Emergency Update 1: Urgent Response to the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis
BACKGROUND AND SITUATION UPDATE

Since the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, at least 3.6 million Ukrainian civilians have sought refuge in neighboring countries. They bring few possessions and arrive in distress after long, difficult journeys. With host countries’ resources rapidly becoming overwhelmed, IsraAID deployed to Moldova to provide urgent humanitarian assistance, arriving just three days after the invasion. At least 371,000 Ukrainians have crossed into Moldova so far. Of those, at least 104,000 refugees remain in the country – including some 50,000 children.

IsraAID is currently active in Palanca at the Ukrainian-Moldovan border and in Chișinău, the Moldovan capital, where thousands of vulnerable refugees are living in temporary shelters. Our emergency response experts are providing urgent support in protection, education, and health, as well as access to essential relief items. Many of our team, including those who deployed from Israel as well as local staff, speak Ukrainian, Russian, or both. In recent days, our second emergency response team has begun initial, large scale logistics operations in Romania to ensure supply chains of essential humanitarian items to southern Ukraine.

In responding to this emergency, IsraAID is drawing on extensive experience working with refugees and displaced populations in Europe and worldwide. We currently have a long-term program supporting Afghan refugees in Albania, and support displaced populations in places with protracted and often neglected displacement crises such as Colombia, Kenya, South Sudan, and Uganda.
ESSENTIAL RELIEF ITEM DISTRIBUTIONS

At the border, IsraAID is distributing essential relief items to new arrivals. These include hygiene kits, containing toiletries and sanitation items to provide some relief after extended uncomfortable journeys; thermal gear amid freezing local temperatures; and first aid kits for refugees’ ongoing journeys. We are also supplying resilience kits for children, containing stress relief activities such as squeezy balls, finger puppets, coloring sheets and crayons; and baby kits, including diapers, cream, wipes, and pacifiers.

PROTECTION

IsraAID’s safe, warm tent at the border allows mothers to gather themselves and feed and change their babies, while IsraAID-trained volunteers engage children in recreational and resilience-building activities. In some of the main shelters in Chișinău, IsraAID’s Child Safe Spaces offer similar activities. Since children process their experiences through play, these spaces are a key way to help them build resilience and cope with their situation.

We are also training shelter staff and volunteers on crisis management, self-care, psychological first aid, and child protection, including referral pathways. Protection incidents often spike amid emergencies, and our team has identified a number of cases of concern. We are supporting local service providers and strengthening local mechanisms to ensure robust, rapid responses.
HEALTHCARE

We ran a clinic in Tuduro, where local families are hosting some 1,000 refugees, to ensure new arrivals could access basic healthcare supplies such as prescription medicines. We also provided checkups to those whose journeys took a physical toll.

PLANNED PROGRAMS

EDUCATION: Mitigating disruption in education offers a sense of normalcy to mothers, children, and teachers despite their displacement. IsraAID will partner with the Ministry of Education to support school and nursery staff to integrate refugee children whose families decide to reside in Moldova. We will also identify teachers from the arriving community and establish local temporary education centers for Ukrainian refugee children, to provide temporary educational solutions for children moving towards other destinations.

HUMANITARIAN LOGISTICS HUB: In Tulcea, Romania, IsraAID’s logistics and operations professionals are collaborating with local authorities, a local NGO, and Israeli tech start-up monday.com to streamline aid donations and ensure supply chains of essential humanitarian items, such as medical supplies, clothes, and food, to southern Ukraine. Together we will implement, standardize and digitize the warehouse management system, ensuring the process is smooth and the focus is on getting help where it’s needed with minimal disruption. This initiative is in the early stages - more updates to follow.
CURRENT LOCATIONS

Chișinău, the capital of Moldova: Providing psychosocial support for mothers and children in four refugee shelters

Tudora, where 1,000 refugees are staying with local families: Mobile medical clinic

Palanca, the busiest border crossing in Moldova: Safe spaces for mothers and children, urgent item distributions

Tulcea, Romania: With partners, creating a Humanitarian Logistics Hub that will streamline aid donations and ensure supply chains of essential humanitarian items to southern Ukraine

NEXT STEPS

This situation is extremely fragile and constantly developing. Our team is closely monitoring all changes. This includes the situation in Ukraine, which may affect the flow of refugees crossing different borders, as well as the locations of and support available to those who have already fled the country. We will continue to adapt our programs in Moldova and elsewhere as necessary.

Simultaneously, IsraAID will continue to deliver essential services for refugees in Moldova and help local authorities develop the capacity to support this vulnerable community long-term. We will also collaborate with our partners to create the Humanitarian Logistics Hub, ensuring those still in Ukraine receive vital medical supplies, clothes, food, and more.
'The five-year-old explained his drawing to me: "This is home. This [messy scribble] is how we escaped, and this is the tent, where we are now". The drawing is his travel diary. It gives him a way to express everything he's been through and process his trauma.'

- DINA DROR, PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT EXPERT, ON ISRAEL'S CHANNEL 13

- The Ukrainian refugee crisis is a women’s crisis - Jerusalem Post
- IsraAID CEO: Ukraine crisis is the worst I’ve ever seen - Israel21c
- Once Victims in Southeast Europe, Jews Come to Aid Fleeing Ukrainians - New York Times
- Russia-Ukraine war: A muddy escape from Ukrainian danger through Moldova - Jerusalem Post
- Mothers With Babies, Babushkas With Canes: A Day With the People Escaping Ukraine - Haaretz
- The emergency refugee response on Ukraine’s Moldova border - Jewish News
- What I learned helping refugees at the Moldova-Ukraine border - The Independent
- Ukraine war takes a heavy toll on refugees’ mental health - Ynet
- For Israelis, the outpouring of aid to Ukraine is personal - Israel21c

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