



# CHILD PLAY-BASED ASSESSMENT TOOL

Lithuania Red Cross

CASE STUDY





Photo description: Children participating in pilot project  
Photo credit: Lithuania Red Cross

## Background

Sesame Workshop and IFRC have formed a strategic partnership to create content and programs focused on the safety, early education, and mental health of children ages 4-8 years.

Recognizing gaps in understanding and assessing young children's mental health, they have developed a play-based assessment tool for use in humanitarian and non-humanitarian situations.

Lithuanian Red Cross (LRC), tested the Play Based Assessment (PBA) as part of a global pilot between June-July 2024.

Financial and technical support was provided from the Canadian Red Cross (CRC) as part of programming with displaced people from Ukraine now living in Lithuania.

## Who was Supported and How

The team who conducted the PBA was comprised of a psychologist working with Ukrainian children and families, LRC PGI focal point, and a LRC Kaunas branch specialist working with Ukrainian families. In other words, they were well capacitated and skilled to use this tool.

The tool was used with Ukrainian refugee children (4-8 years old) and their caregivers living in the Kaunas region of Lithuania. The participants in the assessment were mixed groups of males and females.

The first group of child participants were from a LRC summer camp led by the Kaunas branch.

Parents/caregivers were informed about the assessment prior to the summer camp, and they had to provide permission for their children to participate in the PBA or not.

The second group of children was organized through an open registration. Registration was sent out through media channels and shared in community meetings at the Red Cross branch office.

Premises for the PBA were agreed based on accessibility for children and parents. The premises of the Kaunas branch were used for the interviews and the assessment.

Consents and assents were collected for the PBA, interviews, and photos from the assessment.

Both adults and children had a possibility to disagree to participate.

Parents/ caregivers had the opportunity to stay in the room and observe their children or wait in another room.

## Successes

- 26 children participated and over 20 adult parents / caregivers.
- The assessment was seamlessly merged with existing LRC activities with children. Specifically, a summer camp for children.
- The Kauna branch has significant experience on programming with children. The preexisting relationships with the community allowed for easier participation of children and adults into the pilot.
- A psychologist led the assessment. This provided opportunities for parents to understand greater insights about their children. In fact, a number of the participating parents arranged for follow-up sessions with the psychologist in order to strengthen aspects they want to improve within their families.

## Challenges and Difficulties

- In the experience and understanding of LRC, it is common for 4-year-olds to play for 40 - 50 minutes before losing concentration, whereas older children can play for a little longer. The pilot, however, lasted more than 60 minutes, which made it difficult for some children to concentrate.
- It was a challenge for children to draw a puppet in 15 minutes, some kept trying again and again, so they were very worried about not keeping up with the others who drew faster than them.
- For some children the dance exercise with animals was not clear. In particular, because the dance was repeated many times without visual material to help them memorize the dances, children became tired. They did not understand why they needed to learn to do certain actions in a more reversed way than other animals, e.g. a chicken needs to turn into another animal.

## Lessons Learned

- Because of children's cognitive development, it can be harder for young children to orient themselves in time, their bodies can react in a certain way to the passage of time - they want to eat, sleep, etc. at certain times of the day. It is therefore important that parents help ensure child participants are well rested and have eaten before joining into the assessment.



- Naming emotions before and after the dance activity is very useful and engaging for all children. Children learn to express emotions about themselves, thus fulfilling their needs for communication, affection and attachment.
- The first pilot group had many child participants, as such, it was challenging to document the results. It is important to keep the size of the group not too large.
- It is essential to remind parents that they have an opportunity to observe but they should avoid commenting on their children's process.