



OM IN POLAND 2022 REPORT / UKRAINE CRISIS RESPONSE

Sharing hope in a war-torn world

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SINCE FEBRUARY 24, 2022

MORE THAN 10.2 MILLION REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE
HAVE CROSSED THE POLISH BORDER, AND OVER 1.5 MILLION
APPLIED FOR PROTECTION IN POLAND.

Source: UNHCR, March 2023



Compassion lived out by God's people

We heard the first reports of Ukraine being attacked on Thursday, February 24th 2022, in the early morning hours. We were devastated by the news of destruction and horror coming from our neighbours

We immediately called for a prayer meeting, gathering together our team, friends and partner churches. We knew we needed to seek God, and we knew we needed to respond.

Our team at the time was small and scattered, but with a good growth dynamic and just enough structure to set things in motion. We continue to be amazed at God's anticipatory grace - just one month earlier, together with a new intake of volunteers, we were able to receive an in person training from OM International Disaster Response team. We were already connected to some refugee centres and were working with Ukrainian migrants and refugees from other countries. We had key, long-term personnel scheduled to join in the following weeks, although none of us knew how strategic that timing would be.

Our ministry projects, developed as a result, became one of the many expressions of compassion seen in the Church locally and globally. The region-wide response united communities of Jesus' followers, supported by OM Teams and other like-minded organisations in one passion - to bring much needed help, comfort and hope to people whose lives have been devastated by the war.

Looking back at that historic year, we stand in awe of God's grace and mercy expressed in so many ways. We were blessed to witness transformation, healing and restoration in the lives of individuals and whole communities affected by this crisis.

It would be impossible without prayers, generosity and long-term commitment of thousands of people around the world. It is a great honour to be a part of that movement.

Thank you.



Weronika Czajko
Country Leader, OM in Poland



**"The Lord heals
the brokenhearted
and binds up their
wounds."**

PSALM 147:3 (ESV)



- Trailers for mothers with babies and small children, providing warm, child-friendly waiting space
- Psychological First Aid for people crossing the border
- Backpacks for children (kits for boys, girls and babies)
- Christian literature: Bibles, gospel tracts, prayer books (thousands of copies distributed)
- Spiritual and emotional care: prayer, counselling, conversations on grief, pain, suffering, hope
- Information and safety guidance
- Support in coordination of transports to reception centres
- Human trafficking prevention (brochures, banners, conversations, reporting to local authorities)
- Baby essentials: diapers/nappies, wet wipes, baby food, baby formula, teething/toys - over 6 tons of goods
- High-energy snacks and drinks
- Essential items, depending on the season: blankets, gloves and heating pads, bags to help carry goods, strollers, baby carriers, toys, etc.



After a quick evaluation of needs at the border crossings and major transportation hubs, combined with first runs of aid distribution, we were able to see how we can be most helpful in spaces where needs were not yet being met. We saw terrified and confused women with multiple children, travelling with their humble belongings in the cold. They were often waiting long to cross the border after a difficult journey through war-torn Ukraine, without any plan for their next step. They had many needs, little resources and were vulnerable targets of potential criminal activities. We wanted to make sure they would be safe, would receive reliable information and would be able to take care of their babies somewhere warm.

As followers of Jesus, we also knew we could provide something even greater than the practical aid itself - a sense of peace, hope and comfort that people in such turmoil so desperately need. By the end of the first week, we had organised custom-made mother and baby trailers, begun recruiting volunteers, prepared resources and were ready to set up tents at the Polish-Ukrainian border. Each of these steps required multiple miracles, which unfolded right before our eyes.

"There were 2 young women crossing the border with babies, one from Kharkiv, one from Mariupol. The one from Mariupol was a follower of Jesus. She gave birth in the basement, her husband was killed around the same time, she was travelling together with a grandma. She was distressed, anxious and cried a lot. She had nowhere to go. We provided supplies for her and the baby and took her by car to a shelter ran by a partner church in a nearby town, where we knew she would be safe and supported." - Mykola

AID RECIPIENTS: Zosin and Dorohusk

52% adults:

82% female / 18% male
10% elderly women / 8% elderly men

48% children:

53% girls / 47% boys

3% visibly disabled



Partnerships

Lubelski Urząd Wojewódzki

Cooperation on the ground

Caritas, PAH, World Central Kitchen,
ZHR (Polish Scouts Association)

Carried by love

The continuous work at the border wouldn't be possible without the extraordinary dedication of over 110 volunteers: followers of Jesus from Poland, Ukraine, and many countries in Europe, America, Africa and Asia.

Beyond the practical needs of people fleeing the war, the team members provided emotional and spiritual care, offering love to those who suffered from trauma, loss and anxiety. They were soon nicknamed the "tear collectors".

**"You keep track of all my sorrows.
You have collected all my tears
in your bottle. You have recorded
each one in your book."**

PSALM 56:8 (NLT)



"We were able to minister to a bus of children from a hard hit area of Ukraine. All of their fathers served in the army and suffered serious injuries from the war. They were very thankful we were waiting to receive them and amazed to discover that we've come from many different countries to help."

- Jacek

"We were also able to hand out backpacks, water, candy, and juice to so many children during our shift. God used us to provide these things to those in need."

- Jamie



"We experienced conversations with people who had been on a bus that drove near 4 bombs in Ukraine and they were very shaken. It was important to be here tonight because there were so many broken people who needed to hear the Good News of Jesus. God used us to minister to these people and be a shoulder to lean on in times of crisis in their lives. We used listening ears and shared many hugs. We could see how our small acts of kindness and listening ears can truly change people's hearts."

- Haley

"We welcomed a family: three adults and four children, travelling to France. They were very happy about the luggage cases we provided for them, they couldn't believe that we had exactly what they needed. Another woman was not well on the long journey - she had cancer and her legs were very swollen. We helped her receive consultation at the ambulance and looked after her in our trailer, where she spent the night. Next morning she was allowed to pass through the border with priority."

- Jacek

"A lady took a prayer book and started reading. She began crying as she was reading it. I saw God is speaking to her in that very moment."

- Mariah

OKUNINKA

Children's Club

13

Weeks of operation

2

Locations

65

Programme days

Work in small groups (average 10 children)



EDUCATION AND INTEGRATION

In June, we learned about several hundred refugees, mostly women with school-aged children who were granted accommodation in campsites located in the secluded forest by the Biale lake. While some of the facilities were in good condition, some were really dilapidated, and all residents shared the same challenge - isolation from most services, community or educational opportunities. We offered to provide child-friendly activities, which later also expanded into psychosocial groups for adults.

- English lessons
- Sports and games, including sport tournaments
- Music and dance therapy
- Arts and crafts
- Human trafficking prevention, life skills
- Storytelling through Bible stories
- Creative group for women



"Kids enjoy the program. Working with the more difficult children was meaningful because they really needed someone to show them care." - Anna



OKUNINKA CHILDREN'S CLUB

"The children are very hungry for affection and attention. We are grateful to be able to serve them through a few hours of structure and fun every day."

- McKenna

"Children asked many questions after the lesson. Kids also LOVED balloon animals at the end of each session today. It feels like we're building friendship, regardless of the language barrier. Kids are excited to see our van pull in each day and they wait outside the door till we let them in the room, where they greet us with joyful hugs. Parents express their gratitude and we see our presence means a lot to the residents of Okuninka camps." - Andrea

"It was nice to hear from one of the grandmothers that her grandson is very happy to spend time with us. The highlight of the day was the discussion with the older kids. They remembered so much from previous lessons." - Rachel

"Children in all age groups open up with each passing day. In the beginning some of the children didn't talk or they were violent. There was no violence today, it was a breakthrough. We saw lots of smiles and happiness. The children remember many stories from the Bible and are learning to pray!" - Amanda



Sharing hope

I feel a hand reach from behind me and stick something onto my shirt. I look down to see a white sticker with my name written in Ukrainian: **Аня**. A girl appears from behind me and gives me a shy smile. Above the uproar of the other children playing in the room she says, "I thought you should have a name tag too."

A green bouncy ball hits me in the face before I can thank her for her kind gesture. The boys want to play soccer before the rest of the children arrive and it's time to start the program. They decide that the tables on both sides of the room will work perfectly as goals. It's the two of them against the one of me and it's a surprisingly difficult challenge.

"I'm going to make this goal!" I shout right before my shoes slide on the slick floor and I land on my bottom, the green "soccer" ball remaining unmoved in front of me. I laugh as one of the boys whisks in and scores a point in my goal.

A few minutes later all the Ukrainian refugee children who live in the hotel have gathered and it's time to officially start the kids' program. I send a quick prayer to God for strength and for the children to feel His love for them through us and then I try to gather them in a circle. A few failed attempts later, I convince about half of them to come join the rest of the volunteers and me in a song.

An opportunity to serve the hurting

My parents immigrated from Ukraine to the United States 26 years ago and we often travelled to Ukraine during my childhood summers to visit our relatives. We first heard the news of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine from my uncle, who told us late at night on February 23rd, (the morning of February 24th in Ukraine), that he could hear bombs going off not far from his apartment in Kyiv.

The next several weeks were a blur of sending text messages to check on the wellbeing of my relatives, constantly checking the news, and praying and asking others to pray for Ukraine. I decided to throw my energy into finding a way to spend my summer helping those affected by the war.

By the time I arrived in Poland on June 8th, the OM team had just launched a new wing of their ministry in a nearby town called Okuninka, where many Ukrainian refugees had been settled in hostels. Each weekday the team conducted a children's program with songs, games, snacks, crafts, and Bible stories in two different locations. Over the time I volunteered with OM, the children began to greet our silver missions van while it was still rumbling to a parking spot and surrounded me with hugs the moment I stepped out.

The fruits of showing love

During my first two weeks in Poland our team went through a trauma-healing program with the refugee children. The children shared with us through the pictures how they were afraid of a bomb or tank destroying their house in Ukraine and how they felt sad when they were forced to leave their fathers and pets behind.

There are no cookie-cutter answers for children who have experienced such pain. There is only the love of God we could show to them by ministering to their practical and spiritual needs.

At times, it was hard to see the fruits of the children's ministry—the days and weeks ran together like paint on a preschooler's messy masterpiece. After a few weeks, however, several of the moms and even the managers of the hostels where the refugees lived told us that they sensed a positive difference in the children since we started working with them.

Eventually, our team's efforts with the children opened the door for OM in Poland to minister to a group of about 60 Ukrainian refugees who were all staying in Okuninka. We held a barbecue dinner and game night for them and even started a ministry for teens and for women.

My last week in Poland, our team made bookmarks with the Ukrainian women with the words hope and Ukraine written on them. In the darkest of times, God's hope is shining bright for the Ukrainian refugees in Okuninka.

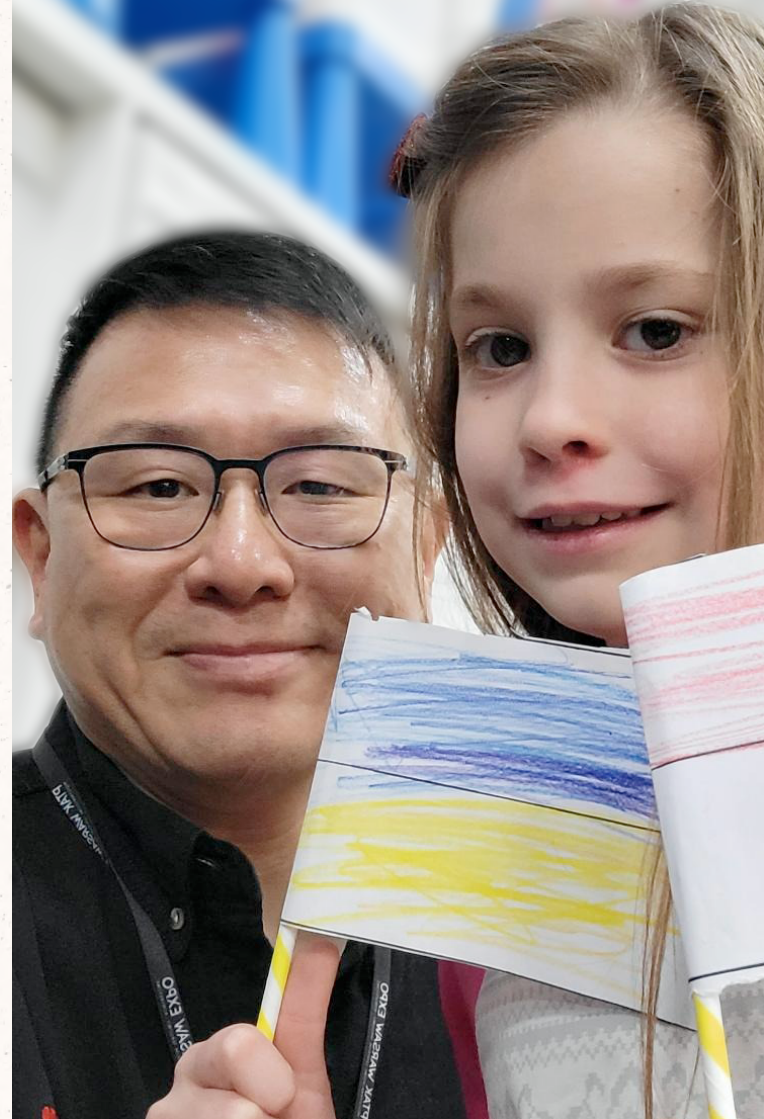
Anna Skudarnova

Supporting **vulnerable children** in Warsaw area

Many refugee families were initially hosted in private homes, churches and reception centres all across Poland, but with time they've either relocated or found employment and become independent. However, in Warsaw and some other cities, there are still thousands who live in mass accommodation facilities and find it challenging to integrating into the society. These are often people who either come from ethnic minorities or disadvantaged backgrounds. Some of them struggle with disabilities, depression or other circumstances that make it very difficult to establish their lives in Poland.

Children in these families require extra support and attention. We're painfully aware that these precious kids and teens are not only deprived of pre-war community and education, but also exposed to many dangers, including trafficking, online addictions and abuse. Unfortunately, the capacity of the local volunteers has been decreasing with each passing month and the facilities are generally unable to offer more than basic shelter.

As our international team of volunteers relocated from the border crossing, we decided to address this need and began to serve in the largest mass-accommodation facility (PTAK Expo) and two smaller hostels at the outskirts of Warsaw.



EXPRESSING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH:

- English lessons
- Sports and games
- Music, dance, arts and crafts
- Human trafficking prevention, life skills
- Storytelling through Bible stories
- Creative group for women
- Youth groups
- Practical work in a church-operated distribution centre (September - December 2022)

8950 recipients reached

"It is wonderful to connect with children through small acts of kindness and care. In one of the groups, there is a disabled girl who doesn't attend school. Making her smile means a lot." - Roberto

"We managed to start a youth programme in another section of the PTAK Expo. The teens were very happy, as there were no programmes available there before. They were excited to learn who we are and why do we come to spend time with them." - Aneta

"One boy, Mikarh, mentioned he lost his father and grandfather in the war. He is only 4 years old. Learning about his painful experiences helped me understand why the care and support

WARSAW AREA

Programme (active)

4

Locations every week

102

Programme days (in progress)

488

Hours of activities (in progress)

86%

*child participants
55% girls, 45% boys*

14%

*adult participants
90% women, 10% men*

WARSAW AREA PROGRAMME



"I feel that the children understand the love we have for them, despite the language barrier. Once one of the girls came to give me a high-five when she succeeded with a craft, and the boys too, they can feel our genuine care and love for them." - Serena



"It's a labour of love and patience, of endless piggyback rides and many smiles. But it is also journeying together through the most difficult chapter of people's lives." - Magda

OPERATION SAFE

In camps, reception centres and hostels for refugees, we meet overwhelming numbers of children who need age-appropriate trauma care, offered in their heart language.

Untreated, psychological trauma during childhood can adversely affect physical and social development of the child.

This is where our OpSAFE Team is making a difference, bringing restoration, hope and healing to the next generation.





"I saw how the children became more open, they tried to help each other, worked together as a team, made new friends and joyfully sang songs. Such camps should be held for every child from Ukraine and in Ukraine, because each of them is now in a crisis situation, regardless of whether this stress manifests itself in a visible or invisible way. I'm very grateful for this programme, especially the theme story, which is very beautiful and children love the characters very much. It really helped them understand God's love and care in their complex situation" - Yulia, volunteer



OPERATION SAFE

OpSAFE: Teaching principles to emotional recovery and survival after trauma.

Operation Safe is a programme based on thorough research and expertise of psychotraumatology, but it also draws from Christian values, becoming a uniquely effective tool.

The program has been developed in Japan to assist children who experienced both natural and man-made disasters. Previously OM used this programme successfully in the Philippines and Nepal, and our team became an implementing organisation for Poland. We've translated and published complete training and programme resources in Ukrainian and Polish at the beginning of May 2022.

Using principles of psychological first-aid, we've trained over 350 local volunteers to help children be safe, secure and relieve stress and fear after a disaster. Because OperationSAFE is community based, trained volunteers continue to be available to help children long after other disaster relief efforts have finished and aid workers have gone home. This often creates new, strategic links between local churches and the refugee community

OperationSAFE teaches children important principles to emotional recovery after trauma. With stories, crafts, songs, and games, children learn, make friends, share their experiences and regain hope. Children learn how to recover from trauma at their level, with activities designed to be friendly and engaging.

PROGRAM

IMPACT (active)

781

Children reached with this transformative experience

350

Trained volunteers across the country

11

In person trainings for volunteers and staff

7

Online trainings for volunteers and staff

Assesment results (Poland and Ukraine):

15% of children had slight or non-observable trauma symptoms, 68% were categorised as having mild symptoms, and 17% had more severe symptoms.

97.6% of the children with more severe symptoms made significant progress with reduced trauma symptoms and increased well-being!



OPERATION SAFE

"During the short, 5-day camp, I've noticed tremendous change. Children who appeared not interested, finding it difficult to focus or follow instruction, began to carefully listen to stories and follow the directions of the leaders. Children who were at first restless and difficult with others, began to help those who needed extra support. During the camp all of us, both children and adults, understood what team spirit and teamwork really are. For me, it was a great experience of both working with children and working in an adult team!" -

Anna, volunteer



"I would like to express my gratitude for the OpSAFE programme. My 8 year old daughter, Lisa, participated in the camp. We both loved the atmosphere there. After the camp activities, she came back home looking forward to the next day. I was pleasantly surprised by the situation on the second day. I was reading a children's Bible to her, and after the words of an angel to Joseph: "Do not be afraid, take Mary as your wife..." , Lisa said: "Do not be afraid, you are not alone!".

Since then, she began to use words of support and affirmation, like "Don't be afraid .." often in our daily life. It supports and inspires both her and myself. I noticed that she became so much more communicative."

- Ola, participant's mum

On 1 year of war in Ukraine

“Be Strong and Courageous” - This is the theme of our fourth day of OpSAFE camp for children who have been through trauma. We make “dumbbells” and pretend to work out before enjoying the delicious treats.

But can little children really be strong in the face of separation from fathers and the loss of their community? Do children really have a reason to be courageous with the threat of incoming missiles destroying everything? Aren't children just helpless victims?

The Bible shows that we have a reason to be strong and courageous - because we are not alone. The Lord our God is with us. In Ukraine, little children after the camp are reminding their mothers to “Fear Not” as the air-raid sirens blare.

In situations like these, children have a spiritual advantage. Children often find themselves in a place where they don't really understand what is happening and have to depend on others. They follow their

parents and teachers and believe what they say without doubting.

Adults lose this child-like faith as they gain experience, context, and knowledge. They no longer have to depend on others and become independent, but at the same time find it much more difficult to trust in God who they cannot see.

After one year of war in Ukraine, what has changed? Violence and terror still threatens daily and many families are still separated. Refugees still wait without knowing when they can go home. What has changed? The difference is that there are now thousands of children who are strong and courageous, leading their families to trust in God because they are not alone.

- Jonathan Wilson
Director, OpSAFE International



**“Fear not, for I am with you;
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you,
I will help you,
I will uphold you with my righteous
right hand.”**

ISAIAH 41:10 (ESV)

Delivering aid into Ukraine

We didn't initially plan to become involved in delivering aid into Ukraine, as the influx of millions of refugees required a quick and strategic response. Yet, we realized that we must deliver aid and offer practical, tangible support to the needy communities of Northern and Eastern Ukraine, in order to remain faithful to our calling. We saw our brothers and sisters in great need, and we saw people who desperately needed hope after their homes, reduced to ruins, were freed from occupation. We've heard urgent pleas from remote places where grocery stores were not yet open and large agencies were not reaching. We were also painfully aware of the needs of our OM Team in Rivne, feeding hundreds of IDPs (*internally displaced people) every day.

We soon formed a small team dedicated to coordinate and deliver the aid, involved in every detail of the process: from warehousing and loading trucks to personal relationships with partner churches, communities and individual beneficiaries. We've been delivering nutritious food with both large trucks and smaller vans, depending on the location. While the food was greatest in volume, the aid also included hygiene products, baby products, medical gear, generators, heaters, warm clothes, sleeping bags, blankets and other essential items.

This massive undertaking would not be possible without our strategic partner, FAIR - The Fellowship Canada and other key international partners.



As of March 2023, we've purchased and delivered over **210 TONS (463 000 POUNDS)** of both food and non-food aid, donated to select communities in Ukraine. The aid reached over 51500 people in the most severely affected areas.

Please note the map represents aid funded and delivered into Ukraine through OM in Poland, in partnership with OM Rivne Team. More aid was delivered and distributed through OM in Ukraine and other OM Teams in the region.

RIVNE OBLAST

- Rivne: food, medical packages, Christmas parcels for orphans, large generator

CHERNIHIV OBLAST

- Vershynova: food
- Baklanova Muraviika: food, building materials for reconstruction of houses
- Orlivka: food
- Grabivka: food

KHARKIV OBLAST

- Kharkiv: food, steel ovens, battery/power, hygiene articles
- Izium: food, steel ovens, battery/power, hygiene articles

DNIPROPETROVSK OBLAST

- Kamianske: baby care goods
- Dnipro: baby care goods, food, medication
- Marhanets: rehabilitation/medical equipment, food
- Novomoskovsk: food

DONETSK OBLAST

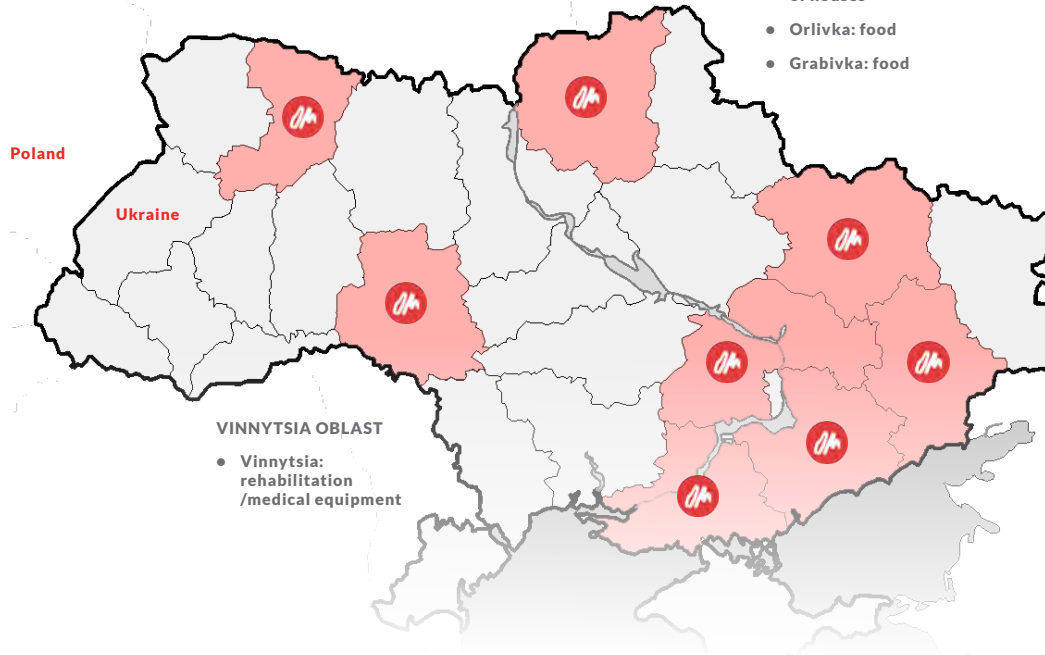
- Zelenne: food

ZAPORIZHZHIA OBLAST

- Zaporizhzhia: food, steel ovens

KHERSON OBLAST

- Nikopol: food
- Kherson: food
- Molodizhne: food
- Pokrovske: food



Impressions of Kharkiv



The city greeted us with beautiful sunshine, several degrees of frost and surprising traffic on the streets. "Kharkiv is alive" - proclaim the ever-present billboards. Indeed, despite the visible traces of the war, Kharkiv is alive. I could see it, feel it and hear it. This alone was remarkable.

In the first days of the war, invading troops quickly crossed the thirty-five kilometres separating the Russian border from Kharkiv and found themselves on the outskirts of the city. On February 27, violent fighting had already entered the city centre. It seemed that Kharkiv's fate was decided. Although the authorities appealed for people to stay at home, some residents began to organise a defence. Barricades were built, and all sorts of items potentially useful in battle were collected. The courage and determination of the residents will certainly go down in history. At the same time, many decided to leave the city. The streets, as well as the highway west of Kharkiv, were filled with tens of thousands of refugees. The drive from the centre to the suburbs took six hours. Leaving the city became almost impossible. Some abandoned their cars in an attempt to flee on foot.

Shortly thereafter, regular food supplies ceased. Most stores were closed because there was nothing to sell. People lined up in

long lines, waiting for food. After a while, the water supply also ran out. The constantly damaged power infrastructure was failing. In early March, to everyone's surprise, Kharkiv pressed on. The city was hit by rockets armed with cluster warheads. Some of them reached civilians queuing for water.... A brilliant September counteroffensive by the Ukrainian army finally allowed Kharkiv to function normally. But even now the city is under fire. The howling of sirens can still be heard....

Our small team was welcomed by Vlad - chaplain of the Ukrainian police and founder of the local Christian ministry, dedicated to providing aid and sharing the message of Jesus. Vlad introduced us to his friends: pastor Lonia, his wife and several others. They greeted us warmly and were keen to know about the goods we brought. - Is that from OM? - someone asked with excitement. - Come, let's unload the van, and then we'll eat something! - offered Pastor Lonia.

We took out canned goods, flour, jams, groats, pasta, oil, sugar, some sweets. Three pallets in total. Packets and packages went from hand to hand. Then we unloaded the clothes: some jackets, sweaters, pants. They will come in handy during this difficult winter. And finally, the much anticipated gas stove.



Soon we found ourselves by the table, set with every treasure of their pantry. We cautiously sampled some rice covered with lard and pieces of fried sausage - it tasted so great! It was time to talk and share. We met just a couple hours earlier, but the sense of love and unity, that can often be felt among the followers of Jesus, was evident.

Lisa, a teenage girl, told us how her parents took in a two-year-old child who got lost during the evacuation. He walked down a crowded street, calling his mother. All he knew was that his name was Kiryl. Kiryl's mom was never found despite many efforts, and Lisa now has a little brother.

Then the pastor told us about the church. As a result of the evacuation, it shrank to about 36 people. Soon, however, the chapel began to fill with new believers - People need Jesus - said the pastor. Although we don't distribute humanitarian aid on Sundays, there are so many people attending the service every week that they can barely fit in the building.

After the meal, we left to visit the bunker. We went down through a maze of staircases in an old shooting gallery, arriving at "The Center of the Invictus" - a cosy and welcoming space, self-renovated by the volunteers. Vlad explained that an old bunker now serves as an air raid shelter for residents in the district. The mayor of Kharkiv appointed a group of young Christians as official caretakers of the place. They've prepared and furnished it, and

now, during more dangerous attacks from the air force or artillery, the bunker fills up with people. The volunteers bless them with coffee, tea, sweets and fellowship.

Serving people in this way helped reach many people in the city with the message of the Gospel. As a result, a youth church was born here, which OM is currently helping to equip. It's a vibrant community of genuine Jesus followers, determined to serve their community. They could have left the city by now, but they continue to live out love where God called them to serve, day by day.

Then we all move together to a nearby village, helping to organise a makeshift medical clinic in one of the houses. We'd unloaded another van of goods, shared more great conversations and prayed for the residents of the village. I continued to pray that we wouldn't run out of food packages, trusting we have enough for everyone. The need of the people and their gratitude were both immense. It turned out that this time we had enough!

I will not forget these people, not the others we've met during each of the trips into the most needy regions of Ukraine. We will come back soon. Perhaps many things will change by then, but what will not change is the One who sent us all here. He is our inspiration, He loves His children dearly and He never fails.

Jacek Krakowiak,
Aid coordinator - OM in Poland



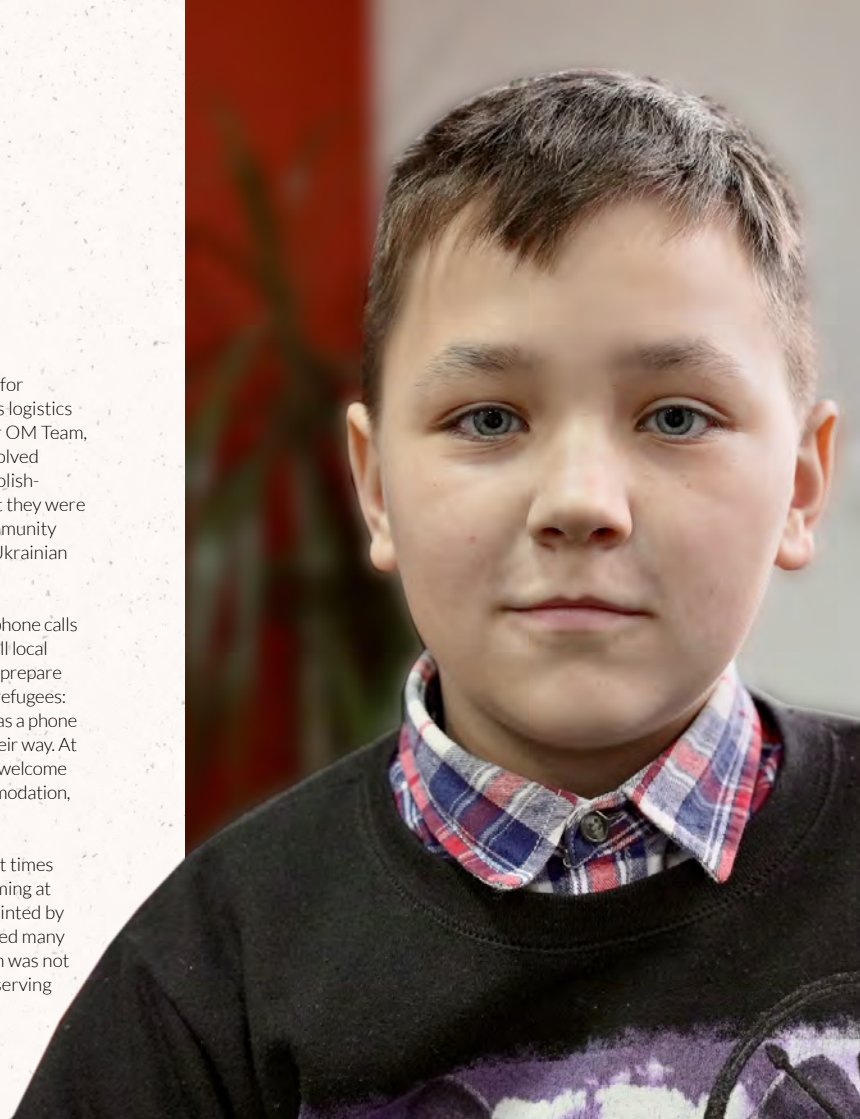
Kutno Church Plant

Integration and long-term assistance

The town of Kutno in central Poland has been a destination of choice for thousands of Ukrainian migrants for some years already. Thanks to its logistics hub and industrial zone, it was easy to find work and settle there. Our OM Team, made of two families: one Polish, one Ukrainian, has already been involved in outreach to this language group, while continuing to develop the Polish-speaking church-plant. The news of war shook their world deeply, but they were not unprepared. God already gave them an extensive network of community leaders, the trust of local authorities, and credibility within the local Ukrainian community.

On the first day of war, our workers, Sasha and Tanya, received lots of phone calls from home, asking for help as many were preparing to escape. The small local church, lead by OM workers Donna and Arek, made a swift decision to prepare a shelter, and the next day they welcomed the first group of Ukrainian refugees: Sasha's mom and his oldest daughter's family. On the next day, there was a phone call informing about a bus of over 20 refugees, who were already on their way. At that time there were only 10 beds on the premises, but God helped us welcome each person and the church became a 24/7 aid centre, offering accommodation, food, laundry services, counselling and aid.

The following weeks lead to establishment of the Ukrainian church (at times over 100 people attending services), and several ministry projects aiming at long-term integration of the refugees. Our team members were appointed by the town authorities to coordinate the local NGO response and formed many strategic partnerships. Eventually, the makeshift shelter at the church was not needed anymore and we were able to establish a transitional hostel, serving Ukrainian refugees in need of mid-term accommodation.



EXPRESSING GOD'S LOVE THROUGH:

- Temporary shelter in the church building
- Hot meals
- Food packages for needy families
- Resource center
- Transitional house for refugees
- Daycare for children
- Administrative assistance
- Pastoral care and outreach to the Ukrainian community in town
- Special Christmas events
- Summer football clinic

Over **2150** recipients reached

Poland



KUTNO

Integration and long-term
assistance (active)

600+

Church shelter residents
(March - August 2022)

153 individuals / **22** families

Transitional House residents (to date)

3750

Food packages distributed

30

Children attending Day Care Center
April - December 2022

50-70

Average Sunday attendance
of the new Ukrainian congregation



Where is God in the crisis?

The testimony of the church brings hope into lives broken by the tragedy of war.

Natalia and her family are originally from the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine. They were forced to leave their newly built house and moved westward in 2014 when the war broke out between the Ukrainian military and Russian-backed separatist rebels. When they thought that they could slowly rebuild their lives, they were forced to move again because of the Russian invasion, this time to Poland where her husband had been working for some years.

As a believer, Natalia immediately looked for a church. She and her two young children turned up during our prayer meeting in Kutno. When we asked how we could pray for her, she responded with a question: "Have we done something wrong that this war is a punishment from God?" Many Ukrainian Christians who were present at this prayer meeting resonated with Natalia, they were also expressing doubt and confusion.

We don't have an answer for Natalia or the others, though we know we bear the consequences for what we have done,

and for the sin that rules this world. Nevertheless, God who is gracious and merciful, has given His one and only son, Jesus to ransom on our behalf. Therefore, with confidence we prayed together with our Ukrainian brothers and sisters for God's intervention as He is the source of life and our only true Hope, in whom we could always trust.

Knowing that we provide shelter and assistance for the refugees, many local friends brought very much needed resources to the church. One woman, who came to bring some aid articles, was overwhelmed when she saw the refugees staying in our church and heard their tragic stories. She then asked, "there is so much evil and suffering in this situation, where is God?". Arek, who is the pastor of the church, calmly replied "God is here, through His people, the community of Jesus followers reaching out to this broken and hurting world, to heal and to save."

Donna Delik
Kutno Church Plant, OM in Poland

Protection and care

As we began to offer Psychological First Aid and raise awareness on issues of child protection, we started to be approached by groups who needed specialist care or were in a uniquely challenging situation, caring for evacuated orphans or foster children.

With broken hearts, but with gratitude for God's light in this unbelievable darkness, we were able to offer comprehensive support to a large group of foster children rescued from human trafficking and abuse.

We've rejoiced over the provision of transport and accommodation of evacuated 40+ orphans, provided essential equipment for a hostel that accepted over 130 children, supported a summer camp and organised Christmas gifts for orphans from Ukraine.



Through the sponsorship of SOS Children's Villages we were also able to supply **16 families with special needs, providing monthly cash vouchers of a value of 24,750 PLN in total, for the duration of 3 months.**

This proved to be invaluable assistance in a situation where children have immediate needs, affecting their long-term health and well-being, and international administrative processes can be lengthy.

Another batch of the vouchers is scheduled for distribution in the first half of 2023.

CINEMA PROJECT

Educational cinema events

Alongside the much needed and effective one-on-one work that was already taking place in multiple locations across the country, we've dreamed of a project that would reach even more refugee children with the message of hope and with practical information that would boost their safety and help protect them from abuse.

Through a local sponsorship grant (Fundacja Orlen), we were able to organise a national tour of 100 cinema events in refugee reception centres, hostels and accommodation facilities.

GOALS OF THE PROGRAMME:

- To support mothers and offer children an opportunity to enjoy quality cinema experience in their native language
- For children to become familiar with vital safety and anti-trafficking information
- For all participants to know they are loved and valued because God created them
- To establish relationships and partnerships where our Teams were not present before

PROGRAM

IMPACT

19 400

*Children and their families
trained in child safety
through cinema events*

26 000+

*Copies of books distributed,
emphasising the value and dignity of each
child, and sharing God's love with them*

13 000+

*Gift bags (backpacks) distributed
in refugee accommodation facilities*





Elements of the programme:

CINEMA TOUR 1: 50 SCREENINGS

- Quality cinema experience, together with free popcorn, red carpet and comfortable deckchairs
- Child safety educational film in Ukrainian, produced by OM and presented before the animated movie
- Safety principles printed on popcorn boxes and flyers for maximum exposure to educational content
- A backpack with gifts, including information on child safety and carefully selected Christian books



CINEMA TOUR 2: 50 SCREENINGS

- A craft workshop and a story presentation, explaining the meaning of Christmas
- Quality cinema experience, together with free popcorn, red carpet and comfortable deckchairs
- Christmas tree decorating, a photo wall
- Child safety educational film in Ukrainian, produced by OM and presented before the animated movie
- Safety principles printed on popcorn boxes and flyers for maximum exposure to educational content
- A backpack with gifts, including information on child safety and carefully selected Christian books



Refugee Ministry Hub in the heart of Warsaw

Our passion for the Refugee Ministry Hub is to bridge the current relief work with an ongoing outreach and strategic efforts towards establishing vibrant communities of Jesus' followers among the refugees and the community of Old Praga in Warsaw.

The needs of refugees currently living in Warsaw are overwhelming. Since February 2022, millions have fled the war in Ukraine; over 10 million arrived in Poland. More than 80% are women and children. It is estimated that at least 450 000 settled in Warsaw. Many Ukrainians lost their homes, source of income, community and family ties. Both children and adults struggle with trauma, depression, and an uncertain future.

As we continue our projects in refugee centres and other government-operated facilities, meaningful relationships are started. The refugees we meet are grateful for the aid they receive, but they long for more than just food for the body - they need hope, fellowship and Christ's saving love. As we serve them where they are, we realised the need to establish a long-term ministry platform to impact and transform lives beyond the first humanitarian response.

We believe that the purchase of property for the Refugee Ministry Hub is a strategic next step to bridge practical aid with a vibrant community life and a platform to offer programmes relevant to the refugees' social, emotional and spiritual needs. It turns out to be more than a blessing to the refugees - it also mobilises the Body of Christ, being a place where mission is modelled and practised.



Activities in OM Refugee Ministry Hub

- Weekly aid distribution
- Support group for women
- Children's club
- Discovery Bible Study
- Language lessons (Polish, English, *Spanish*)
- Dance therapy classes
- Women's fitness group
- Craft workshop
- Adult art class
- OpSafe Day Camp for children
- International Café and Tea Room
- Conferences and trainings
- Concerts and special events
- Access to Bibles and literature in multiple languages
- Senior's Mission Club
- *Youth Group*
- *Jam sessions with international and worship music*
- *Café operated by refugees throughout the week, open to the public*

**Activities in italic are planned and scheduled to launch*

Currently **300-350** programme participants per week



The Refugee Ministry Hub consists of the main meeting room complete with a stage, café and a bookstore, a classroom, a resource centre, storage and administrative space and a fully equipped kitchen.

*We called it "Dom Kultur" - A Home for All Nations.
By God's grace, it opened to the public on Feb 9, 2023.
Fundraising efforts are in progress.*

COMMUNITY CENTER

designed to become
a church planting hub

As followers of Jesus, we can play a unique role in the heartbreaking story of millions of refugees fleeing Ukraine. We can offer them long-term assistance, a vibrant community and growth opportunities that restore their dignity, rebuild their hope and lead them to experience the transformative power of the Gospel, lived out daily.

The Refugee Ministry Hub, which has been established by OM Team in Warsaw, offers a permanent platform to meet those great needs for the years to come, as it becomes clear that the impact of the war will last for generations. Its programs build a vibrant community that is meant to initiate multiple new groups of Jesus' followers.



OM REFUGEE MINISTRY HUB, WARSAW - HOME FOR ALL NATIONS



Looking back,

We return to these memories, which have become part of our personal history and the history of virtually all churches and aid organisations in Poland.

Each of us remembers something different - the exhausted faces of people getting off the coaches at the Warsaw West Railway Station, the makeshift tents at border crossings, the setting up of night shelters, the laundry, the cooking, the phone calls in the middle of the night.

Some return to memories even more difficult - rockets, explosions, abandoned houses, dramatic partings. Tears of helplessness, extreme exhaustion, silently whispered pleading prayers. The carrying of weeping children, the hugging of confused grandmothers and grandfathers, the reassurance that they are already safe, with the hope that this is true.

But in fact, even from those very first hours, it is also a story of miracles that unfolded before our eyes. Of open homes and hearts, of incredible generosity and compassion that overcomes all barriers. A story of statistically impossible encounters, surprising solutions and God's precision in showing care to specific people.

We all learned a lot and we could experience the profound truth that we are not alone. Responding to challenges that are bigger than ourselves and our own capacities, we saw a global community of Jesus followers, an international and intercontinental movement of hearts driven by compassion, committed to relief, prayer and financial support. This incredible movement has changed the course of history, bringing hope where human ability ends.

To all those who became part of this miracle, we would like to say today: thank you. Our faith has grown over this year thanks to your commitment, and hundreds of thousands of people have received real, practical help: material, spiritual, and emotional. Thank you for your trust and thank you on behalf of all those we have been able to serve.



Looking into the future,

We are far from triumphant. We continue to weep over the destruction and hurt in Ukraine, which intensifies with each week of war. There are still more orphans, traumatised children, young people whose dreams have been destroyed. There are more ruins, separated families, and people who have lost hope. We seek wisdom on how to make the best use of resources and opportunities to act, because the needs around us are only getting worse, and we see on the horizon many years of work in this crisis.

We continue to pray for deep reconciliation between Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine. We pray that the Polish people will not lack love for the refugees, and we pray that the world will not forget too soon.

As a local team, we're committed to pour out our energy and love into this disaster for as long as it is needed. We are hopeful, as we continue to marvel at the beauty of the global Church, united to live out Christ's love among the nations. In all this, we will trust in the One who has been with us so far, with our brothers and sisters from Ukraine, and we know that He always will be.

Will you join us?

PROJECTS TO CONTINUE IN 2023 and beyond

SUPPORTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN
in Warsaw area

OPERATION SAFE
Child trauma recovery programme

HUMANITARIAN AID
Transports and distribution in Ukraine

KUTNO CHURCH PLANT
Integration and long-term assistance

SUPPORTING ORPHANS AND CHILDREN
In foster care

OM REFUGEE MINISTRY HUB, WARSAW
Refugee Community Center
Dom Kultur - Home for All Nations

in development
TEENSTREET
Supporting refugee teenagers to have a real
friendship with Jesus and reflect Him daily



WE ARE OM - TOGETHER!



Partnership opportunities

- Give towards a specific project
- Help support key workers (Slavic languages)
- Volunteer in Poland (1 week or longer)
- Join with a Church Team
- Help us fund the Community Center
- Organize a mobilizing event
- Pray for Ukraine and for the refugees
- Join us long-term

We'd love to hear from you.
info.pl@om.org



Watch videos
to discover more



KUTNO: Victoria's Story

vimeo.com/685093845



DELIVERING AID INTO
UKRAINE'S FRONTLINES

youtu.be/zzL0AmmJ52k



WORK AT THE BORDER
CROSSINGS: Rise Up

vimeo.com/688680461



OPERATION SAFE: Children
recover from war trauma

youtu.be/RR85LrWjw2U



REFUGEE MINISTRY HUB:
Community Center vision

youtu.be/q_YUWqWAXuk

**"For the needy shall not always be forgotten,
and the hope of the poor shall not perish forever."**

PSALM 9:18 (ESV)



“My command is this:
Love each other as
I have loved you.”

1 JOHN 15:12 (NIV)



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