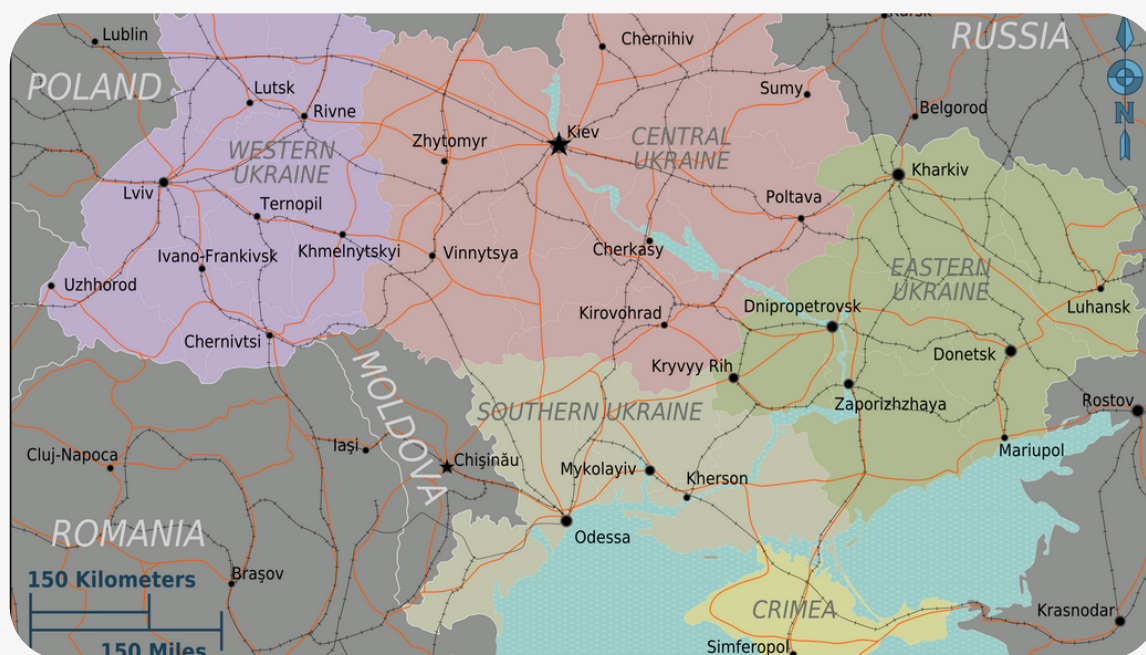


DMITRY'S STORY

For 18 year old Dmitry, Mariupol is home. Dmitry loves football and his dream has always been to be a professional football player. Before the war, he played for Mariupol FC's under 19 team and had a contract with them. "Everything looked good" he said.



When the war began, Mariupol, lying close to the border with Russia, was one of the first cities to be attacked.



Unable to leave because of the siege, Dmitry stayed in the city. But then the fighting moved close to where he was sheltering. There was no option. He had to go. The first night he spent with relatives on the edge of the city, before heading north to his girlfriend's family in Donetsk.

DMITRY'S STORY

Dmitry and Anna planned their escape carefully over the next month. Before they left, Anna's mother insisted they delete everything from their phones linked to the war – photos, videos, even a chat with a friend serving in the Ukrainian army. When they reached the border, they realised why.

"The border guards checked everything and searched us from head to toe. They took my passport and my phone and looked at it for over an hour, but it seemed like so much longer," Dmitry said. "They checked all my messaging, social media, my posts, pictures..." In the end they found nothing of interest and the pair were able to cross into Russia. Once across, they took a train to St Petersburg and then on to Hungary through Estonia.



Dmitry and Anna are now living at a refugee shelter run by ACT Alliance member Hungarian Interchurch Aid. Dmitry has started working night shifts at a warehouse. "I have the same dreams as in Ukraine," he said. "My dream was always to be a football player. Before the war ... everything looked good, but then it all went to ashes, I haven't trained or played for two months.

"If I had a possibility here to work for the realisation of my dream, that would be the best, I'd be so happy. This is what I was preparing for in my whole life, that's what this war took from me."

Operation Refugee is raising funds to assist refugees like Dmitry who need food, shelter, education, medical care and protection – whatever they need.

Story courtesy of ACT Alliance/HIA.

Note: Professional team Ferencvárosi TC offered Dmitry an opportunity to train with their Under-19 squad after the interview. While the future is uncertain, Dmitry's dreams of a football career are alive and well!

IRINA'S STORY

Irina's family has been torn apart by the war in Ukraine. Irina is a nurse and when war broke out in the Donetsk region, Irina's husband, a history teacher, joined others to defend their city.

At first, Irina and her children moved in with her parents. They built a makeshift shelter at home out of furniture.



This provided a sense of security that soon proved to be illusory as a couple of days later a bomb exploded in their neighbourhood. The children were terrified and Irina knew they had to leave.

The family walked to an evacuation point but were forced to take cover from shelling on the way. They reached a nearby village but the shelling got closer every day. They had to move again.

They made the exhausting 20 hour train journey to Lviv with the children sleeping on the floor. In Lviv, Irina managed to secure them a place at a shelter in Batiovo, another five hour train ride away. Irina and her children are now living at a refugee shelter near the Ukraine-Hungary border with 90 other refugees.

Operation Refugee is raising funds to assist refugees like Irina who need food, shelter, education, medical care and protection – whatever they need.

Story courtesy of ACT Alliance/FCA.

MONA'S STORY

Mona's mother, a Palestinian refugee, died when she was three years old. This left Mona and her brother living with their father in the cramped Sabra/Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon. The local schools would not enrol her because they thought she had Down syndrome. So she spent the days with neighbours while her father worked.



When Mona was 12 years old, her desperate father sought help from the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR) Lebanon.

When father and daughter came to the office, the Director of DSPR took up the challenge, enrolling Mona in their literacy class for women aged 40–70. It was perfect. Mona finally received the support and care she needed. Not only did she learn to read but she thrived on the attention from these mothers.

Once she had progressed, the director moved Mona to the programme for young people at risk – those not attending their local school. Mona's reading, writing, maths and English improved but it was the traditional folk dancing she loved the most.



MONA'S STORY

Now 19, DSPR is helping Mona find work. She is enjoying the hairdressing training programme run by DSPR and helping out at the kindergarten it runs at the Sabra Centre. She has even started to write short stories. In seven years, Mona's life has been transformed. She is happy and self-confident. Her father cannot speak highly enough of DSPR's care and concern.



Operation Refugee is raising funds to assist refugees like Mona who need food, shelter, education, medical care and protection – whatever they need.
Story courtesy of DSPR Lebanon.

FOUZIA'S STORY

Until 2020, Fouzia lived with her mother in Afghanistan's Ghazni province. Her mother worked hard washing clothes to provide a small income for the pair. They were happy living a simple and peaceful life. In 2020 however, Fouzia's mother sadly suffered a sudden heart attack and died. Since then, life has been extremely difficult for Fouzia.



Orphaned at 13, Fouzia was adopted by her aunt and uncle. Her uncle, the sole earner for the family, lost his labouring job when the Taliban took over. Faced with few options for making a livelihood, the family decided to leave their homeland. One night, they crossed the Chaman border into Pakistan, eventually settling in Islamabad.

Life as new refugees in Pakistan has not been easy. Without officially verified legal documents her uncle has found it difficult to find work and Fouzia cannot enrol in school. The family are living in a cramped four-room apartment with three other families and insufficient water supplies.



The family struggles for the necessities of life much less medicine and healthcare for Fouzia who suffers from a neurological condition. In Islamabad, Fouzia's aunt took her to see the doctor but they could not afford the treatment. Operation Refugee is raising funds to assist refugees like Fouzia who need food, shelter, education, medical care and protection – whatever they need.
Story courtesy of Community World Service Asia.