

A photograph of two young children in a classroom setting. A girl in the foreground is looking towards the camera, while a boy behind her is also looking forward. They appear to be engaged in an activity.

LEARNING TO STAY STRONG: EDUCATION AS UKRAINE'S BACKBONE OF RESILIENCE

Conference Room 2,
United Nations Headquarters,
405 E 45th St, New York, NY 10017, USA

September 23 — 10:00 a.m.

Concept of the UNGA80 High-level Week Side Event

“Learning to Stay Strong” is a timely and meaningful side event during UNGA80 High-level week. This panel discussion will highlight resilience, innovations, and hope from Ukraine — a country that, despite a full-scale invasion, continues to educate almost 4 million schoolchildren under extraordinary conditions.

Event hosts include the Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations, the Permanent Mission of Lithuania to the United Nations, and Osvitoria, Ukraine’s leading educational NGO, driving educational reforms and leading emergency education programs during the war.

The event is supported by the First Lady of Ukraine Olena Zelenska and the First Lady of Lithuania Diana Nausėdienė. It is also supported by Nova Ukraine, a leading U.S.-based nonprofit that delivers humanitarian aid and services while raising global awareness of Ukraine’s needs and resilience.

Event Overview

The side event will combine powerful storytelling with expert insights to illustrate how Ukraine’s education system continues to function and innovate under conditions of full-scale war. Guests will see exclusive excerpts from the documentary [Timestamp](#) — a moving chronicle of educators and students learning in bomb shelters and rebuilding schools from ruins.

Directed by Crystal Bear winner Kateryna Gornostai and executive-produced by Osvitoria, the film was selected for the main competition at Berlinale 75, with The New York Times describing it as “a nonfiction portrait of the nation through its children.” The screening will be followed by a high-level panel discussion featuring those who directly lead and shape the education of Ukraine’s children.

Aim

- Draw attention to the impact of war on education in Ukraine.
- Showcase the resilience of the Ukrainian educational community.
- Encourage international support for the protection of the right to education during wartime.

Format and Duration

The panel discussion, featuring integrated film excerpts, will take place from 10:00 to 11:15 a.m. (75 minutes).

Agenda

Opening Section 10:00 – 10:20

- **Opening remarks** — Zoya Lytvyn, Founder of Osvitoria
- **Keynote Address** — Olena Zelenska, the First Lady of Ukraine
- **Keynote Address** — Diana Nausėdienė, the First Lady of Lithuania

Panel Discussion 10:20 – 11:00

Moderator: Anna Sydoruk, Chief Executive Officer, Osvitoria

Speakers:

- **Olena Zelenska** — the First Lady of Ukraine.
- **Zoya Lytvyn** — Founder of Osvitoria and Executive Producer of Timestamp; Head of Global Government Technology Centre Kyiv; an educator leading national reforms and emergency learning.
- **Lucia Elmi** — Director of Emergency Programmes, UNICEF.
- **Ambassador Erin McKee** — Chief Executive Officer, Nova Ukraine; former senior USAID leader.
- **Natalia Hutaruk** — English teacher from Zaporizhzhia, 30 km from the frontline, now teaching in one of Ukraine's first underground schools.

Discussion Themes

Section 1. Education in Ruins

The destruction of schools was one of the first and most painful blows of the war. Classrooms, sports grounds, and libraries lie in ruins, erasing years of community investment and depriving children of safety and stability. The Chernihiv Lyceum is a striking example, where the principal recalls years of work being wiped out in days.

Section 2. Learning Without a Pause for War

Despite everything, education in Ukraine has not stopped. Online platforms, underground schools, and lessons in bomb shelters enable children to keep learning wherever they are — even on the move or abroad. Digitalization has become both a lifeline and a path for future development.

Section 3. Teachers as Heroes — Anchors in Times of Uncertainty

Ukrainian teachers embody resilience. Beyond providing lessons, they offer children stability, emotional support, and encouragement, helping them cope with anxiety and uncertainty while continuing to learn under fire.

Section 4. Education as Refuge: Safeguarding Children's Futures

War changes childhood but cannot destroy it. Ukrainian children still dream, laugh, and plan for the future. Despite air raid sirens and displacement, they look forward to graduations, careers, and life beyond war. Education remains their refuge and their bridge to tomorrow.

Closing Section 11:00 – 11:15

- **Q&A session** with panelists and audience
- **Closing remarks** by Anna Sydoruk, Chief Executive Officer, Osvitoria.

About Osvitoria

Osvitoria, the host of the event, is Ukraine's leading educational nonprofit. Since 2013, Osvitoria has been transforming Ukraine's education by driving reforms, training teachers, and bringing innovations. During the war, Osvitoria has delivered emergency learning solutions for displaced children while maintaining Ukraine's largest national distance learning platform with more than 1 million users, provided training for more than 150,000 teachers, restored the educational process in dozens of schools, and built international partnerships to support Ukraine's education.

About Nova Ukraine

Nova Ukraine, a partner of the event, is a leading U.S.-based nonprofit, founded by Ukrainian Americans in 2014, that delivers humanitarian aid and services while raising global awareness of Ukraine's needs and resilience. Since its founding, Nova Ukraine has provided over \$130 million to support Ukraine through four pillars: HEAL, BUILD, EMPOWER and ADVOCATE.