



Fear not, for I am with you; Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you,  
Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.

- Isaiah 41:10

# WHY CRISIS RESPONSE?

As disasters increased around the world (a 400% increase between 2010 and 2020), communities where MAI served were impacted. We suffered along with brothers and sisters during tsunamis, floods, earthquakes, epidemics, and erupting volcanoes. We learned that there are proper ways to accompany those exposed to catastrophes that effectively combine wholistic and developmental approach, without removing community ownership and good use of available local resources in the moment of a disaster. We have also learned to become available to other organizations, as our partners on the ground, well trained and trustworthy, provide an excellent framework for assisting in distribution. Networking in disasters requires open minds, open hands, and open hearts. When the situation in the field is dire, there is no room for isolated and proud actors.

In 2021, MAI created a **'Crisis Response Fund' [U 020]** so we can respond within 48-72 hours when a CHE community reaches out to us for help. MAI participates through trainings and fundraising in each of the four stages of the Disaster Cycle: Response, Rehabilitation, Mitigation, and Preparedness.



**YOU ARE RECEIVING THIS REPORT BECAUSE YOU HAVE PARTNERED WITH MAI TO SUPPORT THESE RELIEF RESPONSES. THANK YOU FOR JOINING US WITH FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND PRAYER FOR THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF MINISTRY IN 2022.**

# UKRAINE CRISIS

In February of 2022 the war in Ukraine began. Over 14 million people were forced to leave their homes. The majority of those fleeing were women and children. This was the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world. Millions of people did not have access to basic services, including water, electricity, and heating, while food supplies ran low. The war also provoked significant protection challenges as civilians were exposed to shelling, armed violence, mines, family separation, looting or eviction, and human trafficking. The safety risks for women and girls were, and still are, extremely worrying, as well as the situation of the most vulnerable groups (children, older persons, those living with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+).

**Since March 1st, 2022, MAI has responded in three phases.** The first one was immediate support to one of our missionaries, Zuzana Polackova, to go to the Slovakian-Ukrainian border to assess needs of those arriving from Ukraine. The second phase included two partnerships: 1) to help PROEM Poland, as they were providing shelter to refugees in their campground facilities, 2) we partnered in Slovakia, through Zuzana's contacts, with the Cirkev Bratská (Church of the Brothers). Through them facilitated the purchasing of a new van to transport people and supplies to and from the border.



# UKRAINE CRISIS (CONT.)

MAI sent additional funds later in the year as the needs in Ukraine and among refugees taking shelter in Slovakia continue to grow. The third phase included a visit to re-assess the situation, and meet our Slovak partners on the ground.



We, Dr. Bibiana Mac Leod, Technical Advisor in Disaster Response at MAI, along with Zuzana Polackova, Horticultural Therapist and co-worker at MAI in diverse special projects, traveled to Slovakia during the month of November 2022 to visit participating churches and listen to stories. Refugees and responders have been deeply transformed by this crisis. We want to be their voice and bring them closer to those that read this report. **Though the flow of refugees across the border has decreased, the work has intensified.** Between taking care of those that decided to remain in these cities and providing help to Ukrainian partners serving Internally Displaced People, (IDPs), work has evolved and needs continue to increase. Exhausted men and women continue to serve refugee families, despite many other responsibilities, like working to support their families, pregnant moms, and busy pastors. We went to listen, to walk alongside them for a bit, and become available for whatever assistance they may need. **We are honored to share a few stories with you.**



# UKRAINE CRISIS (CONT.)

**Terka and her husband** have four children between 3 and 10 years old. Her brother is married to a Ukrainian lady, so they have many contacts that ask for help often. They have been involved in going to the border to pick up people, finding accommodations, helping, or paying for them to take a train, or find a job, registering with the government, or just be refreshed at the church facilities before moving on to the next destination.

*Terka said, "We established a children's club with 30 kids. I wanted to give the children more than just play in the backyard. I shared stories and we made crafts. We sang songs together in both languages with some hand language. This helped children to connect and united the community of these mothers from both countries."*

*Terka's husband said, "I have been in Ukraine several times and shortly after you cross the border you see billboards informing about the dangers and consequences of the war. The billboards at the entrance of every town show pictures of men that will not come back to the village. The village does this to honor the men they lost. When we travel, we go to help a church located 600 km from Michalovce. The family we stayed with on our last trip did not have electricity, nor heat or hot water. The people of the church were very happy to see us and to receive the humanitarian help. We brought non-perishable food. Currently they need generators and medical supplies. At present, there is gasoline and diesel, but they are also looking for power banks and inverter systems. There is still much help needed."*

# UKRAINE CRISIS (CONT.)

**Ruslan**, the father of two children with disabilities, is the coordinator of a storehouse in Ukraine. He uses the van that MAI sent money to purchase to distribute aid to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Ukraine. The church we are assisting looks after children of IDPs, providing schooling for them. We bring in clothing and food. This is the model we are using until it no longer works. Every time we visit, we continue brainstorming what is going on and how can they plan future activities.

**Veronika** is the director for the refugee center at the old high school. She said, *"We are housing 76 people in the classrooms, but we have had up to 136. They share rooms, divided by cubicles, giving some privacy to bed spaces. They have a common kitchen and few rules for living together. It has been challenging teaching them how the system works and trying to direct them to the different offices for diverse services, with scheduling and challenges in communication."*

**Vladimir**, came from Cernihiv, north of Ukraine, 60 km away from Belarus and 70 km from Russian border. He said, *"I used to be an aeronautic Engineer. 75% of my town has been destroyed since the war started. My house is no longer there. I have two daughters, my wife and my dog. I am 66 years old and have to start from scratch, I just got a job at the local hospital as a janitor. My daughter could not remain here, she decided to go back home and try to rebuild."*



# UKRAINE CRISIS (CONT.)

**Halina**, a Ukrainian translator in Michalovce who was 7 months pregnant, said, *"I have a childhood friend who was shot and is missing a hand and a leg, and another one that died as a drone killed the whole truck loaded with soldiers, including another friend. We hear that boys are afraid to be on the street as soldiers can come and call them to war and they have to go. They are recruiting from 18 to 60 years old. For now, men with three kids or more are excused, but they are starting to call those people too."*

**These were just a few of the many people we have been honored to help with your support.** Our message by going where they are suffering is: *"We are here, hold on, we are here with you, and this is a little price for us to pay. If there is a risk for us to go and pray with you, we will pay for it."*

For more details on the various types of support provided to refugees in 2022, please scan the QR code below to visit the blog or visit [www.medicalambassadors.org/crisis-response-ukraine/](http://www.medicalambassadors.org/crisis-response-ukraine/)



# OTHER RELIEF PROVIDED IN 2022

**Pakistan:** Torrential monsoon rains triggered the most severe flooding in Pakistan's recent history in October, 2022, washing away villages and leaving almost 10 million children in need of immediate, lifesaving support, and at increased risk of waterborne diseases, drowning and malnutrition. Hundreds of thousands of homes were damaged or destroyed, while many public health facilities, water systems and schools were destroyed or damaged. MAI provided mosquito nets, blankets, and rations. Rebuilding of fallen homes in new communities have led to CHE Awareness Raising Workshops. Two of our CHE lessons are key: "Relief & Development," and "Needs & Resources." A Bible story that God has used multiple times in our sharing during this crisis is in 2 Kings 8:5, the story of Elijah and his servant Gehazi. Through this all, people are very receptive and aware of our message: "We love you because Jesus loves you."



**Guarani Community, Bolivia:** In Bolivia (population 12 million) there are around 96,000 Guarani, an indigenous group with distinct languages and traditions who live primarily in the southeastern lowlands. MAI has been partnering with a Guarani community leader named Orfa Gomez Parra, for nearly a decade. Orfa facilitates relational connections and CHE trainings with Guarani communities, churches and individuals in Bolivia and Argentina. These communities have been impacted by the effects of Covid, including an increased rate of death amongst the elderly and an increase in seasonal migration for work. Through MAI, and the Alto Isoso Covid Response, community health center medicines were restocked in the central Guarani communities of Tamachindi Alto Isoso (300 families) and Rancho Nuevo Bajo Isoso (200 families).

