



“Ukraine Appeal”

- Interim Report -

Charitable Service of the Reformed Church in Hungary and the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid in response to the War in Ukraine in 2022

Introduction

Along with the rest of the world, the Reformed Church in Hungary (RCH) was shocked by the news that Russia had launched a war against Ukraine. The charity institution of the Church, which is the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA), responded quickly and sent the first humanitarian aid shipment to Transcarpathia (the western region of Ukraine) immediately on the 24th of February 2022, the day the war broke out. At the same time, the Church Aid transformed one of its buildings in Budapest into temporary housing for refugees from Ukraine and issued a call for volunteers resulting in more than 1,500 people joining the voluntary action team in a single night. Their service is characterised by an eager enthusiasm and they stand ready to help people affected by the war.



Aid to Transcarpathia has been a primary focus of HRCA aid sent to Ukraine. Transcarpathia is the westernmost region of Ukraine where many internally displaced people from the war-torn areas of the country have sought refuge. The region is home to a large Hungarian minority population in Ukraine. One of the churches operating in the region is the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia, a close partner of the Reformed Church in Hungary. Therefore, RCH supports



the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia in every possible way, including the development of a Solidarity Fund, and considers it an implementing partner alongside HRCA in the service of refugees and internally displaced people.

RCH has received many kind and generous offers and donations from its partner churches and congregations all around the world. The Church has distributed these donations among the HRCA and the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia, both of which were able to successfully distribute it to those in need. As Dr. Károly Czibere, head of the Diaconia of the Reformed Church in Hungary and chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (HRCA) said



'We are grateful for the tremendous wave of solidarity, the prayers and donations from sisters and brothers and partner organisations around the world. Congregations and members of our sister churches have shown that their hearts go out to refugees and victims of the war. They have contributed substantial donations to the ministry of the Hungarian Reformed Church Aid, which has been shared with refugees in Hungary and internally displaced people in Transcarpathia, Ukraine. There are no words sufficient to express our gratitude on behalf of the HRCA and the Reformed churches in Hungary and Ukraine, as well as the thousands of refugees to whom you have offered hope in a time of hopelessness.'

In this report, RCH will present how donations and different kinds of aid have been used by its implementing partners in the service of people affected by the war.



Service Provided in the Aftermath of the Outbreak of the War in Ukraine

- **180,852** refugees provided with care in Hungary
- **84,725** refugees provided with orientation and information in Hungary
- **111,985** refugees provided with food in Hungary
- **11,524** people provided with accommodation in Hungary
- **43,447** cases in which hygiene equipment supplies were provided in Hungary
- **3335** refugees provided with one time ‘cash assistance’ of around 80 EUR
- **69** local communities/parishes hosting refugees in Hungary (28) or IDPs in Ukraine (41) provided with ‘group support’ in a total value of **350,00 EUR**
- **4,301** volunteers registered with HRCA
- **927,01** tons of supplies provided in total (including in Hungary), from which **552,969** tons were delivered to Ukraine (Transcarpathia and beyond) [“supplies” includes in-kind donations, food, clothing, hygiene and medical equipment]
- **704,039,451 HUF**, or 1,7 million Euro total financial support for HRCA, from which **380,000,000 HUF** (925,000 Euro) came from international donors (as of 19th December 2022)
- **220,000 HUF** (540,000 Euro) in Solidarity Fund donations for Transcarpathia, Ukraine from which **160,000,000 HUF** (390,000 Euro) came from international donors [the Solidarity Fund is a program from March 2022 through December 2023]
- Over **10,000** IDP’s provided service, hosted and sheltered in Transcarpathia, Ukraine



Complex service provided by HRCA

Nyugati Railway Station

Our first help centre was established in the Nyugati Railway Station, Budapest. Our team provided people fleeing from the war with food and personal hygiene products. We helped them find accommodation and transportation. Our team of volunteers included interpreters, doctors from the Bethesda Children's Hospital, as well as pastoral counsellors. By the first weekend of the war, we had already provided shelter for 100 refugees and delivered 10 tons of donations to Transcarpathia.



More people helping

It quickly became apparent that in order to provide the best care possible to refugee families, we needed more staff. To date, many new staff have been hired and joined the HRCA since the beginning of the war. New staff serve many roles, including as coordinators, administrative staff members, drivers, and warehouse personnel. There have also been more than 4,000 people registered as volunteers, including retired doctors, nurses, lawyers, and university students.

Záhony and other border towns, locations

In just a few days, the number of service points multiplied. Staff members of the HRCA supported people fleeing from the violence at a variety of border crossings, (e.g. Záhony, Beregsurány, Tiszabecs, and Lónya) and since the beginning of March we have also been



present at the Liszt Ferenc International Airport in Budapest, as well as Biharkeresztes (border crossing to Romania, through which many refugees from Ukraine have also arrived in Hungary). Our team has had a presence 24/7 at the railway station in Záhony since March. (Záhony has the biggest and most important railway station and border crossing along the border between Ukraine and Hungary.) With their work and with donations the volunteers and donors also help provide and maintain transitional housing for refugees. HRCA has been present in 21 different locations ('help points').



Repositories and help for Transcarpathia

Along with on-site support, our colleagues have worked non-stop to provide logistics, donation coordination and storage. We rented new warehouses, extended their availability, and expanded our vehicle fleet. Thanks to these measures, we have been able to provide more than 496,325 tons of donations to people affected by the war. On Thursdays since May, we have been accepting donations at Marek Street 35, Budapest, where the public can drop off items that help people in need.

Aid to Transcarpathia has been a primary focus of HRCA aid sent to Ukraine. Since the outset of the war, our vans have been crossing the border daily, fully packed with in-kind donations. In addition to humanitarian aid shipments containing food and hygiene products, we have helped our brothers and sisters with educational supplies, seeds and medical equipment (see below for details). With the help of the Reformed Church of Transcarpathia, some of these shipments reached other regions of Ukraine as well, including the easternmost, war-torn regions.



Healthcare

Alongside non-perishable food and hygiene products, donations to healthcare institutions in Ukraine are of growing importance since the war has greatly depleted Ukraine's stock of medicines. On the 8th of April, HRCA stepped in to deliver medical supplies valuing 3,200,000 HUF to the Ungvár/Uzhhorod City Central Hospital. At the end of April, we sent 15,000,000 HUF worth of donations - including medicines, bandages, syringes, infusions, blood glucose metres as well as defibrillators and ECG devices - to the Munkács/Mukachevo County Children's Hospital, and on the 8th of May, we also donated medical equipment worth 1.5 million HUF to the Volovets Region Central Hospital. HRCA has its own medical team as well. Our doctors are there for the refugees arriving in Hungary and some of them have gone to Transcarpathia to help the overwhelmed personnel of the local hospitals. There have been 4877 cases where the HRCA Medical Team was involved in giving medical help and treatment to refugees.



Seeds of Hope

The HRCA also works to support families and farmers who provide the important service of remaining in Transcarpathia to farm and work. On April 19th, the HRCA 'Seeds of Hope' program provided a humanitarian transport containing seeds to Transcarpathia from its warehouse in Beregdaróc. In this program, a total of 11 tons of seeds were delivered to the border region by HRCA. The total value of the transport exceeded 100,000 euros. Thanks to the donation that arrived in Beregszász/Berehove, the Church Aid is helping 10,000 families in Transcarpathia with backyard farming, thus ensuring their long-term livelihood.



Service in the Capital

In mid-March, when the government made policy changes and the service points located at the Keleti and Nyugati Railway Stations closed, the BOK Sports Hall in Budapest became the central reception location for those fleeing the war. HRCA joined many other organisations in offering assistance there. Our colleagues and volunteers, providing refugees with food and safe places to stay, work here in 12-hour shifts. HRCA provides staff for both the daytime and overnight shifts. The charity point mentioned above at Marek Street 35 is still open every Thursday, accepting donations. Items which get dropped off there soon make it into the hands of those in need. Another important project of the HRCA in Budapest is providing refugees with cash assistance and multipurpose shopping vouchers. There are two service points in the capital where people fleeing from Ukraine can ask for it. In this project 5335 displaced people will be granted one-time cash assistance (3335) and shopping vouchers (2000) (30,000 HUF per person. This amount corresponds to the monthly minimum pension in Hungary.)



Monitoring needs and giving information

Monitoring needs is a very important part of HRCA's work. Approximately 2,000 interviews have been conducted by HRCA staff with refugees fleeing the war and remaining in Hungary in order to have a clear view about their needs. Additionally, we set up Information Corners. Those will provide help for anyone who wants to know more about everyday life in Hungary. At the same time HRCA also produced some printed material on issues like rights and protection of refugees under the laws in Hungary, labour law, taxation and revenue, education



and healthcare. In total, there have been 83 539 cases so far where HRCA provided refugees with information.

Accommodation

Since February, HRCA has provided more than 10,000 refugees with overnight accommodation. We transformed one of our buildings in Budapest into temporary shelter, while also cooperating with our host congregations and subsidising the rents for fleeing families who stay in Hungary. Besides temporary shelters, HRCA continue support 350 individuals in mid-term housing solutions (rental).

Integration and Community Hubs

We consider supporting the resettlement needs of fleeing families a very important part of our mission. We provide assistance to enrol their children in schools, organise community events, and support parents as they work to find jobs. In the meantime, Community Hubs are there in Budapest, where free public hotspots are available to users with Wi-Fi enabled laptops and wireless devices. Public computers and tablets are also accessible for beneficiaries loaded with educational apps appropriate for children. There are study rooms offered as well as community spaces specifically designed for children in different age groups.

Service delivered through and by the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia (RCT)

The most important and critical asset of RCT's social ministry is that pastors and their families stay in Transcarpathia and coordinate the effort of the local parishes to take care of all those who suffer from the war and are left behind: the elderly, the sick, the large families, the disabled and the internally displaced persons who unfortunately cannot return to their homes. The Church has a total of 108 congregations, led by 75 pastors, including 12 women. The Church has 64,000 members, from which many fled the country or were forced to leave their homes. Therefore they carry emotional and physical burdens. Families torn apart are struggling: husbands working abroad and afraid to return home, wives visiting them on weekends with the children.



Bishop Sándor Zán Fábián, Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Ukraine and Márton Juhász, CEO of HRCA

Accommodation, food and hygiene

The Reformed Church in Transcarpathia (RCT) has contributed in many ways to caring for refugees arriving from war-torn areas since the outbreak of the war. The Church provides internally displaced people with free accommodation for the short and the long term. Food for refugees has been prepared in schools, kindergartens, and parish halls. Healthcare and personal hygiene products, clothes and non-perishable food have also been provided, community events and joint worships organized.

The Reformed Church in Hungary supports RCT in its efforts with financing renovation works and equipment purchases at the facilities where refugees are accommodated. 41 reformed parishes received financial aid valuing between 200,000 HUF and 4.5 million HUF.

Mental care and care for children

The Church opened its community spaces for refugees and organised daycare and summer camps for children, and adults were offered pastoral consultation and care. Religious books and worship services were provided in the Ukrainian language. The Church sent gospel books for soldiers as well and delivered humanitarian and medical aid to war-torn areas like Kharkiv county, paying all costs of transportation and protection.

Work for local communities in Ukraine

In the midst of it all, the Church maintained its focus on the children of our congregations. Summer camps and preparatory weeks for confirmation have been held, providing a welcome diversion for them from the depressing weight of the war. Additionally, bomb shelters were



built to meet the newly set legal conditions for schools and nurseries to open and continue educational services. Social kitchen and bakery have been operating and humanitarian shipments organized to Central and Eastern Ukraine on a regular basis. Over 60% of the humanitarian aid provided by HRCA has been delivered directly to Ukraine.

Solidarity Fund

The Reformed Church in Hungary operates a Solidarity Fund for supporting the local congregations of the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia. This Fund accepts donations from all around the world, and thanks to the incredible generosity of the international community, it provided a 312.50 EUR/per family/month financial supplement for 80 ministers and church workers in Transcarpathia for 16 months. This ensures that the RCT continues to serve as an ‘implementing partner’ of HRCA, serving with its network, institutions, volunteers, and community members the wider society in Ukraine.





Appendix

Message from the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia, Ukraine



Najla Kassab, President of the World Communion of Reformed Churches was one of the 15 delegations paying a solidarity visit to Ukraine in the months of hardship

“The Reformed Church in Transcarpathia is an officially registered church in Ukraine, with historical roots dating back to the 16th century. It is composed of 3 dioceses, in them, we have a total of 108 congregations, led by 75 pastors, including 12 women. The Reformed Church has 64,000 members, nearly 8,000 young people participating in religious education and about 1,500 youngsters attending confirmation preparations. The Church runs and maintains 18 kindergartens, 4 secondary schools, a children's home, and 2 rehabilitation centres for disabled children. We also have a diaconal centre for complex social services including a bakery and social kitchen network, as well as a home for the elderly, volunteer fire brigades, a ministry to addicted persons, a home care service, a Roma school programme, 3 conference centres and a headquarter (Bishop's Office) in Chop for administration and coordination of all these activities.”



The war between Russia and Ukraine affects our lives in many ways and poses several challenges to us. Transcarpathia has hosted more than 400 000 refugees. Many received daily care in the institutions of the Reformed Church, where they have been welcomed and taken care of with great love and affection. We offer weekly worship services in Ukrainian. As we see the shocking pictures of destruction, we feel the responsibility to offer help to the regions in the most urgent need. In cooperation with other Protestant churches and charity organisations in Ukraine, we regularly send durable food and other in-kind donations to war-torn areas in Kharkiv, Kyiv, Borodyanka, Irpin, Sloviansk and many other places.

The greatest challenge for us is to keep the community together here in Transcarpathia and ensure the livelihood of those who faithfully stay in their homeland. Since many people left the country fleeing from the war, including men fearing conscription, families are torn apart, and many elderly and disadvantaged people are left behind. Despite the fears for their own future, our pastors and their families stay in Transcarpathia and coordinate the effort of the local parishes to take care of them all. The Church is working to ensure the survival and maintenance of educational and all other institutions here because it is the only way to provide people in Transcarpathia – including the Hungarian community – with a future. Although we carry emotional and physical burdens, we put our hope in the Almighty God, and we trust that He has a plan for us even in this time of war.

We are grateful to all who have contributed in any way to help us in our work, but especially to enable us to continue the ministry entrusted to us. May God's rich blessings be upon all our brothers and sisters, and all our partners and donors, whether individuals, churches or organisations around the world.

God may bless our lives and help us to end the war as soon as possible and to embrace a time of peace.”

Presidium of the RCT