

Moldova and Ukraine



Since the start of the war in Ukraine we have received the most wonderful and generous support, both financial and practical. Because of this, in just three months we have sent three articulated trucks crammed to the roof with aid and further ones planned. In addition, we have sent over £65,000 direct to our contacts helping on the ground in Moldova and Ukraine as they can respond to immediate and changing needs.

We cannot thank our wonderful team of volunteers, or the fantastic people who have donated financially, enough for their commitment and help. Everyone has been truly unbelievable.

As you may know, the roots of our voluntary charity go back to 1990 with work in Romania. You may well remember the images from the orphanages in Romania at that time. Subsequent years saw us expand and support those in Moldova.

For over thirty years we have been supporting families, running Soup Kitchens, have educational and medical programmes as well as sending articulated lorries filled with Humanitarian Aid.

The start of the war in Ukraine has highlighted the country of Moldova and the generosity of the people there. Moldova is Europe's poorest country and has been described by the BBC as a European Country with African levels of poverty. Despite having so little they have shared their food and homes with those fleeing the bombs and missiles in Ukraine.

As a charity we have been supporting the refugees in Moldova since the start of the conflict. I was desperate to go to Moldova to help, I know the country very well and know hundreds of people there. Despite this desire to go and help, thirty years of experience told me I could do more here in England raising money and aid to send in 40 tonne trucks, (the most cost-effective way to take aid). There were plenty of local people in Moldova who spoke Russian and/or Ukrainian willing to meet people at the border and take them to safe accommodation. I would just be another mouth to feed and the cost of travel would be better used to buy food etc. that was, and continues to be, urgently needed.



In April, I decided it was time I should go to Moldova and see for myself how best to help and also to venture into Ukraine to see and speak with those suffering the effects of this war. Going to Ukraine we planned to take aid, speak to, and most importantly, listen and learn from those living there.

Venturing into Ukraine with Humanitarian Aid was quite an experience. Before leaving I was very concerned for my personal safety, this would be the first time I would be in a war zone. Would I be safe? Would I see my family again? Would I be injured? How would I get home? So many fears. - If these were my thoughts just imagine living every day in Ukraine in these conditions; especially worrying about your children. It is no wonder so many have fled.

Having crossed the border, I was very impressed with the quality of the main roads, far better than those around my home in Devon. As we drove deeper into Ukraine evidence of the conflict became more apparent, scars on the road from the tank tracks that had rumbled over them. Evidence of battles, burned shops and destroyed homes. The number of



army checkpoints increased; our papers being checked. Petrol and diesel difficult to find and big queues at the places who had fuel. A limit of 20 litres each. We topped up whenever we had the opportunity as we wanted to ensure we had sufficient to return to Moldova.

More and more army strongpoints, some by the road, others concealed in the woods.





The devastation I witnessed in the Bucha region was heart-breaking. We have all seen images on the television but this is nothing compared to the reality, houses, flats, schools, shops, everything, all indiscriminately destroyed in an attempt to cause terror. Nobody was safe, wherever you were you could be a target.

You will have seen the reports of mass graves in the region. The word execution seems to justify all the cowardly killings of innocent civilians, including women and children who had been murdered, many with their hands tied and dumped into the ground. Many terrifying stories on the action of Russian troops when the region was occupied, parents forced to watch as their children were raped or killed.

The worst image etched in my head was of a dead soldier, he had been burned and partially eaten by stray dogs, his arms largely gone, just the bones remained. His ribs exposed on his left where the dogs ripped the flesh from his body. He looked young, but still may have been a father, brother but definitely someone's son; now a partially eaten corpse.

NATO countries have rallied around and provided support in the way of guns and ammunition not to mention tanks, drones, missiles etc. This has been of huge benefit to those fighting Russian forces. We are a small and totally voluntary charity but nevertheless we have managed to achieve so much.

Since the war started many have come forward and stepped up with generous donations and support. Our volunteers have spent many hours collecting and sorting through tonnes of aid to ensure everything we send is of the highest quality. Everything has been quickly and efficiently distributed in Ukraine. Photo right, an ambulance from the municipal refugee centre is fully loaded with clothing, disability equipment and toys.

At the moment we are eagerly collecting aid especially non-perishable foodstuffs; tinned beans, meat, fish and dried food, pasta, rice, sugar.



On our April truck we carried a ventilator and oxygen concentrator amongst many other medical items. These were expressly requested by the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and obtained by a Consultant Anaesthetist from Torbay Hospital who asked us to arrange transport. Shortly after delivery it was being used to save lives in a newly formed Field Hospital.

Life for those civilians who have so far survived the bombings is difficult, even if their house or flat remains intact, many areas have no electricity or water so cooking has to be done outside over a fire.



It is quite bizarre to see the attempt to live a "normal life" under such conditions. People planting vegetables, trying to buy things from shops etc. Tractors working in the fields, cars and vans driving in the streets.

Our charity, a totally voluntary charity, has been helping in Eastern Europe for over thirty years but the challenge now is greater than ever. Our trucks make their way direct to those in need with lots of aid including several tonnes of food. Their greatest need at the moment is for food, clothing and other aid. As long as we have the money and the goods, we will continue taking humanitarian aid to Moldova and Ukraine.

100%

Of your donation will go to aid

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