

Success Story

UKRAINE / COMMUNITY-LED EMERGENCY ACTION AND RESPONSE (CLEAR) 2 PROGRAM

From Sesame Street to Snovsk: Supporting Kids in Crisis

Over the summer, beloved Sesame Street characters like Elmo, Grover and Cookie Monster arrived in the small city of Snovsk in the Chernihiv region of Ukraine. While they only appear on TV screens, their friendly faces offer a healthy escape for children living in a war zone just miles from the Russian border.

Last year, Global Communities began working in this remote hromada under the **Community-Led Emergency Action and Response (CLEAR) program**, partnering with a local civil society organization known as LAMPA. With funding from the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA), children and adults started receiving psychosocial support services and attending various therapy activities in a child-friendly space created by the program.

More recently, under a renewed **CLEAR 2 program**, Sesame Workshop joined the partnership and developed a series of animated content and tools for teachers to help children and caregivers process the trauma of conflict and displacement.

In Snovsk, psychologists Zhanna and Nataliia provide a series of art therapy sessions with elements of the "Welcome Sesame" program. The series consists of five sessions, 2.5 hours each, for children ages 6–15 years old. In the cartoons, Sesame Street characters explain how to recognize and process complicated emotions and issues such as stress. Then, the cartoons are followed by conversations with psychologists and creative activities. Children draw, use clay, play games, create stories and work in teams to learn how to support each other.

"The purpose of these sessions is to develop psychological competency and resilience, teach children self-regulation techniques, and eliminate the fear of expressing their own emotions and thoughts," Nataliia says. "Kids like our meetings. They learn quickly, and you can see the results very soon."



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— Nataliia, psychologist



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While participants range from locals and those who have been internally displaced to those who are highly active, extremely shy, or living with a disability, what is common for all of them is that the war took away their ability to attend school and enjoy social interaction. For most families, it even claimed the lives of fathers who went to the battlefield to protect their country.

When the group first met, Zhanna says the children were mostly silent and tense, because they were used to staying home alone with schools being closed and their parents at work or in the military.

By the third meeting, however, “they started creating a group in a messenger [app] to communicate after the sessions ended,” she said. “Our friendly and safe space stays open for them to come and do something together.”

To date, **11 CLEAR partners** have implemented “Welcome Sesame” programming at **1,407 facilities** across several regions in Ukraine. More than **21,000 children, parents and caregivers** have benefited from the sessions.



Children who have been affected by the war in Ukraine participate in an art therapy session that incorporates Sesame Workshop content.