age-specific scenarios and illustrations to support recognition in real classroom contexts. | Trauma-informed education and child developmental responses to potentially traumatic events (Carello & Butler, 2015; Samara et al., 2020) |
| 3 | How Educators Can Support Children Who Have Experienced Trauma | Equips teachers with practical, relational strategies for responding to students affected by trauma, with emphasis on the role of student-teacher relationships in supporting recovery. Includes interactive scenarios and reflection journal prompts grounded in classroom realities. | Trauma-informed education as a relational, non-clinical practice (Bastian, n.d.; Venet, 2021); teacher-student relationships as a resource for student well-being in crisis contexts (Shephard et al., 2024) |
| 4 | What Can Be Done in the Classroom and School to Incorporate Trauma-Informed Practices and Policies? | Moves from individual student support to classroom- and school-level integration of trauma-informed practices, including policies, environmental design, and links to broader school community support. Includes a curated Educators' Resource slide for continued learning. | Equity-centered trauma-informed education at the school and system level (Venet, 2021); education in emergencies goals of quality, safe, and relevant education through prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (INEE, 2018) |

*Note.* EiE = Education in Emergencies; INEE = Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies.

To create this project, NCDP and UCAP worked in tandem to understand teachers' needs and to scaffold content on trauma in ways that are practical and relevant to the realities of Ukrainian and Polish classrooms. In practice, it is common to observe tiered approaches to trauma-informed education. For example, the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) utilize the following

intervention tiers: Tier 1 includes trauma training for all school staff, Tier 2 involves consultation between educators and internal mental health staff, and Tier 3 involves consultation with professionals externally (Berger, 2019; Gee et al., 2020). The priority for scaffolding content in this project fell within Tier 1 of the MTSS. In addition to the tiered approach, the team also scaffolded conceptually and technically alongside local experts. For example, even the word "trauma" was discussed at length with the project translators on the exact translation to use in each native language.

The course required an iterative development approach that relied on rounds of feedback from expert teachers, psychologists, trauma specialists, and researchers from the U.S., Poland, and Ukraine.

**Affordances of the Online Modality**

The decision to deliver training online was initially met with skepticism from some key school decision-makers, as online learning is often perceived as a lower-quality, limited alternative to in-person, real-time instruction. However, given the project's scope of delivering training at scale in a wartime setting, a self-paced eLearning approach was the only modality that could provide trauma-informed training to large numbers of educators in a short period during active conflict. Three challenges shaped the design: 1) introducing the pedagogical approach of trauma-informed education, 2) localizing content for Ukrainian and Polish contexts, languages, and school structures, and 3) sustaining learner engagement throughout the course.

In developing this web-based course, interaction design strategies were identified early to effectively enhance learner motivation and accommodate diverse learning styles. Firstly, given that the course content includes complex psychological terminology and emotionally charged scenarios, it was essential to create a precise visual presentation and interactive elements that serve as effective training tools. The incorporation of targeted illustrations and imagery to depict emotions, body language, and mood was critical for conveying concepts such as trauma and its symptoms, particularly in children. Additionally, the implementation of clickable interactions enabled learners to navigate the course at their own pace, allowing them to revisit specific slides or content as needed. By introducing layered information on each slide, the course effectively broke down complex knowledge into manageable segments, with the goal of enabling learners to absorb the material more thoroughly.

Secondly, as the course emphasized practical application in classroom settings, realistic scenarios and corresponding solutions were tailored to different age groups, specifically preschool, elementary, middle, and high school students (using the local Ukrainian and Polish grade level equivalents). Interactive elements were designed around these age-specific contexts, allowing educators to select relevant situations that align with their real-life experiences. This was especially important to the design considerations of the modules, given insights

from the literature and project experts that the impact of trauma on the developing brain is critical and manifests differently across developmental stages (Plumb et al., 2016). Upon choosing an age group, learners engaged with distinct storylines and detailed analyses, prompting them to reflect on relevant issues and apply appropriate approaches in their own practice.

Lastly, the course incorporated multiple module learning checks and case studies, both of which are essential components of web-based training design in practice. The module learning checks enhanced assessment, engagement, and overall learner success while providing critical feedback for continuous improvement. Furthermore, the case studies included a reflection journal activity that fostered self-awareness, critical thinking, and personal growth, contributing to a more meaningful and effective learning experience.

The project took approximately a year to develop, with several trips to Warsaw, a team of instructional designers, translators, and narrators, and collaboration with leading educational institutions and technical experts in Ukraine and Poland. In Fall 2023, when the course was finally published on partner sites in Ukraine, nearly 2,000 teachers completed the course within its first month. This reach within three weeks of the start of a new school year would have been impossible under the operational conditions of wartime Ukraine without an online modality. The modality also efficiently supports updating content in a rapidly changing crisis landscape by publishing new versions of the course as needed on each partner's website or learning management system.

**Early Evaluation Data**

Evaluation data were collected as part of a descriptive program evaluation embedded within the implementation of the online course. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to understand participants' immediate perceptions of the course, their self-reported knowledge, skills, and abilities related to trauma-informed education, and their continued training needs. Evaluations were first translated using translation software and then confirmed with a native Ukrainian speaker.

***Study Design***

This evaluation used a post-training questionnaire administered to teachers who completed the online course and received a certificate. The questionnaire included closed-ended and open-ended items. Closed-ended responses were analyzed quantitatively, while open-ended responses were analyzed qualitatively. The two sets of findings were then interpreted together to understand both the course's early perceived value and the continuing needs of teachers working in crisis-affected classrooms.

***Evaluation Instrument***

The questionnaire functioned as a course satisfaction and feedback instrument. It asked teachers to report their perceived knowledge, skills, and abilities before and after the training using four response categories: high, average, basic, and

low. It also asked whether the course enriched their knowledge and helped develop skills to support students, whether they would recommend the course to colleagues, and whether they felt able to apply the skills acquired in practice. The open-ended question asked the teachers to identify their perceived ongoing professional development needs in the context of trauma-informed education and crisis-affected schooling.

***Participants and Sampling Methods***

A total of 1,921 teachers completed the online course during the first month of implementation. Of these completions, 172 Ukrainian teachers submitted evaluation questionnaires, representing an approximate response rate of 9.0%. Teachers were invited to complete the questionnaire at the end of the course. Participation in the evaluation was voluntary.

***Analytical Methods***

Closed-ended survey items were analyzed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. These results were used to summarize teachers' self-reported knowledge, skills, and abilities before and after the course, as well as their satisfaction with the course and perceived ability to apply course content.

For the final open-ended question, NCDP conducted a qualitative analysis to identify teachers' perceived needs for future training and support. Of the 172 questionnaire responses, 126 were included in the qualitative coding process. Forty-six responses were excluded because they did not identify a specific training need or were too general to support thematic analysis. The excluded responses included answers such as "All," "I don't know," and "N/A." Excluding these responses allowed the analysis to focus on comments that provided interpretable information about future training priorities.

The coding process used an inductive qualitative coding framework, in which responses were reviewed, and recurring topics were identified and organized into broader categories linked to the evaluation question (Thomas, 2006). Recurring topics that appeared during the review process included teacher needs, student support, classroom practice, and education in crisis contexts. Codes were then grouped into broader thematic categories. The final code system organized valid responses into three primary categories: Child-Centered Training and Support; Teacher Well-being, Skills, and Professional Development; and Sustaining Human Connection in Education During Crisis. Each primary category included subcodes that captured more specific areas of need, such as psychological trauma recovery among children, inclusive education, teacher burnout, classroom management, and teacher-parent communication.

***Ethical Considerations***

The evaluation was conducted with adult teachers as part of routine post-course feedback. Responses were analyzed in aggregate and used to understand course implementation and future training needs. No student-level data were collected. Given the crisis-affected context in which the training took place, protecting

participant confidentiality and avoiding overinterpretation of individual experiences were important considerations in the analysis and reporting of findings.

***Limitations***

This evaluation has several methodological limitations. First, the findings are based on voluntary responses from 172 teachers out of 1,921 course completers. As a result, the respondents may not be representative of all teachers who completed the course. Teachers who chose to complete the questionnaire may have been more engaged or more satisfied with the course than those who did not respond. Second, the evaluation relied on self-reported data collected after course completion. The reported changes in knowledge, skills, and abilities, therefore, reflect teachers' perceptions of learning rather than objectively measured gains in knowledge or demonstrated changes in classroom practice. The evaluation did not include a pre-course baseline survey administered before the training. Third, demographic data were not collected, which limits the ability to examine whether teachers experienced the course differently across regions, school types, grade levels, years of experience, or prior exposure to trauma-informed education. In addition, the qualitative findings are based only on open-ended responses that provided interpretable training needs. Finally, the findings are not broadly generalizable to all Ukrainian teachers or to all education-in-emergencies contexts. On the contrary, they provide early evidence of implementation from a subset of teachers who completed the course and chose to provide feedback. Future evaluation could strengthen the evidence base by collecting follow-up data, assessing changes in classroom practice, and examining teacher well-being over time.

***Positionality Statement***

The authors approach this work from positions that are both proximate to and distanced from the Ukrainian wartime education context. The author team is based at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University in New York and brings expertise across instructional design, disaster preparedness, public health, and program evaluation. None of the authors were physically present in Ukraine during the period of implementation, and none experienced the war as residents of Ukraine or Poland. The course was developed in close partnership with the Ukraine Children's Action Project and with Ukrainian and Polish educators, psychologists, and trauma specialists who provided lived knowledge of classroom realities, language, and cultural context that the authors could not directly provide. The authors served primarily as designers, facilitators, and evaluators of a training program whose grounding in the Ukrainian and Polish contexts was provided by local collaborators. The evaluation reported here was conducted in Ukrainian and translated for analysis, which introduces interpretive limitations that the authors acknowledge. The authors recognize that writing about a population experiencing active conflict from a position of relative safety entails an obligation to represent participants' perspectives accurately,

avoid overinterpreting individual experiences, and credit the expertise of local partners whose work made this project possible.

## Findings

### *Quantitative Results: Course Reach, Teacher Satisfaction, and Self-Reported Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities*

The course reached 1,921 teachers during its first month of implementation. Among the 172 teachers who completed the evaluation questionnaire, respondents reported substantial perceived gains in knowledge, skills, and abilities related to trauma-informed education.

Before taking the course, teachers reported their knowledge, skills, and abilities to navigate trauma in their classroom in the following categories: high (12.2%), average (51.7%), base (31.4%), and low (4.7%). After completing the course, the self-reported knowledge, skills, and abilities shifted significantly, with 81.4% of respondents reporting high knowledge, skills, and abilities (an increase of 69.2 percentage points), 15% at an average level, 3.5% at the base level, and importantly, 0% reporting low levels. The results of the comparison of knowledge and skills before and after taking the course are presented in Figure 1.

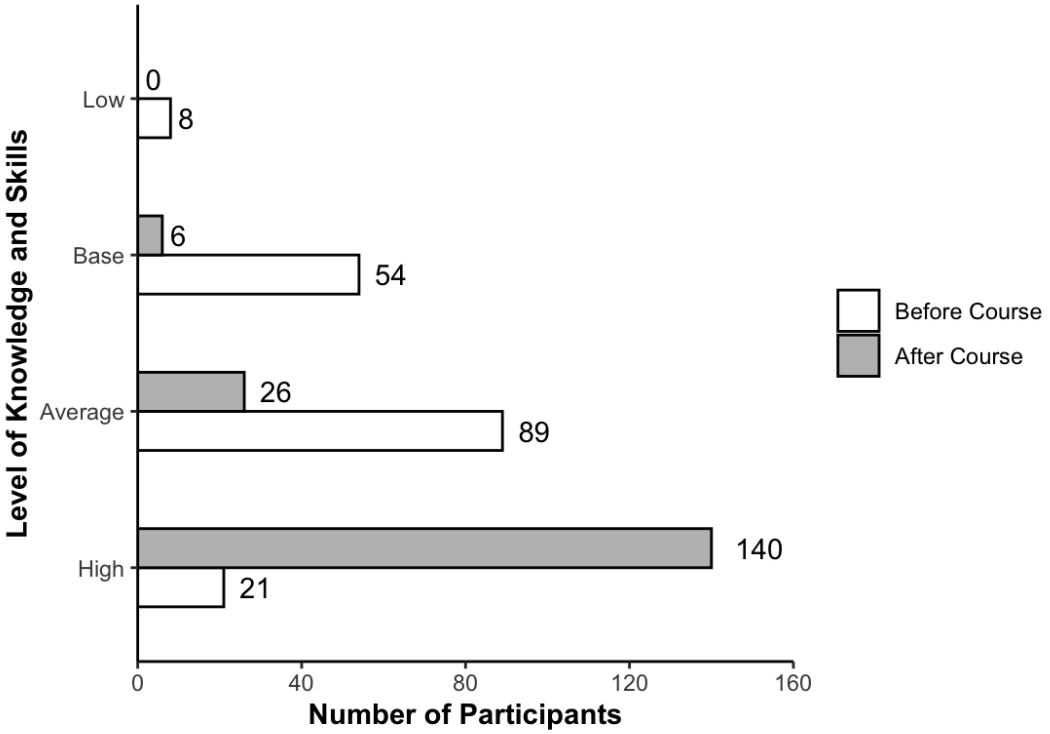
In practice, this shift suggests that respondents felt more prepared to recognize and respond to trauma-related needs in the classroom after completing the course. This is important in a crisis context because many teachers may be expected to support students affected by trauma without having received formal preparation in trauma-informed education.

At the same time, these results should be interpreted as perceived learning rather than verified competency. The evaluation did not include an objective knowledge test or student outcome data. Therefore, the findings indicate that teachers believed the course improved their preparedness, but they do not demonstrate whether teachers changed their classroom practices or whether students experienced improved educational or psychosocial outcomes.

Respondents also reported very high satisfaction with the course. 99.4% (171 out of 172) of respondents agreed that taking the course enriched their knowledge and developed skills to support their students in the classroom. The same proportion (99.4%) reported that they would recommend the course to their colleagues. Finally, 98.8% (170 out of 172) of respondents reported that, after completing the online training, they felt fully able to apply the skills acquired during the course in practice.

**Figure 1**

*Comparison of Knowledge and Skills Before and After the Course*



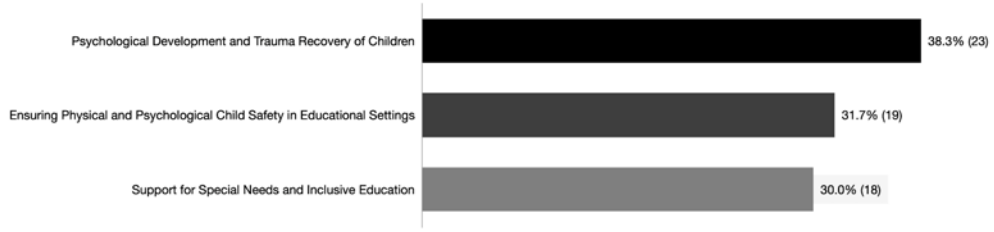

***Qualitative Perspectives: Teacher-Identified Training Needs***

The open-ended responses provided insight into teachers' needs after completing the course. The 126 valid responses were organized into three primary categories: 1) Child-Centered Training and Support, 2) Teacher Well-being, Skills, and Professional Development, and 3) Sustaining Human Connection in Education During Crisis. These categories show that teachers viewed trauma-informed education as more than a set of individual classroom strategies. Respondents described a broader need for support across three connected levels: students' safety and recovery, teachers' own well-being and professional capacity, and the relationships among students, teachers, and families.

**Category I: Child-Centered Training and Support.** This category encompasses training and support mechanisms focused on children's physical and psychological well-being, especially in times of crisis. A total of 60 responses were categorized under this code, divided into three main subcodes: Psychological Development and Trauma Recovery of Children, Ensuring Physical and Psychological Child Safety in Educational Settings, and Support for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. Figure 2 shows the distribution of responses across the subcodes.

**Figure 2**

*Subcode Statistics for Child-Centered Training and Support*




***Psychological Development and Trauma Recovery of Children.*** Teachers recognized the need to identify and address the psychological trauma of students. They highlighted the need for psychological support for students during crises such as air alerts and war, including providing crisis psychological assistance, understanding psychological injuries, and fostering both spiritual and emotional development. They also emphasized the role of self-esteem in trauma recovery, helping students understand their feelings while addressing behavioral aspects and the psychological development of high school students.

Teachers encountered challenges in motivating children who have lost interest in learning. Respondents emphasized the need to adapt learning approaches after crises, such as reimagining summer breaks. Participants also want to explore strategies for working with children who are reluctant to learn, as well as specific techniques to rebuild students' interest and engagement in their education.

***Ensuring Physical and Psychological Child Safety in Educational Settings***. Strategies are needed to enhance physical safety in schools. Teachers reported the need to address critical issues such as managing trauma from physical and sexual abuse and ensuring general child safety in educational settings. In addition, it was noted that there is a need for First-aid training for handling common injuries among students. Teachers emphasized the importance of equipping educators with the skills to manage common student injuries, which include providing pre-hospital care and addressing specific injuries such as fractures, fainting, and frostbite. Participants expressed a desire for practical training in diagnostic techniques and injury management during physical education lessons. It was noted that enhancing physical safety in schools requires addressing bullying by equipping teachers with strategies to recognize and prevent it, a critical need.

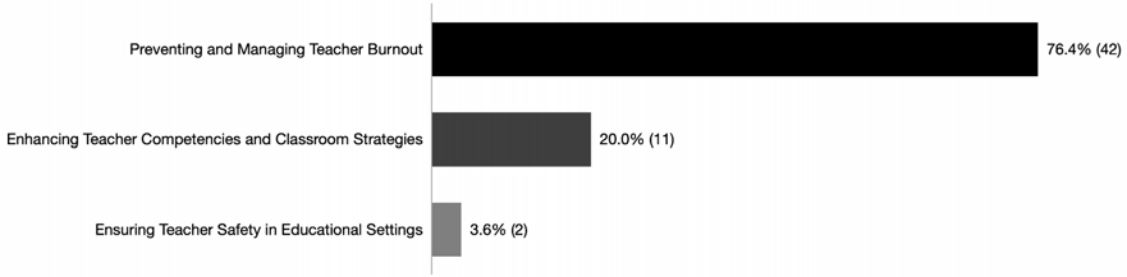
***Support for Special Needs and Inclusive Education.*** Teachers seek additional support for special needs and inclusive education. Respondents noted wanting training on how to support children with special needs, including students in vocational schools, elementary schools, and those classified as OOP (Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children) and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons). Of the 18 responses in this category, 10 specifically mentioned the importance of ensuring "inclusive education practices."

**Category II: Teacher Well-being, Skills, and Professional Development**. This category centers on the well-being and professional development of teachers,

focusing on the stresses and challenges they encounter in crisis environments. A total of 55 responses were classified under this code, divided into three main subcodes: Preventing and Managing Teacher Burnout, Enhancing Teacher Competencies and Classroom Strategies, and Ensuring Teacher Safety in Educational Settings. Figure 3 shows how the responses are distributed across these subcodes.

**Figure 3**

*Subcode Statistics for Teacher Well-being, Skills, and Professional Development*




***Preventing and Managing Teacher Burnout.*** Schools must recognize and prevent teacher burnout. Teachers noted the importance of recognizing the signs of emotional, professional, and psychological exhaustion among teachers, particularly during times of crisis such as war. The responses emphasize the importance of providing support systems to prevent burnout and offer strategies for managing stress, maintaining motivation, and balancing professional responsibilities with personal well-being.

One participant explained:

> "How to stop professional burnout. Now all the attention of children, and teachers are depleted emotionally no less. Teachers also live during the war. And they have children, men who are fighting... And very little attention is paid to it. In order for us to lift the student, we have to have the strength..."

This response shows that teachers saw their own well-being as necessary for supporting students. In this view, preventing burnout is part of what allows teachers to provide stable classroom environments. Teachers also requested training in emotional and psychological support to help them manage their mental health and create an environment where they can recharge emotionally.

Teachers want to know how to build emotional self-regulation techniques. Respondents highlighted the need for training to help teachers manage stress and build self-control, especially during crises. Participants emphasized techniques such as relaxation exercises, meditation, and personal development methods, all aimed at enhancing emotional resilience.

***Enhancing Teacher Competencies and Classroom Strategies***. Additional professional development in practical skills for teachers (e.g., classroom

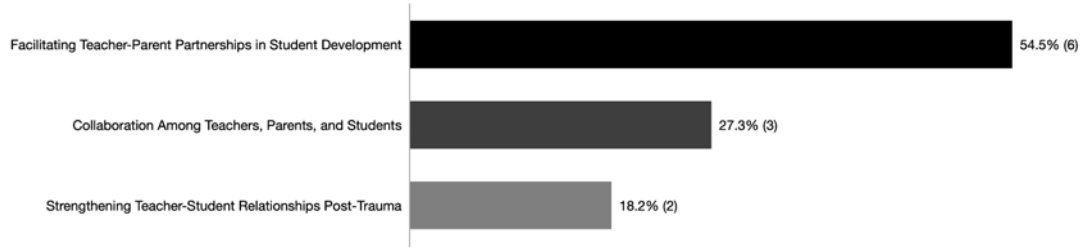
management, emotional resilience) remains appealing. Teachers noted the importance of hands-on training and development of practical skills to help teachers effectively manage their classrooms while building emotional resilience. Participants also highlighted the need to incorporate artificial intelligence into the classroom and implement effective time-management strategies to help teachers manage their workloads efficiently.

***Ensuring Teacher Safety in Educational Settings.*** Ensuring teacher safety in educational settings is a requirement. Teachers noted the importance of feeling protected and of valuing teachers' well-being in the workplace, and the need for strategies to prevent harassment and methods to manage or prevent deviant behavior among students.

**Category III: Sustaining Human Connection in Education During Crisis.** This category emphasizes the importance of maintaining strong relationships among teachers, students, and parents in challenging environments, particularly during or after crises. A total of 11 responses were categorized under this code, divided into three main subcodes: Facilitating Teacher-Parent Partnerships in Student Development, Collaboration Among Teachers, Parents, and Students, and Strengthening Teacher-Student Relationships Post-Trauma. Figure 4 illustrates the distribution of responses across these subcodes.

**Figure 4**

*Subcode Statistics for Sustaining Human Connection in Education During Crisis*




***Facilitating Teacher-Parent Partnerships in Student Development***. Teachers want to facilitate teacher-parent partnerships to support student development. Highlighting the importance of guiding teachers on how to communicate with parents of children who have experienced trauma, handle challenging interactions, and foster collaboration.

***Collaboration Among Teachers, Parents, and Students.*** Teachers recognize the importance of developing collaboration among teachers, parents, and students. Respondents noted a desire for new strategies for working with children whose parents are involved in challenging circumstances, such as fighting in wars, and for nurturing mutual respect for schools. Effective collaboration among these stakeholders contributes to the development of a child's personality, ensuring a supportive, cohesive environment that promotes both academic and personal growth.

***Strengthening Teacher-Student Relationships Post-Trauma.*** Techniques are sought for building trust and emotional bonds with students recovering from trauma. Teachers noted that providing training to equip teachers with the skills to maintain students' dignity while fostering positive classroom dynamics that enhance the healing and learning environment is critical. Participants also emphasized the need for training to prepare teachers to effectively manage and resolve student conflicts, thereby promoting a harmonious and respectful classroom atmosphere. One participant noted the following:

> "Given the context of the course of children's injuries for teachers, in my opinion, it would also be useful to undergo training with 'communication skills in working with children who have experienced trauma.' The ability to communicate properly and tactfully with such students is a key to their successful adaptation and recovery. Such a training would give the teacher to support the child, while maintaining its dignity and contributing to positive dynamics in the classroom."

This response shows that teachers understood trauma-informed education as a relational practice. It suggests that teachers need practical guidance on how to interact with students in ways that support recovery while avoiding further harm or stigma.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Overall, early evaluation suggests that the *Impact of Trauma and How It Affects Behavior and Learning: What Teachers Should Know* course achieved several important implementation outcomes. First, the course quickly reached a large number of teachers during a crisis period, underscoring the value of online learning as a scalable modality for trauma-informed education. Second, respondents reported high satisfaction and substantial perceived gains in knowledge, skills, and abilities. Third, teachers identified clear areas where additional training is needed, particularly in child-centered trauma support, teacher well-being, inclusive education, classroom management, and communication with students and families.

These findings directly align with the goal and project objective of scaling trauma-informed education in Ukraine and address the EiE thematic focus of Mental Health and Well-being (INEE, 2018). The course appears to have filled an immediate training gap by providing accessible introductory content for educators working in crisis-affected environments. At the same time, the open-ended responses show that access to introductory training is only one part of the broader need. Teachers also want deeper and more specialized support to apply trauma-informed practices in complex classroom conditions.

The findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of reach, acceptability, and perceived usefulness. In particular, the multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) approach (Berger, 2019; Gee et al., 2020) proved valuable in initiating a trajectory of continued support and learning for teachers in Ukraine. The reliance

on survey data enabled rapid, at-scale feedback from teachers, which was appropriate for an implementation effort during an active crisis as well as for planning subsequent tiers of support. The *Impact of Trauma and How It Affects Behavior and Learning: What Teachers Should Know* course was developed and implemented at a critical time, during the first eighteen months of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, when millions of children were newly displaced, and teachers were being asked to support traumatized students without formal trauma-informed preparation (UNHCR, 2023). The outcomes of the program are difficult to bound, as the situation in Ukraine is dynamic and the long-term implications remain largely unknown. However, the value of the co-design of modules and localization was clear; the curriculum sought to avoid deficit-oriented framings that can emerge within trauma-informed educational approaches (Venet, 2021). By approaching trauma-informed education in this manner, the project fully embraced local collaboration to address known critiques of externally led interventions in trauma-informed education (Novelli & Kutan, 2024).

As an applied implementation case study combining TIE and EiE components, this work contributes lessons for scholarship and practice on how the two frameworks can be operationalized together at scale during active conflict, and on the teacher-identified needs that extend beyond initial trauma awareness. Such outcomes of the project contribute to the evidence gaps of the lack of empirical work informing trauma-informed teaching and teacher education and lack of clear operational guidance (Thomas et al., 2019). From the early implementation of the online course, it is evident that the online modality achieved scale and reach in ways a traditional in-person modality could not, given the time parameters. Importantly, these findings indicate that participating educators conceptualized trauma-informed education as a relational, non-clinical practice grounded in a system of mutual trust, dignity, communication, and psychological safety, as opposed to a purely behavioral or instructional framework.

**Recommendations**

The authors' recommendation is to begin exploring ways to enhance learning on themes of trauma-informed classrooms alongside the emergent themes teachers reported as needing to address in continued training, employing multiple modalities such as online, hybrid, and face-to-face learning to increase depth and breadth of learning. In addition to the need to address trauma in the classroom focused on students, the preliminary data indicate that significant attention is required to develop training that also supports teachers in navigating burnout and the stress of being an educator in a wartime environment. The findings reinforce scholarship demonstrating that teacher well-being is fundamentally linked to student recovery and educational continuity in crisis settings (Falk et al., 2022). The characteristics of this project were unique and highly complex; however, by adopting an interdisciplinary, cooperative, innovative, and iterative approach, training and education served as a high-impact support function in

both crisis response and recovery. These recommendations also point to a broader need for continued applied case studies that combine TIE and EiE components, as such cases provide the implementation evidence required to refine both frameworks for use in active crisis contexts and to translate them into training and policy decisions that respond to teacher-identified priorities.

***Joshua L. DeVincenzo, EdD,*** *is Assistant Director of Applied Research, Education, and Training at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Columbia Climate School. His research advances adult learning theory and cognitive science in disaster contexts, with published work on school disaster preparedness, instructional design, and professional capacity-building across international settings.*

***Shuyang Huang, MS, MArch****, is a Staff Associate II at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University. Her work integrates AI, GIS, spatial design, and data science to support socially and environmentally resilient communities, with a focus on disaster preparedness, public safety, and equitable service delivery.*

***Sumana Palle, MS,*** *is a researcher and practitioner at the intersection of climate, conflict, and human rights, with a focus on post-conflict recovery and community resilience in crisis-affected contexts. She holds a Master of Science in Sustainability Management from Columbia University and a dual Bachelor's in Business Administration and International Affairs from the University of Michigan.*

***Syeda Kainaat Jah, MA,*** *is a researcher and educator focused on climate resilience, mental health, and literacy practices in marginalized communities. With a background in anthropology and education, her work explores the intersections of discourse, culture, well-being, and social change, particularly in Pakistan, through ethnographic, community-centered, and interdisciplinary approaches.*

***Linfan Gan, MA,*** *holds a master's degree from Columbia University. She is a learning experience designer and program manager with expertise in AI-powered content development, instructional design, and cross-functional enablement. She is currently consulting with Workato, where she builds scalable training programs for technical audiences.*

***Michelle Rozenfeld*** *is a rising sophomore at Rutgers University Honors College, majoring in Environmental Policy with a minor in Science Communication. She is a self-published author and is entering her 4th year of conducting research, spanning the social sciences, AI, soil microbiology, and policy analysis.*

***Chloe Chung*** *is a rising freshman at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, majoring in ESG and finance. She is an economics research intern at Columbia University's National Center for Disaster Preparedness, where she studies climate resilience and disaster risk.*

**References**

Akkari, A., & Radhouane, M. (2023). Learning in emergency contexts: From the building of the concept to multifaceted actions in the field. *Prospects, 53*(1–2), 15–28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-023-09639-8

Bastian, L. (n.d.). *Trauma-informed pedagogy (TIP)*. Teaching Support and Innovation, University of Oregon. https://teaching.uoregon.edu/resources/trauma-informed-pedagogy-tip

Berger, E. (2019). Multi-tiered approaches to trauma-informed care in schools: A systematic review. *School Mental Health*, *11*(4), 650-664.

Burde, D., Kapit, A., Wahl, R. L., Guven, O., & Skarpeteig, M. I. (2017). Education in emergencies: A review of theory and research. *Review of Educational Research, 87*(3), 619–658.

Carello, J., & Butler, L. D. (2015). Practicing what we teach: Trauma-informed educational practice. *Journal of Teaching in Social Work, 35*(3), 262–278.

Falk, D., Shephard, D., & Mendenhall, M. (2022). "I always take their problem as mine"–understanding the relationship between teacher-student relationships and teacher well-being in crisis contexts. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 95, 102670.

Gee, K. A., Murdoch, C., Vang, T., Quetzally, C., & Prim, J. (2020). Multi-tiered system of supports to address childhood trauma: Evidence and implications. Policy Analysis for California Education.

Gorbunova, Y. (2023, November 9). *"Tanks on the playground": Attacks on schools and military use of schools in Ukraine*. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/11/09/tanks-playground/attacks-schools-and-military-use-schools-ukraine

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. (2018). *INEE strategic framework 2018–2023*. https://inee.org/resources/inee-strategic-framework-2018-2023

International Rescue Committee. (2024, April 15). *IRC report: Ukraine, 10 years on*. https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2024-02/IRC%20Report%20-%20Ukraine%2C%2010%20Years%20On.pdf

Novelli, M., & Kutan, B. (2024). The imperial entanglements of 'Education in Emergencies': from saving souls to saving schools?. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 22(3), 405-419.

Plumb, J. L., Bush, K. A., & Kersevich, S. E. (2016). Trauma-sensitive schools: An evidence-based approach. *School Social Work Journal*, *40*(2), 37-60.

Samara, M., Hammuda, S., Vostanis, P., El-Khodary, B., & Al-Dewik, N. (2020). Children's prolonged exposure to the toxic stress of war trauma in the Middle East. *BMJ, 371*, m3155.

Shephard, D., Falk, D., & Mendenhall, M. (2024). 'My teachers make me feel alive': the contribution of student-teacher relationships to student well-being in accelerated education programmes in South Sudan and Uganda. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, *54*(6), 1021-1039.

Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, *27*(2), 237-246. https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214005283748

Thomas, M. S., Crosby, S., & Vanderhaar, J. (2019). Trauma-informed practices in schools across two decades: An interdisciplinary review of research. *Review of research in education*, *43*(1), 422-452.

UNICEF. (2026, February 17). *More than a third of Ukraine's children remain displaced four years into war*. https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/more-third-ukraines-children-remain-displaced-four-years-war-unicef

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2023). *Ukraine situation: UNHCR operational data portal*. https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine

Venet, A. S. (2021). *Equity-centered trauma-informed education*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Zakharchenko, T., Bell, A., Drushchak, N., Konopatska, O., Arif Khan, F., & Stoyanovich, J. (2025). Estimating the impact of the Russian invasion on the displacement of graduating high school students in Ukraine. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, *12*(1), 1–10.