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Helping Ukrainian Families

February 2023 update

Thank you so much for your continued generosity to International Needs UK over the last few months.

We are delighted that through a number of different appeals – Giving Tuesday, The Big Give and our Graham Kendrick Concert – we were able to raise another £67,689 towards our emergency Ukraine response. While we are saddened that the war has continued for a year now, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity of our existing donors and all the new supporters, including Trusts and Foundations that have contributed. Across the IN Network, more than US\$500,000 has been raised and put to use.

IN UK's Executive Director Danny Morris and two members of the board of trustees were able to take part in a monitoring and evaluation visit to Slovakia and Romania in November 2022. We are also excited to share with you that IN Bulgaria recently joined the Ukraine response and we have been able to support their ministry with refugees because of your kindness.

Humanitarian aid convoys



After a needs assessment spearheaded by IN Slovakia and in partnership with the Bible Society, a series of convoys of food, hygiene and other essentials – including Bibles – was sent to Kyiv, with the trucks operating as a mobile distribution centre. Road transport is challenging in Ukraine at present, because of damaged infrastructure, interruptions to mobile phone coverage, frequent air raid alerts and curfews precluding travel after dusk. Despite this, successful supplies distributions have also been undertaken in the east of the country: Sumy, Poltava, Kharkiv, Zaporizhzhia and Kramatorsk. Sufficient food was provided to feed 7,000 families for 3-4 weeks at a time.

It was a difficult trip to process. While hugely energising to see the work of IN locally, I felt the urge to 'solve' the big picture of the war in Ukraine – clearly impossible – and felt useless at **not knowing how to really help.** I was then reminded of Jesus' words in Matthew 25:40 – 'whatever you did for the least of these brothers/sisters, you did for me.' As a management consultant, seeking to solve complex problems top down, I was transformed. It's about one person at a time; we must love each individual with God's love. **Matt King, IN UK trustee**



Impact summary

1 September to 31 December 2022



38,750
meals provided
per month

2,400
nights of
accommodation



6
aid convoys

102
medicines/
vaccines
provided



7,180
health and
hygiene packs
supplied

9,600
kindergarten
places
(60 per day)



70
language learning
classes held

491
people provided
with spiritual
counselling





According to the World Health Organization, more than half a million Ukrainian refugees have crossed the border into Bulgaria since the war began. IN Bulgaria has therefore joined the emergency response and – through your donations – IN UK has been supporting this important work.

Twenty refugees in Ovchal Kupel were provided with safe and secure accommodation, and all utilities, from September to December. Internet access was also provided in order to help refugees remain connected, and to support Bulgarian language learning. This also meant children were able to continue their learning virtually, connecting with an online Ukrainian school.

Food vouchers are being provided for those accommodated plus a further 30 living in the wider community. The vouchers enable refugees to buy groceries of their own choice, improving dignity and self-esteem. Fifty refugees have also been supported through the provision of hygiene products (eg soap, toothpaste, sanitary pads) and essential medicines.

Protracted trauma

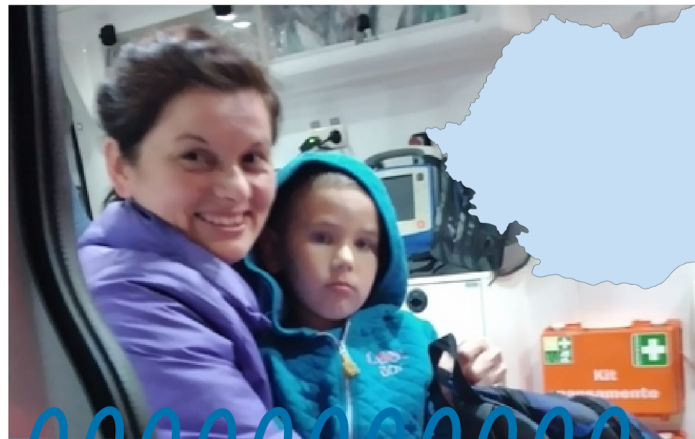
One year from the onset, but with no sign of the war ending, mothers and children – who have had to leave their husbands and fathers behind – continue to live in a perpetual state of disappointment, hopelessness and uncertainty. For IN Romania team members, it has been difficult to offer hope and courage when the trauma and the wounds are so deep, but their hope in Jesus has spurred them on. The country has seen an increase in refugees being welcomed, with IN Romania working hard to meet the needs for food, medicine and other essentials.

Romania's warm summer weather gave way to a cold, rainy autumn, and a frozen winter. The team provided refugees with thick winter clothing and sturdy shoes for the children. The team was privileged to support a mother from Ukraine to be admitted to the maternity hospital in Sighișoara. She gave birth to a beautiful, healthy baby, swelling the number of people supported by IN Romania to 421!

Daniela Pribac writes: 'The pastors and church members have provided continual counselling, hugs, encouragement in an attempt to share God's love, helping them to understand that beyond this cruel and evil physical world, they can receive the peace of God they need so much. We have taken care of feeding their souls, through the distribution of the New Testament in Ukrainian to each of them.'

'In the last quarter of 2022, IN Romania established two education centres for Ukrainian children. The kindergarten in Sighișoara-Danes hosts 60 children while the after-school club in Arad, staffed by four Ukrainian nationals – including three teachers – provides 40-50 children with activities. Both provide spiritual and psychological support for families.'

'The recent acquisition of forty new tablets now provides refugee children with much-needed access to online Ukrainian-language school lessons.'



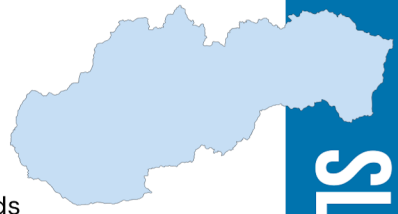
Valentina (40) is one of hundreds of people displaced from Mykolaiv in southern Ukraine, a city close to the Black Sea coast between Odesa and Kherson. Like so many fleeing the city, her house has been bombed by the Russian military, leaving it unsafe. Valentina has two sons: Vadim, who is 16 years old, and Artiom, who is just four years of age. The journey from Mykolaiv to Arad in Western Romania was extremely difficult, with many challenges caused by damage to the transport infrastructure, continual air raid warnings and strictly enforced curfews making it illegal to travel after dusk. Being of conscription age, Valentina's husband was unable to leave – he has mandatorily remained in Ukraine to help defend the country.

In March 2022, when Valentina and her boys arrived in Romania, the stress of the situation really began to break through. Partly due to fatigue and partly because of a lack of vaccination, four-year-old Artiom contracted meningitis. He was urgently admitted to hospital, med-evaced by helicopter. This, in turn, was extremely distressing for Valentina, who had a nervous breakdown and continues to receive medical treatment for her mental health.

Away from home, it is very difficult for Valentina and her children to grapple with the loneliness, insecurity, fear and separation from her husband. IN Romania has been providing wraparound support to the family, and while there are no 'quick fixes', we give thanks that Artiom has made a full recovery and that Vadim has found a local football team offering a place of welcome, belonging and camaraderie.



Many of the women we met were *babushkas* who took their grandchildren out across the Ukrainian border [into Romania or Slovakia]. They all had a story to tell. One grandma with five children in tow told me how she rushed to the border on her own with her grandkids, with not much more than a few snacks. Men at the border asked for her watch – ‘where are your treasures?’ they kept repeating. The *babushka* cried and held her grandson close as she spoke to me. ‘I told them “these are my treasures”... my children are my treasures,’ she said. With the help of a translator, we shared family photos on our mobile phones. **It’s a deep jolt to hear the stories of escape.** One afternoon, we went with Sammy – a local pastor – delivering groceries to refugee women in his neighbourhood. We had enough potatoes, chicken, eggs and other supplies to feed their families. One teenage boy cooked us a clear chicken soup with dumplings, and he was keen to discover what we thought about it. He wants to be a master chef, and he beamed with pride because he knew it was delicious. And of course, it was... **My head is full of stories. My heart is full of joy.**
Wendy Riches, IN UK board chair



SLOVAKIA

With some refugees deciding to move onwards to Germany, or in some cases back to Ukraine, the IN Slovakia response has been scaled down. However, the IN team has continued to support around 25 individuals with regular food and hygiene supplies, with a further two families arriving in October 2022. The IN Slovakia team coordinated the provision of white goods and beds for the two new families, also helping an elderly woman and her disabled daughter to find more suitable accommodation.



Christmas music in Lučenec, Slovakia

IN Slovakia has continued to employ two refugees at its Rackova centre, and has assisted several others to successfully find work. Health has also been a focus for the team, providing medical support for three people, including a woman with severe asthma.

The team held church services for more than 30 refugees, including a special Christmas event for Ukrainians in Lučenec. Pastor Victor from the Bratislava Ukrainian church shared the Christmas sermon and several Ukrainian musicians took part. The displaced children were all given age-appropriate Christmas gifts. Some of the refugees also attended other festive services.

Ukrainians helping Ukrainians: IN Romania has set up small groups where refugees can share their burdens, troubles, concerns and get the help they need. The groups are augmented by the professional services of Ukrainian psychologist who has joined the IN Romania board and able to provide bespoke counselling to families. One three-and-a-half year-old boy receiving care spoke well before the war, but suffered such trauma through the explosions that he’s now nearly mute as a result.



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER REUNITED

Olya is one of the first people who came to IN Bulgaria for support. She and her 18-year-old daughter fled the bombing in Ukraine but, in the panic, they ended up in different countries – Olya in Bulgaria and her daughter in Germany. Through the long winter months, Olya did everything to support her daughter but the worry and sadness in her eyes could be seen. Olya could not cope with being away from Ukraine. **She struggled for more than two months and finally decided to go back to her home country ‘to die’.** She did not see meaning in trying to learn a new culture and language though she faithfully took part in all Bulgarian classes. Thankfully, after months of separation, Olya’s daughter managed to sort out her papers and was able to move to Bulgaria to be reunited.



Protection and provision

From Slovakia, Bevan Stein writes: One of the 20 places we delivered humanitarian help in November was Zhuky, north of Poltava.

The town is very rural, accessed only with difficulty, on account of the small, unmarked and unpaved roads. I connected with a local pastor named Pavlo. The owner of a nearby house (another pastor) moved to Germany to escape the war. He gave the property to Pavlo. He was glad to have a safe place to go with his whole church of about 50 people who left the Donbas region when the Russians took over and who now use Pavlo's church for shelter. So, what was too dangerous for the owner and pastor of a small church in Poltava was a welcome refuge for Pavlo and his small migrant congregation from the Donbas.



Pastor Pavlo (left) pictured with Bevan

He told us also about God's miraculous provision at the start of the war in 2014–2015 when he took into his house in Donbas many refugees from Luhansk on the Russian border. When people in the area dropped off food for him, he could take care of the refugees. Once, a whole truck appeared with 20 tons of food. The driver asked if he was Pastor Pavlo. When he said that he was, the driver said God had directed him to give him a truckload of supplies. He had so much that he shared with others who had been sharing with him, and still had much left over.

Now, it was our turn to bring him supplies that God had put on our hearts to share with him. By partnering with pastors like this, the message of the gospel and of God's miraculous provision is demonstrated in the community of Poltava just like it was in Donbas. Our presence was a sign and a message to Pastor Pavlo that where the Lord is, there home is as well.

Thank God we were obedient, and listened to him calling us out of our comfort zone to find Pavlo. Our hearts were lifted and we all knew that this trip was a divinely appointed blessing – for us, as well as our Ukrainian friends!

NEXT PHASE...

The horrors of the violence, explosions, debris and destruction that many refugees have been subjected to means **trauma care** is a priority for the coming months. With some families having been separated for a year, or having had family members killed in the atrocities, IN across the region will be exploring ways of providing **professional counselling** and **mental health care** provision.

Recognising that there is presently no end to the conflict in sight, IN will continue to strengthen programmes that support refugees to **integrate into communities**. This will include events that create **spaces for engagement** with the local population, church, children's, young people's and women's activities plus **language learning** and education, affording a balance between benefiting from cultural experiences in the host country and the comfort of Ukrainian tradition and language.

For displaced people remaining within Ukraine, IN Slovakia plans a minimum of one **humanitarian aid convoy** every two months, distributing food and hygiene items.

