

JANUARY 20, 2023

CARE Ukraine Crisis Update

A year of war in Ukraine: Masha's story

By Sarah Easter and CARE staff



At the start of the war in Ukraine, three-year old Masha had to leave her two beloved cats behind when her family was forced to flee their home. Last February, the fighting pushed Masha, her parents, and her older sister out of eastern Ukraine. They became a small portion of what would become the nearly 6.5 million people internally displaced since the start of the war.

The family began a four-day journey from Sjewjerodonezk, their hometown in the Donbas region, to the train station in Lviv, where they hoped they'd be able to travel to safety somewhere in Ukraine further from the fighting.

At the end of February last year, Masha's family was among the 40,000 to 100,000 people who arrived in the western city of Lviv with the hopes of finding shelter. They could only take one suitcase of clothes when they fled, and they had to spend the night in the train station to stay warm.

Today, nearly a year later, there a few hundred people a day who still arrive at the station, fleeing the continued fighting. But this year, many of the displaced families won't be able to take the same comfort Masha's family did. The war's ongoing destruction of energy infrastructure has caused prolonged power outages throughout Ukraine, including at the Lviv station. While many of the families stay in Ukraine, many also make their way to places like Poland, where aid workers help them get temporarily settled.

"Refugees who come to us often don't have basic things with them," says Olga Leskiw, an international aid coordinator in Poland.

Masha and her family managed to make it to a shelter in Ivano-Frankivsk, two hours south of Lviv. CARE and its partners worked throughout the start of the war to renovate the shelter and to supply it with new furniture — mattresses, kitchen appliances, tables, chairs, and storage — and even to build a playground out front.

Masha now stays in a small room, only 20 square feet, which is just enough to accommodate her, her sister, her parents, and — after volunteers traveled the nearly 800 miles back to eastern Ukraine — the family's two rescued cats.

Over the past year, CARE and its partners have reached more than 960,000 people like Masha and her family across Ukraine, Georgia, Germany, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Slovakia. The response to this humanitarian crisis will be more important than ever in 2023. Already, as winter's onset deepens the level of need, attacks and damage to homes and infrastructure have left millions at risk of deadly temperatures that can drop below -4°F.

Comfort from the kitchen

Oksana, Ludmyla and Maria serve refugees a taste of home

By Von Diaz for CARE

In times of crisis, communities often come together to feed one another in ways that sustain and comfort. When war broke out, throngs of displaced people crossed into Przemyśl, Poland, from the nearby border with Ukraine.

Quickly, volunteers from the Ukraine House cultural center sprang into action, converting the elegant, more than 100-year-old theater into an emergency shelter. But as the war raged, the space proved too small. Volunteers and community leaders eventually built a larger shelter nearby, turning Ukraine House into a refugee operations center and meeting space. Because this is an emergency shelter, most residents will only stay for a couple of nights before they transition to a longer-term solution.

It's lunchtime, and residents are lined up expectantly, the smell of home-cooked food filling the room. Each day, classic Ukrainian dishes such as borscht, and vareniki—a vegetable-stuffed Ukrainian dumpling similar to pierogi—are lovingly prepared by Oksana Huzij.

Oksana is a mother of three and has been cooking since childhood. She learned from the women in her family, who taught her to make perfect vareniki. Among the most treasured of Ukraine's traditional dishes, these dumplings are typically stuffed with a mix of vegetables—cabbage, onions, mushrooms or grains, or mashed potato and cottage cheese. They're steamed and served with buttery mushrooms and onions and the region's signature condiment: sour cream.



Left to right—Ukrainian cooks Ludmyla Kancidajlo, Maria Vantukh, and Oksana Huzij.

Oksana has been managing the kitchen at the Ukraine House shelter since the beginning. Today it provides multiple daily meals for shelter residents. And the crisis couldn't be closer to her heart; she recently adopted a teenage girl whose mother was killed in a bombing in Ukraine, making her now a mother of four.

By Oksana's side are Ludmyla Kancidajlo and Maria Vantukh, who fill vareniki, boil water for noodles, prepare a creamy white meat sauce, and dish out borscht, the kitchen perfumed by the smell of simmering butter and onions. Ludmyla and Maria are themselves refugees, having fled Ukraine in recent months. In the kitchen, they have a seemingly effortless flow, perhaps replicating their own experiences of cooking with moms, aunts, and grandmas back home. But the faces of the people they serve say it all; the joy, warmth, and comfort of eating something familiar, made just for you.



BY THE NUMBERS

17,408,643

refugees fleeing Ukraine since Feb. 24¹
(Up 6.6% from Dec. 13 update)

5.914 million

internally displaced²
(Down 46.24% from Nov. 25 update)

Neighboring countries receiving refugee influx:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Poland: 8.86M ¹ | 4. Romania: 1.8M ¹ |
| 2. Russian Federation: 2.85M ³ | 5. Slovakia: 1.09M ¹ |
| 3. Hungary: 2.05M ¹ | 6. Moldova: 739K ⁴ |
| | 7. Belarus: 19K ⁵ |

11,144

civilians injured⁶
(Up 5.06% from Dec. 15 update)

747

healthcare facilities damaged or destroyed⁷ (Up 4.48% from Nov. 28 update)

2,528

education facilities damaged or destroyed⁸ (No new reporting since Sept. 2022)

SOURCES

¹UN High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), Jan. 10, 2023 ²International Organization for Migration (IOM), Dec. 20, 2022 ³UNHCR, Oct. 3 ⁴UNHCR, Jan. 8 ⁵UNHCR, Jan. 3 ⁶UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), Jan. 13 ⁷World Health Organization (WHO), Jan. 3 ⁸Multiple Sources, Sept. 21

