



Ukraine Appeal Report

June 2023

Christian World Service is grateful to you, our supporters, for your gifts to the Ukraine Appeal. Together you have donated over \$213,000 to assist displaced people in Ukraine and then in Poland with matched funds from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Poland is hosting 992,670 registered refugees. Your gifts are helping these people get through the terrible conflict - thank you!

On February 24, 2022 Russia launched a major attack on Ukraine. With the spring offensives now underway there is no end in sight. ACT Alliance members are adjusting their programmes to the changing contexts and limited funds.

They are distributing humanitarian supplies to some of the 700,000 people affected by the destruction of the Nova Kakhovka dam.

We value your prayers for peace.



Nataliia (*cover*) and her two grandchildren Lia aged 8 and Timur aged 10 (*pictured above*) live with six other families in a converted house in Bielsko-Biala, Poland. Each family has their own room and they share the kitchen, dining room and living spaces. The families support each other where they can.

When the war broke out, the family stayed in Zaporizhzhia, close to Ukraine's nuclear power plant. But in September 2022, Timur aged 10 went to buy milk and was almost hit by a shell. Half a year later, he still recalls every detail of the experience.

Timur tells his story in a quiet voice:

"I heard explosions and rode my bike very fast. I saw a crowd of people. I came closer, and I saw a person lying in blood. People cried, and there was broken glass everywhere. A tree was burning in the city centre. The explosion had thrown a man's dog away. An ambulance came and took the person that was lying there. He was a power plant worker, and people said he died." The children began to build border checkpoints from Lego after that experience says his grandmother.

Having a space to live and being close to other Ukrainian families is a great relief, says Nataliia. She has been the children's caregiver for the past five years. At home, she's supported by her son and her family. Now the family is scattered: her daughter's family is in the Netherlands and her son, the children's father, is in the army. "I cannot be ill. I am now mother, father, and grandmother to them", she says. She also watches a friend of Timur's after school while his mother works.

The hostel is part of the work done by our partner the Lutheran World Federation to assist refugees from Ukraine. It is also supported by local churches.



How your Donations Helped:



**Three months of cash transfers assisted
60 households - 151 people**



Comfort kits for 164 children



Wheelchairs for 10 people



**6 People trained in community-based mental
health and psychosocial support**



**257 women are receiving mental health and
psychosocial support in women's safe spaces while
learning Polish, making crafts and doing other
activities**



**292 children attend child-safe spaces where they
can make crafts and do other activities while their
mothers attend appointments or attend classes.**



Maria (left) has found friendship and support through the women's groups coordinated by Yuliia who has been trained to provide Community Based Psychosocial Support.

Visiting Poland

In April, International Programmes Coordinator for Christian World Service, Rob Wayne, visited Poland to meet with local partner, Lutheran World Federation (LWF). LWF provides practical support to refugees and helps them deal with some of the psychological challenges they are facing. LWF runs programmes in six centres: Gdansk, Wroclaw, Ostróda, Zgierz, Bytom Miechowice and Bielsko-Biała. 75% of LWF staff are Ukrainians. Rob monitored the use of New Zealand government funding and met with recent refugees.

“The programme was well organised to meet the needs of the people and has adapted as the needs changed,” reports Rob.

In the first stage, LWF assisted over 2,600 people with three monthly cash transfers to eligible families, provided safe spaces and psychosocial support for women and children, and helped people with disabilities. Many of them have now found work, received assistance from the Polish government, or received pensions from Ukraine although these are not to support their families. In November last year, LWF switched to a focus on providing psychosocial and other help.

In Warsaw, Rob met with LWF’s local Polish partner assisting people living with disabilities. As well as providing physiotherapy, occupational therapy and guidance on parenthood and sexuality, the partner was introducing some people with disabilities to extreme sports! People could try parachute jumping and deep diving to encourage them to overcome obstacles. Funding from CWS also provided wheelchairs to ten people who needed them.

Yuliia who runs the Wroclaw Centre told Rob, **“We like to show refugees that life has not ended. When you feel happier you can help other people.”**

The child spaces are invaluable. Mothers can safely leave their young children for up to three hours while they attend job interviews or appointments. The children enjoy the chance to play. In recent months LWF has moved to working with teenagers and is setting up local clubs and sports programmes for community-based support.

In Poland the demand for psychological services has increased, especially from single mothers. The incidence of depression has risen as people struggle to cope with family and friends back home and the needs of their children. Refugees can access the healthcare system and other social services. Ukrainian mothers with older children have found work and some are beginning to think about staying. Children can attend Polish schools but because this education will not count if and when they return to Ukraine, many prefer to study online through the courses broadcasted by the Ukrainian government.

“People left the war and their problems behind in Ukraine. They were running on adrenalin at the beginning and did not want to talk about the war. It was only after half a year or more that they became aware of what has happened to them,” says Tetyana, a Ukrainian psychologist working with LWF.

A Gift of Love

Maria (*pictured above*) welcomed the opportunity to tell Rob about the support she receives at the Wroclaw Centre. She had completed a Polish language class that she hopes will help her find another teaching job at the local school when the current one teaching Ukrainian literature runs out. She needs work as her Ukrainian pension is not enough to meet her expenses in Poland or assist people back home.

When she talks about her literature and singing group, her eyes light up. In this group she has made many new friends. Rob was impressed by the way the women celebrated one member’s 70th birthday. The women organised a party where everyone shared stories and poems. The women contributed enough to pay for a ticket so the woman could go to the local ballet.

LWF runs a number of community groups for older women involving activities such as knitting and embroidery. Maria says the group has helped her a lot and she wants to keep the programme going.

Your donations to the Ukraine Appeal give hope and practical support to families from Ukraine.

Thank you for your generosity and compassion.

Photo credits: LWF/Albin Hillert and Rob Wayne