

Aid for Ukrainian War Refugees (Part VI)

The Hungarian Unitarian Church (HUC) and its charity organization, Gondviselés (in English: Providence) has been providing support for Ukrainian refugees in Romania and those internally displaced from the very first days following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In our previous reports, we summarized our activities from the beginning of the war until the summer of 2023. The current report captures our activities of the past twelve months (from 26 July 2023 to 15 August 2024). Updates, including photos and video reports, were shared on our organization's Facebook page.

(Source: Facebook link: <https://www.facebook.com/Unitarius.Gondviseles.Segelyszervezet>)

Fundraising

At the onset of the war, we launched an appeal to individuals, congregations, and private companies to help our fellow Ukrainians in need. We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the financial donations received. These donations from Unitarians and other donors across the Carpathian Basin, the United States, and Japan, as well as from other organizations and private individuals, by 15 August 2024 reached a total of **1,587,000 RON**, equivalent of **350,500 USD**. This amount does not include the estimated value of in-kind donations (materials, volunteer time, and services) provided, which are also significant. Since the start of the war, we have spent **1,542,000 RON** (approximately **340,500 USD**) on our aid activities. We continue to welcome donations, ensuring that they are used carefully and efficiently for Ukrainian people.

Accommodation, Meals, and Other Services for Refugees

Since the beginning of the war, we have been hosting around 70 Ukrainian refugees in our church properties and private accommodations in and around Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca. In addition, we also provided meals, in-kind donations, medical care, job placement, vocational counselling, and occasional administrative assistance. Many of them have become our organizational partners, helping us connect with Ukrainian refugee groups as well as with their communities back home directly and effectively.

Educational and Community Activities

A particular highlight of our humanitarian efforts was the Ukrainian kindergarten group launched on 5 April 2022 at the Unitarian Day Care Center in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca. The activities of the group of 25 children were led by two certified Ukrainian kindergarten teachers. According to available public data, we were among the first organizations to launch a Ukrainian-language kindergarten group internationally as well. The group ceased to operate after the second academic year, as some children had grown to school age, and most parents found alternative kindergarten arrangements for their children.

15 June 2022 marked the start of an elementary class with 22 Ukrainian children in the János Zsigmond Unitarian College, Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca, hiring two Ukrainian teachers. At the beginning of the 2022/23 school year, with the assistance of the Reformed (Calvinist) Church of Transcarpathia, we purchased a complete set of textbooks from Ukraine, enabling these refugee children to learn according to the curriculum of their home country. Learning to read and write in Ukrainian Cyrillic will help them reintegrate in the Ukrainian school system once the war comes to an end. The program continued till the end of the current academic year in June 2024. In July 2024 we organized a summer camp for 22 Ukrainian refugee children, just as we did during the previous two summers. In the camp, held in Cluj-Napoca, the Ukrainian teachers prepared colorful and entertaining educational programs, including

many craft activities and games. This "extension" of the school year is a great opportunity for the children's development while also providing significant support for working mothers.

Aid Deliveries

Since the beginning of the war, our aid deliveries have been directed towards Transcarpathia (Western Ukraine) and Southern Ukraine.

I. Transcarpathia

Between March 2022 and July 2023, we delivered 9 (nine) aid shipments to Transcarpathia. The Diaconal Coordination Office of the Reformed Church in Transcarpathia used part of the donations received to help thousands of refugees in the refugee centers it runs, and the rest was sent to the areas in Eastern Ukraine directly affected by the war.

Below is a summary of our two, most recent shipments to Transcarpathia:

1. **On 24 October 2023** we delivered 10th aid shipment to the Diaconal Coordination Office of the Transcarpathian Reformed Church in Berehove including the following items:
 - 1,500 kg of canned goods and sugar
 - 205 tourniquets
 - 25 computers to support the educational activities of students at the Técső Hungarian-language Reformed Lyceum.

The members of our delegation were: Kovács István, bishop, Zsófia Sztranyiczki, Executive Director of the International Convocation of Unitarian Universalist Women, Kiss Olivér (journalist of local newspaper), Darkó Attila, Rev. Vagyas Attila and Rev. Szabó László (leaders of Providence Charity Organization).

2. **On 16 July 2024** the 11th shipment handed over in Gelénes to the Diaconal Coordination Office of the Transcarpathian Reformed Church included:
 - Two and a half pallets of food (canned goods, flour, and cooking oil)
 - Vitamins
 - 12 tents, 13 camp beds, 24 sleeping bags, 12 self-inflating mattresses, and 1,000 adult diapers.

The members of our delegation were: Rev. Attila Vagyas, Vice-President of Providence Charity Organization, Zakariás Árpád staff member of Providence Charity Organization and Szabó Péter, volunteer.

Additionally, in **November 2023**, we contributed **9,500 euros** to the construction costs of the rehabilitation center of the Transcarpathian Reformed Church in Berehove.

II. Southern Ukraine

Southern Ukraine is the second destination of our shipments. Several refugee families from Southern Ukraine have found shelter in our church buildings in Kolozsvár/Cluj-Napoca, and in time have become our helpers in various organizational areas. They have been our main source of information about needs in the Odesa area. By July 2023, we had delivered seven shipments to this area, as well as a smaller shipment to Kharkiv in Eastern Ukraine in November 2022.

- **On 7-10 March 2024** we delivered our 8th aid shipment to Southern Ukraine, specifically to Odessa and to the town of Lyubasivska, located 170 kilometers away. This dangerous journey was once again undertaken by our volunteers, Vladimir and

Yulia Szkalszkij, refugees from Odessa now living in Cluj-Napoca. The purchase of food items delivered to the hospital in Lyubasivska was funded by the Kinderen In Nood foundation in the Netherlands, while the Gondviselés Charity Organization provided medicines and hospital equipment from targeted donations entrusted to us. The total value of this 8th aid shipment was **7,700 USD**.

In total, over the past 30 months, we have organized 19 aid deliveries: 11 to Transcarpathia and 8 to Southern Ukraine.

We are deeply grateful for the numerous donations from our supporters and the cooperation of our partners, which have made it possible to continue our aid efforts for Ukrainian war refugees and those in need who remain in the country!

May God grant peace to Ukraine, which has been suffering from war for two and a half years, and to all those enduring violence around the world!

Kolozsvár / Cluj-Napoca, 15 August 2024

The Leadership of the Gondviselés (Providence) Charity Organization

Media Resources:

- Video report about the tenth aid shipment to Transcarpathia (Berehove, 24 October 2023), with bishop István Kovács: [Our 10th shipment to Berehove, Western Ukraine \(youtube.com\)](#)