



# HELPING UKRAINE

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THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

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10th February 2023

Dear friends,

it has been almost a year since we witnessed Russia's military attack on Ukraine.

In the following lines, we would like to briefly summarize what has happened so far with regard to our joint assistance organized by UMC Diakonia and the Czech District Office, as well as to outline our intention for its future direction - we would like to focus more on a specific area of medical assistance, in which we have been able to help effectively over the past months.

Alongside this centrally organised aid, of course, the individual activities and assistance of our members, local churches and organisations run in parallel.

We are very grateful to the donors and volunteers from the Czech Republic and abroad for their help so far - financial, prayerful and practical. Our close cooperation with the Bishops' Office of our Central Conference and our other foreign partners has been a great help. Many thanks to all of you!

## ■ Initial assistance

Over the past eleven months we have always tried to respond flexibly to current needs. At the beginning of the conflict, we provided asylum to 78 people from Ukraine. In up to 90% of cases, we managed to integrate these people into normal life in our country. 10% of them returned to their country in the fall of 2022.

Supporting people from Ukraine was not only about accommodation, but also involved a lot of administrative tasks, dealing with the authorities and, especially in the beginning, the very important provision of food and hygiene services. For this reason, a considerable involvement of some of our staff and additional staffing was also needed.

Another integral part of the support was the implementation of humanitarian aid on the territory of Ukraine. This mainly involved the delivery of food, medicine and clothing to specific locations. The transport of aid was carried out by reliable people from Czechia, in cooperation with our Ukrainian contacts.

Part of the whole process of helping was also the creation of a team to distribute the donated funds. The point of setting up the team was to focus on the really important projects and to distribute the funds efficiently, effectively and quickly.

## ■ Present situation

We have not seen any new arrivals of refugees from Ukraine for some time - in this respect the situation in the Czech Republic appears to be stable. Most of the Ukrainians who fled to the Czech Republic before the war are already self-sufficient and have no need for more humanitarian aid or other support. We know from experience that it is better to exclude these individuals and families from humanitarian aid after some time. These are not individuals and families who are unable to take responsibility and live a dignified and fulfilling life in another country, nor are they primarily socially maladjusted citizens of Ukraine - quite the opposite. For this reason, long-term support for these individuals and families is rather counterproductive and may create a stigma of incompetence, victimhood, etc.

Many Ukrainian women and men who are unable to fight feel a moral obligation and honour to remain in their homeland. This is despite all the traumas of a life full of obstacles and unsuitable conditions for living. Despite these hardships, these people are true patriots and do not want to leave their country because they would see it as a personal defeat. Despite all the suffering and the loss of their loved ones, they are very humbly devoted to God and their country. We can learn a lot from them in this regard.

## ■ Towards longer-term support

One of the current priorities of the UMC Diakonia and the Czech District Council is to facilitate longer-term projects with a long-term internal background and the support of a specific community (organization, foundation, parish, etc.). In addition to these projects, the final selection of which was the result of a careful assessment of a public open call during the last year, we continue to try to contribute to current needs arising from local churches, our organisations, etc.

## ■ Overview of our support to date

As of 31 January 2023, thanks to your donations from the Czech Republic and, for the most part, from abroad, the following amounts of aid have been provided and spent:

one-off projects in cooperation with parishes	272 171 CZK
direct humanitarian shipments to Ukraine	616 201 CZK
accommodation and food for those fleeing the war in Czechia	777 620 CZK
direct financial aid to Odessa	116 665 CZK
direct financial and material aid to the Kharkiv Sytenko Medical Institute and the FVSH field hospital (cooperation with Vít Samek)	1 026 892 CZK
staff costs and provision	838 374 CZK
long-term project Helping Hand of Jihlava UMC	277 000 CZK
long-term project Last Mile helping on the front line (cooperation with Petr Húšť)	800 000 CZK
long-term project to support the FVSH field hospital, first payment	240 000 CZK
total	4 964 923 CZK

Other currently financed long-term projects are the adaptation of housing in the recreational area Poušť u Bechyně and the insulation of the attic of the Valtice parsonage. We wish that both places will no longer have to serve those who fled the war and that the situation will soon calm down, but on the other hand we also want to be prepared for possible unfavourable developments - here we are also acting in accordance with earlier personal recommendations from the leadership of our country.

## ■ Objectives of our further assistance

Any relevant support to Ukraine is certainly important, but our priority has organically become assistance in the form of medical support - and this is the direction we would like to primarily continue in.

As you know from our previous newsletter, the ambulance Servatius we purchased, fully loaded with surgical and medical supplies, left for Ukraine on December 6, 2022. The ambulance itself and part of the cargo headed to Kharkiv to the Sytenko Institute of Spine and Joint Pathology, while another part of the cargo was unloaded at the First Volunteer Surgical Hospital near Ivano Frankivsk.

In the second half of January, based on the demand from the Ukrainian side, we purchased a used off-road vehicle, which we also sent to Ukraine.



Ukraine continues to bleed, and we would like to continue to help - to help rescue injured civilians and soldiers. We have already established credible personal relationships Czech-Ukrainian, we provide medical and other supplies, and our people transport these supplies directly to the needy places in Ukraine about once a month.

In order to be able to continue to help in this way, we need funds for medical supplies and possibly for the purchase of additional ambulances. Last but not least, we also need funds for one employee (a paramedic) who will coordinate the whole project and then take the necessary material to its destination. The total monthly cost of this employee is CZK 53 000 (exchange rate USD 1 – CZK 22 at the moment).

Thank you for your trust in us. We try to help as efficiently and thoughtfully as possible.

*Karel Nyerges, Martin Kukla*

For donations from abroad for our aid to Ukrainian refugees there are four ways:

- You may send your gifts through the Advance of Global Ministries, CZECH REPUBLIC IN MISSION TOGETHER (#00399A).  
Go to <https://umcmmission.org/advance-project/00399a/> and click on the red DONATE NOW button.  
In the box that reads "Designate Your Gift" enter that it is for Ukraine Refugees.  
The funds are sent through the bishop's office, and we receive the full amount because banking fees are covered by other sources. (Preferable.)
- You may use the payment gateway at our web site <http://umc.cz/>. Please select EN in the upper right corner for English, this will allow you to pay in US\$. The funds will be converted into CZK and go directly to the transparent account. (We would receive the funds quickly, but pay fees 2% of the amount to the bank.)
- You may still transfer your gifts to Czech crowns transparent account  
IBAN: CZ10 2010 0000 0026 0212 9572      BIC/SWIFT: FIOBCZPPXXX
- You may still transfer your gifts to US\$ bank account dedicated to aid to Ukraine  
IBAN: CZ04 2700 0000 0013 8741 5749      BIC/SWIFT: BACXCZPP

Please do not send checks to Czechia, it is extremely costly and slow to cash them here.