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Public-private partnerships to bridge gaps in education continuity in times of crises

The Ukraine case study



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Abbreviations

CoP	Communities of Practice
MESU	Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine
MHPSS	Mental health and psychosocial support
NUS	New Ukrainian School
PPP	Public-private partnership
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
TPD	Teacher professional development
TTI	Teacher Training Institution
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



Introduction

Forming public-private partnerships (PPPs) can strengthen a country's educational infrastructure, build capacity among the educational workforce, and sustain learning while crisis response strategies emerge and are implemented. This cooperative approach leverages the agility and innovation of the private sector together with the contextual expertise of the public sector. Fostering collaboration between these two entities enables the private sector to lend help to meet immediate education system demands in times of crisis and can also contribute to the development of longer-term more sustainable systems that benefit all levels of an educational system.

Launched by UNESCO in 2020, the Global Education Coalition, in collaboration with KPMG International¹, presents this report highlighting the enriching collaborative experience between the public and the private sector in Ukraine, showcasing the positive and sustainable impact of its initiatives on the national education system and the additional opportunities that can be unlocked through partnership. This collaboration with private partners – and with KPMG International and KPMG in Ukraine in this specific case study – has resulted in significant in-kind contributions in terms of knowledge exchange, secondees, skills development and effective implementation of initiatives. Analyzing the lessons learned, challenges faced and best practices identified through the Ukraine response, this report seeks to underscore the value of collaboration in addressing emergencies and fostering long-term resilience. Additionally, the result of this report serves as a practical toolkit designed to guide future PPPs in crisis situations.

¹ KPMG is a global organization of independent professional services firms providing Audit, Tax and Advisory services. KPMG is the brand under which the member firms of KPMG International Limited ("KPMG International") operate and provide professional services. "KPMG" is used to refer to individual member firms within the KPMG organization or to one or more member firms collectively. KPMG International Limited is a private English company limited by guarantee. KPMG International Limited and its related entities do not provide services to clients

Scope of the emergency and response

On 24 February 2022, war broke out in Ukraine, disrupting daily life, displacing teachers and learners, and hindering access to education for many. The war in Ukraine continues to pose extraordinary risks to the lives of citizens and the future of millions of learners in the country. One of the major challenges for the Ukrainian Government is to ensure that citizens can exercise their fundamental human rights, including the right to education. For conflict-affected populations, inclusive and equitable education is critical to sustaining lives, supporting livelihoods and protecting future generations.

UNESCO's Global Education Coalition, a multi-stakeholder partnership network created to support education systems during the Covid-19 crisis, immediately **called on its members** to support Ukraine's education system to ensure the continuity of education. Three weeks later, on 15 March 2022, UNESCO and its Coalition convened a meeting with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (MESU), which identified the areas in need of support.

With over 200 members active in more than 100 countries and contributing diverse expertise from various sectors, the Coalition effectively mobilized its network to address the crisis through swift and overarching action, reaching multiple regions across the country and demonstrating effectiveness and decisive action. **Twenty-five members** of the Global Education Coalition responded to the call to action by the MESU.

Much of the response was mobilized **from the private sector**, which leveraged its knowledge and resources to complement the critical multilateral and NGO-led efforts at the local level. The stakeholders' agility allowed for a timely response, enabling an immediate and robust reaction in support of the education system as well as its teachers and learners. KPMG International, an important contributor to this mobilization, deployed two full time KPMG office in Ukraine staff secondees to UNESCO to support MESU in the implementation process of several projects, including the delivery of 50,000 Chromebooks and the development of the Digital Teacher Training course as well as its Community of Practice.

By embedding experienced private sector professionals within UNESCO, this collaboration facilitated knowledge exchange, operational efficiency and the development of tailored solutions to address the pressing needs of the Ukrainian education system. The contextual expertise on the country of local secondments from the private sector (KPMG office in Ukraine) along with their experience in skills development, addressing complex challenges and innovative and data-driven approach complemented UNESCO's leadership in capacity building and digital transformation for education, creating an agile, rapid and tailored response to the crisis. This approach not only enabled impactful responses to immediate challenges but also provided valuable insights and tangible best practices, leading to an extension of the initial time scope of the Digital Teacher training programme and the development of new policy priorities.

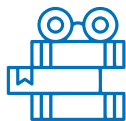
The engagement of KPMG secondees to support UNESCO's work in Ukraine was crucial in fostering cooperation and coordination at the national and local levels, especially with the MESU. They served as intermediaries to facilitate the collaboration between UNESCO and the national and local education authorities in Ukraine, contributing through structural implementation, coordinating the deployment and launch of complex policy initiatives, programme deployment and stakeholder engagement.



3,400+
educational institutions
damaged



350+
educational institutions
completely destroyed



6.4
million school-age
learners **AFFECTED**



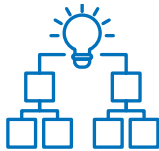
2,180+
children killed
or injured

Value-added response from the private sector



Technical expertise

Specialized expertise offered by the private sector facilitates tailored and effective training, local operations implementation and stakeholder coordination as exemplified by the Digital Teacher Training programme, which was co-created in collaboration with local teachers and experts to enhance engagement in the country. As a result, the programme trained one in four teachers in the country.



Innovative methods

Private sector engagement introduces innovative and efficient methodologies for co-creation and contextualization.

By deploying local secondments from the private sector, UNESCO strengthened connections with local stakeholders who directly contributed to the development of learning materials, enhancing both their engagement and contextual relevance. This multi-stakeholder approach fostered a new mindset towards innovative course creation and development, rooted in direct collaboration with local institutions and actors to ensure greater relevance and facilitate sustainable implementation.



Scaling initiatives

The private sector brings experience and pathways to scale up programmes.

In the case of Ukraine, where UNESCO didn't have a field office, private sector support through the deployment of two national secondments played a key role in establishing a local presence and facilitating the successful implementation of the many vital projects presented in this report. In essence, the on-the-ground presence of private sector actors empowered the public sector to expand its reach to address educational needs or support communities that might otherwise be overlooked.

Accelerate timeliness of the response



The agility of the private sector guarantees rapid and efficient crisis response.

In Ukraine, the swift and large-scale delivery of 50,000 Chromebooks provided by Google and deployed with the support of the local KPMG secondments to UNESCO, played a pivotal role in boosting the country's digital infrastructure, facilitating access to digital tools and learning for both students and teachers.

Leverage local networks and knowledge



Local secondments are assets the private sector can leverage to facilitate project implementation.

KPMG in Ukraine secondments to UNESCO were crucial to ensure the successful implementation of the planned initiatives, thanks to their expertise and contextual knowledge of the country. Their presence also helped to streamline administrative processes, enhance communication and strengthen collaboration with the MESU as well as local stakeholders, contributing both to the sustainability and long-term impact of the response.

Financial support



Substantial funding can in some cases be crucial to expand the scale, quality and effectiveness of initiatives.

The critical funding mobilized through joint efforts among private sector partners not only enhanced the initiative's reach across the country but also strengthened the presence of UNESCO in Ukraine and unlocked outcomes beyond initial expectations, ultimately leading to a six-month extension of the Digital Teacher project and fostering new policy reforms.



Public-private multi-stakeholder partnerships tailored to local needs

Crises response enabled by the private sector

Private sector contributions were instrumental in enabling the upskilling of both teachers and students during the war, creating a robust support system for education through collaborative, multi-stakeholder efforts. Private sector actors brought in vital contextual expertise and both financial and in-kind resources that strengthened local initiatives, ensuring a holistic, swift and impactful approach to the education crisis response.

Additionally, the emergence of innovative financing tools was crucial to scaling up the impact of PPPs. Mechanisms such as the **Global Partnership for Education's Multiplier Grant** allowed UNESCO in 2023 to unlock a total envelope of new Ukraine funding of over 51 million USD for actions in Ukraine. While initially the programme was supposed to directly benefit more than **66,800 children and education actors**, expanding the development of teacher training, EMIS systems, connectivity and psychosocial support in schools, the final multi-stakeholder efforts unlocked results beyond initial expectations, ultimately reaching over 185,000 beneficiaries. Some of the key factors that made this approach efficient and effective included:

Ensuring connectivity for teachers and students in conflict zones

In partnership with Google and leveraging the expertise of KPMG secondees in Ukraine, who skillfully managed the complex negotiations hindered by logistical challenges, cross-border transportation complications and misplaced digital devices, UNESCO successfully deployed 50,528 Chromebooks to teachers across the country and 8,534 Chromebooks to vulnerable students, primarily from the regions most affected by shelling. The contextual knowledge, continuous communication with all stakeholders and mediation skills of the secondments were important to overcome obstacles and strengthen the capacity of Ukraine's education system and its teachers to meet the needs of learners.

- This was the largest delivery of devices imported to Ukraine for education purposes during 2022 (UNESCO, 2023) and was key to supporting Ukraine's teachers and learners.
- According to an internal analysis of data collected by UNESCO from local educational facilities during 2022/23, each teacher, on average, engages with 124 students through their device, including approximately 12 internally displaced persons and 18 refugees.

Upskilling the teaching workforce to be effective in distance and hybrid learning environments: The Digital Teacher Training Course

With support from Google.org and secondments from KPMG in Ukraine, a 30-hour online, self-paced course on digital pedagogy, universal design for learning, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), and social-emotional learning was launched in 2023. Its development entailed extensive coordination, local contextualization and co-creation with local stakeholders and government entities. The UNESCO-KPMG secondments played a pivotal role by coordinating efforts with the MESU, establishing a comprehensive project management plan and ensuring the course's quality through a meticulous co-creation and contextualization process. The Digital Teacher training course has achieved remarkable outcomes:

- The course has enrolled one in four teachers in Ukraine, with 98% of participants reporting high levels of satisfaction in the external project evaluation by Crest Point for Consultancy and Development. These results highlight the quality of the educational content and the effective implementation strategy, which directly involved local teacher networks in co-creating and enhancing engagement with the course.
- More than 77,400 teachers enrolled in the Digital Teacher training course.
- On average, free teacher training courses have a completion rate of 4% nationally. The UNESCO course has achieved a 42% completion rate – ten times the result when compared to the average completion for training courses offered in Ukraine.

Community building

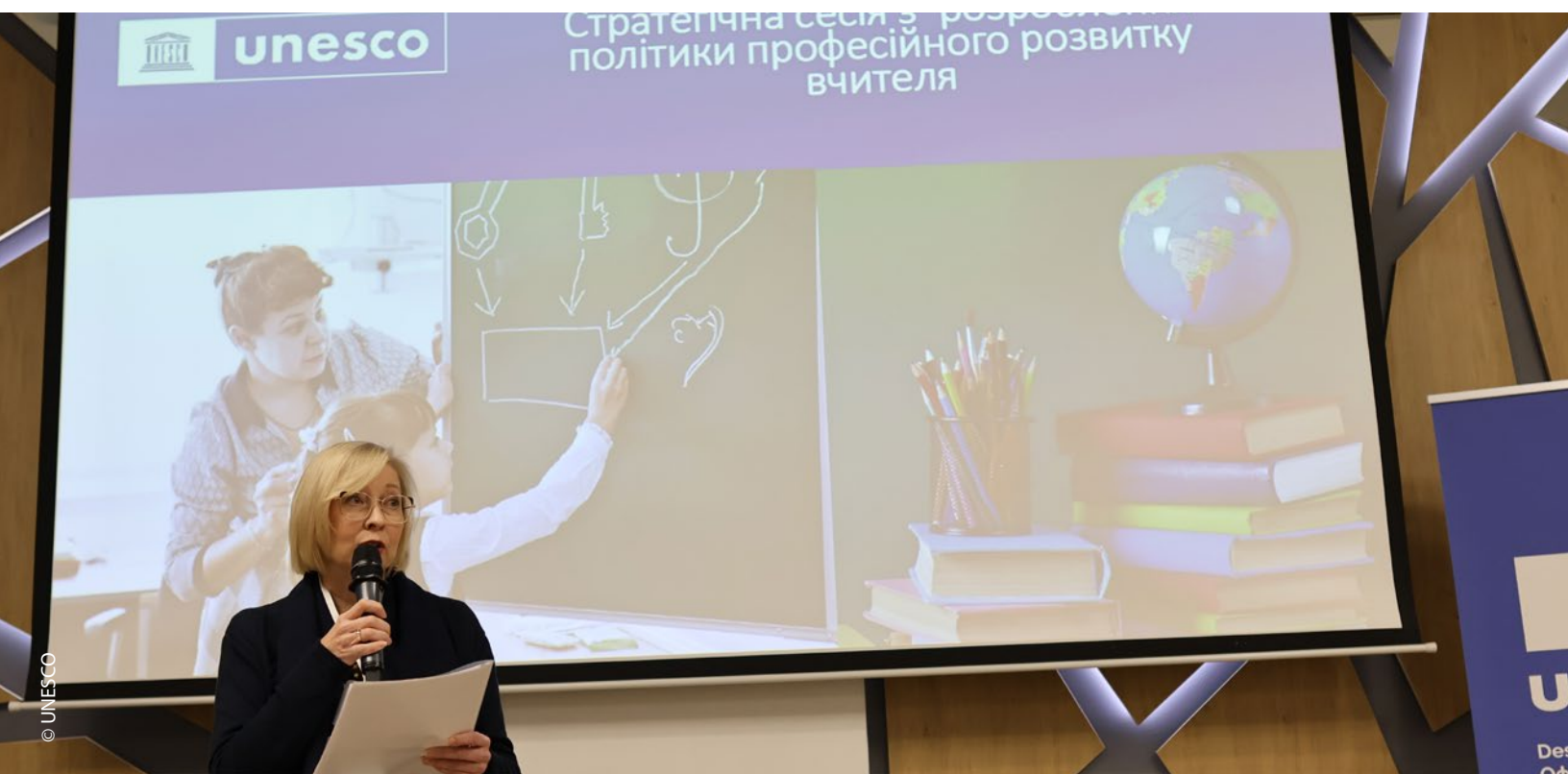
Initially introduced as a support tool for teachers participating in the Digital Teacher training course, the community has evolved to become a resource for all school personnel, thanks to its relevance and interactive, user-centered approach. The role of local KPMG secondments was once more instrumental in leading the country-wide strategy to recruit and engage Ukraine's educational workforce on the platform. Their efforts also broadened its reach to include school psychologists.

- More than 29,500 teachers engaged in the Modern Teachers and Psychologists Community.
- 840 publications launched and 67 webinars/workshops held.
- Provides daily support to teachers, both across Ukraine as well as those displaced abroad, ensuring a wide-reaching and consistent impact on inclusive education practices.
- Supervised 14 educational experts, creating unique and targeted content to meet the diverse and evolving needs of teachers across all subjects.
- Overseeing 5 psychologists dedicated to supporting the mental health and psychosocial components, emphasizing the importance of well-being alongside educational outcomes and the efforts made to create a welcoming, supporting and collaborative space.

Contribution to longer-term public sector efforts in emergencies through skills sharing and expertise

The rise of PPPs has contributed to the transformational approach of the MESU. Initially, support focused on delivering devices—laptops, tablets, Chromebooks, etc.—through siloed requests. Now, the Ministry prioritizes open, multi-stakeholder collaboration and a more strategic, comprehensive approach. Digital transformation efforts go beyond device distribution, emphasizing capacity building and skills development. These efforts are represented by the new policy priorities of the Ministry as well as through the establishment of the **Device Coalition** in 2024 – a collaborative initiative between the MESU, the Ministry of Digital Transformation and the Olena Zelenska Foundation, aimed at delivering innovative education solutions globally through multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Beyond the immediate crisis response, private sector involvement has had a lasting impact on the educational landscape. Seconding personnel to international organizations enables collaboration with government and local public stakeholders, fostering a deeper understanding of policy structures and bringing efficiency to system functionality. This collaboration has contributed to the generation of new policy priorities by the MESU centered around teachers and frameworks essential for education transformation, ensuring that response efforts align with long-term national goals. This policy-oriented approach, focused on teachers as key stakeholders in equipping students with future-ready skills, supports not only the continuity of education but also strengthens systemic resilience and innovation within the education sector.



Analysis of the teacher professional development model, New Ukrainian School reform and further policy work

Since the onset of the war, Ukraine has placed increased focus on education policies, particularly emphasizing the role of teachers as key enablers of skill development for students, through the New Ukrainian School (NUS) reform. In this context, UNESCO has been collaborating with the MESU on various policy-oriented initiatives since 2023. Private sector contributions have been fundamental in achieving this progress – not only through extensive support for projects that underscore the importance of education and skills development but also through the involvement of local KPMG secondments that have brought their experience to UNESCO. Using the new insights gained while working with UNESCO, these secondments played a crucial role in localizing education priorities, leveraging their skills, experience and motivation to ensure a fruitful collaboration that will allow UNESCO to further its work with the MESU in 2025, which includes:

- ➔ A new Teacher Professional Development (TPD) model that was released by UNESCO in 2024, with a specific focus on Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs), identifying the strengths and major gaps in the teacher training provision (i.e., linked to institutional framework, human capacities, teacher course content, infrastructure, funding) and elaborating solutions in collaboration with the Ministry.
- ➔ Supporting UNESCO experts in defining the implementation of the NUS reform and updating TPD-related norms, standards and regulations, ensuring that education remained a top priority.
- ➔ UNESCO's 2025 goal to upskill 300 teacher trainers and 2,000 master trainers across Ukraine with the training in the New Ukrainian School reform.
- ➔ Selected norms, standards and regulations governing TPD in Ukraine that will be revised to make teacher training in the country more efficient. This revision will be guided by different working groups that will review these normative documents. KPMG secondees played a key role in helping facilitate the launch of such normative work coordinated by UNESCO by bringing their contextual expertise to localize education priorities and support the implementation of key initiatives highlighted in this report.

Mobilization and sustainability

Through public-private collaboration, the Global Education Coalition has been able to quickly respond with a variety of projects to support the continuity of education in Ukraine, including logistical and technical support, deployment of devices, implementation of trainings, contributions to normative and policy framing, and the setup of a field office in the country.

Specifically, **SDG 4** (Quality Education), was advanced by enhancing TPD and fostering inclusive and equitable education for all.

SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) was furthered through the upskilling of teachers and learners, providing them with the necessary skills to thrive in a rapidly changing job market.

SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) was supported by the integration of digital tools and infrastructure into the education system, promoting innovation and technological advancement.

SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) was addressed by ensuring that education and skills development were accessible to a wide range of learners, including marginalized and displaced groups.

SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) was strengthened through the multi-stakeholder collaboration between the private sector, international organizations, NGOs and local ministries, highlighting the power of cross-sector partnerships in achieving sustainable development.





Private sector contributions open opportunities for engaging and sharing skills in emergencies

Building on the holistic impact of multi-stakeholder partnerships in Ukraine and the valuable lessons learned throughout this ongoing process, UNESCO and KPMG have identified the key factors that enhanced the collaboration and helped to ensure the longer-term sustainability of the projects. These areas prioritize clear, needs-driven outcomes centered on skills development and deepening local engagement, creating a foundation for more impactful and resilient initiatives that address both immediate challenges and future opportunities. At the same time, private sectors contributions have extended beyond the initial emergency response and funding, underscoring the transformative potential of PPPs in driving sustainable and diversified impact by leveraging in-kind resources and skills alongside financial support.

Through PPPs, the private sector helps meet immediate education system demands in times of crises and can also contribute to the development of longer term more sustainable systems that benefit all levels of education through:

1. **Building multi-stakeholder partnerships**

- Map and then leverage the diverse expertise, skills and resources of stakeholders to advance comprehensive, efficient and sustainable projects that avoid fragmented initiatives and allow for rapid high-quality responses.
- Engage government institutions from the outset to understand the concrete needs of the country and ensure projects respond to their vision and priorities.
- Deploy experts in the form of secondments or technical assistance to build capacity and fill expertise gaps, creating a knowledge exchange that cultivates flexible, adaptable profiles that can operate across diverse environments.
- Streamline collaboration among partners, government, local experts and organizations by establishing clear communication and coordination channels to minimize duplication of efforts, optimize the efficient use of resources and ensure the sustainable development of projects.

2. **Country engagement**

- ➔ Prioritizing partnerships with local experts and organizations contributes to developing effective and relevant projects, supports direct implementation and allows for knowledge exchange.
- ➔ Employing innovative methodologies to project development, such as contextualization and co-creation of content, supports the creation of high quality materials that will be more relevant to stakeholders. Engaging local experts and end-beneficiaries themselves from the outset is essential.
- ➔ Establishing or supporting online and in-person Communities of Practice (CoP), creates a space where stakeholders can share insights, resources, experiences and provide mutual support.

3. **Sustainable investment and visibility**

- ➔ Innovative financing strategies offer significant potential to optimize financial contributions to a project. To harness this potential, it is essential to identify and secure budgetary allocations for critical areas, such as infrastructure and skills development. Additionally, developing a comprehensive cross-sectoral investment plan will help analyze and determine the most effective financing strategies to support these priorities.
- ➔ Advocacy campaigns serve as powerful tools to increase visibility and facilitate knowledge sharing across diverse stakeholder groups. By fostering greater awareness and engagement, these campaigns not only enhance implementation practices but also create opportunities to attract new in-kind and financial partnerships, driving broader collaboration and impact.

Conclusions

Thanks to the collective efforts of the Coalition and its diverse partners, Ukraine has been able to ensure learning continuity during a challenging time. While the private sector has played an increasingly important role in supporting sustainable, holistic and collaborative projects, it is the combined collaboration among all partners that has truly made a difference. These cooperative efforts have gone beyond addressing immediate educational needs – they have ignited transformative processes in policy development and established a lasting framework for continued implementation support within the country. Despite the successful outcomes, the process was not without challenges in the coordination, implementation and engagement processes. Yet, the commitment, expertise and coordinated action among stakeholders proved instrumental in ensuring sustainable and successful outcomes, turning challenges into lessons learnt. By integrating innovative methods and technologies into Ukraine's education system, teachers and learners are gaining essential skills that will play a critical role in the nation's reconstruction and prepare them to meet the challenges of the future. These initiatives are not just rebuilding education; they are shaping a foundation for societal resilience, empowering a generation to lead Ukraine's recovery and transform the country.

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