THE UKRAINE CRISIS
Communities at the forefront of a humanitarian response
The last two years have had a devastating impact for the civilians impacted by the war. Uncertainty is a constant part of daily life. Attacks on essential services like water and electricity continue to make life difficult.

There has been overwhelming international support for those affected by the war in Ukraine, but it is affected communities themselves who are providing the majority of aid to individuals who need it. And while people’s needs have changed since the

“When you work directly with people in an organization in a human-centered way, you build these networks of support - you learn how not only to listen, but also to hear people. When you do things this way, all the external changes and challenges become not as crucial as they might otherwise be.”

Anna Leonova, Executive Director, Gay Alliance Ukraine

People assisted as of 29 February 2024

- **POLAND** (13 partners)
  - 703,486
- **UKRAINE** (17 partners)
  - 1,059,708
- **MOLDOVA** (5 partners)
  - 247,287
- **ROMANIA** (8 partners)
  - 74,557

- **2,085,038**
- **62.3%** women, **37.7%** men
- **0.1%** non-binary
beginning of the crisis, the work these communities need to do to support people has not gone away.

Following the escalation of the war in Ukraine, local and national organizations were some of the first on the ground responding to their communities’ needs, both within Ukraine and in neighboring countries, and two years on, they are still at the forefront of responding.

These organisations have played a vital role in the humanitarian response and have a deep knowledge of their communities and how to serve them. Communities themselves continue to rise to extraordinary levels to support each other too – but war takes a heavy toll.

By partnering with women-led organisations, women’s rights organisations and organisations supporting the LGBTQIA+ community, Roma communities and other marginalised groups, Oxfam’s humanitarian response has targeted those at risk of being left behind by the international humanitarian response.

Since February 2022, Oxfam has worked with 43 partner organisations in Ukraine and neighbouring countries to support communities who have been particularly affected by the conflict. Which communities and what type of support they need continues to change over time.

Oxfam is guided in how we deliver aid by humanitarian principles of humanity, impartiality, independence, and operational neutrality, and strives to use a feminist approach. We are committed to building equitable partnerships with organizations who are close to and understand the needs of those affected by the war.
We are incredibly grateful to the generosity of our supporters who have enabled us to reach over 2 million people in Ukraine, Poland, Romania and Moldova and provide them with critical humanitarian assistance since the escalation of war in February 2022.

Our Humanitarian Approach
We’ve continued to build a humanitarian response to the war that is led by local organisations in Ukraine and Poland. Our approach is aligned to the sector-wide ambitions to reform the way that international aid agencies work – shifting the balance so that local and national organizations are in the lead.

Local leadership as a foundational pillar of Oxfam’s new humanitarian approach
Ukrainian organisations and civil society were the first to respond to the humanitarian needs in February 2022 and continue to provide crucial support for communities affected by the war. Despite this, international actors often dominate decision-making in the response and absorb the overwhelming majority of humanitarian funding. These problematic dynamics exist in crisis responses all over the world.

Oxfam’s Ukraine response has been guided by commitments we’ve made to try to shift this dynamic and make sure that communities can drive the humanitarian response. To do this, we have prioritised quality partnerships with local actors in the four countries where Oxfam has responded.

And it goes beyond principles – we’ve seen how putting local actors in the driver’s seat isn’t just the right thing to do, it is the best way to make sure people get the help they need.

We have particularly tried to focus on partnering with organisations led by and for marginalised communities, including organisations led by women, LGBTQIA+ people, and Roma people. These organisations are rooted in their own communities and understand their needs – which is especially important for these groups, whose needs are often overlooked by mainstream responses.

ONE OF THE GRAND BARGAIN COMMITMENTS IS TO INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING THAT IS CHANNELED TO NATIONAL AND LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS TO 25%.

From February 2022 to February 2024, we spent €41.6 million in our humanitarian response to the Ukraine crisis.

49% has been spent supporting national partners in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and Moldova.

Over the past decade, there has been widespread recognition that local actors are often in the best place to respond to the needs of affected communities, but due to power imbalances between international and local and national actors, these actors have often been underfunded and undervalued by the humanitarian system. Oxfam is a signatory to a number of international commitments, including the Grand Bargain, Charter for Change and Pledge for Change which guide our approach to crisis response. In 2018 we adopted a revised humanitarian approach that centers equitable partnering and local humanitarian leadership, along with gender and feminist principles.
The local organizations we work with have often been working in their own communities for a long time, are trusted within their communities, and have unique experience and access to those in need. Because of this, the projects they implement go directly to addressing real needs and the factors that block people from accessing aid. Also, since they are present on the ground, they also respond quickly and flexibly – which has been vital in the Ukraine response, where needs often change quickly as the conflict evolves.

Two years at the Forefront

Local women-led organizations, women’s rights organizations, and LGBTQIA+ led organizations have been at the forefront of providing aid to communities affected by the war in Ukraine. Since the beginning, they have been helping those who need it most – including marginalized and vulnerable communities.

It was quite challenging to shift to humanitarian activities, but we feel like we overcame this challenge quite quickly – and mostly because we work with a feminist approach. The person is always in the center of our activities – not some process, but a person first.

Anna Leonova, Executive Director, Gay Alliance Ukraine

Two years on from the escalation of the war, Oxfam spoke with some of the people leading the work of these organizations, seeking to understand how the humanitarian crisis has impacted them, personally and as organizations, and their needs and priorities for the future. We produced a public paper documenting the outcomes of these conversations, ‘Two Years at the Forefront: Exploring the needs and experiences of women-led, women’s rights, and LGBTQIA+ led organizations two years into the Ukraine humanitarian response.’

Out of this horrendous crisis, we have seen some opportunities we hadn’t had before. We set up a rape crisis center – Poland’s first – supporting both Ukrainian refugees and Polish women. This was with support of a couple of humanitarian organizations as well as non-humanitarian supporters. I don’t think we would have imagined we’d be able to do that before. It was something we wanted to do for a long time, but the resources just weren’t there.

Feminoteka (Poland)

We would like that when we decide crucial issues, important issues for the Ukrainian community, that the skill and knowledge of the local communities be put as a priority.

Maryna Kurochkina, President, The Tenth of April (Ukraine)

We found that these organizations are facing key challenges in continuing to sustain their vital role in responding to humanitarian needs; that there is a need for greater investment in their voice and agency as decision-makers in the humanitarian response; and that the humanitarian community needs to be flexible in their support to enable these organizations to continue working holistically and sustainably.

Just like many cultures, Roma culture is also patriarchal. So this kind of leadership was really hard for me. At the beginning of the war when I started to work with humanitarian aid, some people would threaten me. One man said, ‘you can’t work here, we won’t allow you.’ But at the same time, the Roma community supported me, realizing the importance and scale of my work, and today our organization has four regional offices and works in seven regions of Ukraine with the Roma community.

Bielova Anzhelika, President and Founder of NGO ‘Voice of Romni’ (Ukraine)

We have presented this paper to a range of actors working in the humanitarian response in order to help spread the word about the needs of local organizations and what we as the international community can do to better support them. You can read the full report here.
Our partnership approach: Shifting Power

As an international organization providing humanitarian assistance in crises all over the world, Oxfam recognizes that traditional humanitarian approaches have often failed to provide dignified, inclusive assistance to all those who are affected by crisis. These approaches can also undermine the leadership of local actors who are most often the first and most effective responders to a crisis.

With no existing presence in the region and recognizing the strong civil society that had already begun responding to the needs of affected communities, Oxfam decided to implement a partner-led humanitarian response model for Ukraine. This prioritized partnerships with local and national actors. Partnering with local and national actors in the Ukraine response enabled an ambition to and is part of shifting the balance of power, as well as an instrument to most effectively address the needs and rights of the most vulnerable populations.

We have also continued to push policy makers in the international humanitarian community to make sure that the humanitarian response in Ukraine is driven by organizations who are embedded in their communities.

We are committed to continuously learning how we can build partnerships that enable and strengthen local leadership. This means that we take a tailored approach with each partner to build equitable and quality partnerships, and we are trying to be flexible and improve our own systems and processes to make them work better for our partners.

We know we can always improve, so we continue to reflect on our approach. In the recently commissioned partnership learning review, partners said they found Oxfam’s partnering processes to be light, flexible and adaptive to the ever-changing context and the tailored, context-specific capacity support to the partners was laudable. Oxfam continues to work on measures to ensure that its good intentions to shift power does not unintentionally re-enforce unequal power dynamics by improving its communication with its partners, encouraging anonymous feedback mechanisms among others.

As of February 2024, Oxfam has worked with 43 organizations in Ukraine, Poland, Romania, and Moldova, whose core missions are to provide support to the most vulnerable populations, such as legal aid, social assistance and integration activities. Among these organizations are:

- 4 Women-led organizations and women’s rights organizations
- 3 Anti-trafficking organizations
- 4 Community-based organizations
- 2 LGBTQIA+ organizations
- 3 Roma-led organizations
- 1 Youth organization
The key principles of a partner-led response

Oxfam believes that working in partnerships with local and national organizations makes our humanitarian and early recovery efforts more efficient and effective. Our partnership model is driven by the following principles:

➡️ Joint responsibility
Partners and Oxfam take mutual responsibility in setting the priorities of intervention based on humanitarian needs and have mutual accountability. Risks are proportionally shared and not just transferred.

➡️ Co-creation
Partners move from a role of implementing Oxfam’s plan to a role of leading in designing and prioritizing the interventions based on evolving needs of the affected populations.

➡️ Flexibility and adaptability
As partners are leading the implementation of programs, they have the liberty to adjust targets, budgets, and timelines according to changing needs – provided we are aligned on operational modalities and quality standards.

➡️ Complementarity
Oxfam acknowledges that local and national organizations have strong capacities. Where partners are less familiar with humanitarian work, we provide financial and technical support as required, to ensure quality and accountability of the response.

➡️ Equity
Oxfam behaviors and practice in this response shift from a contractual partnership to an enabling way of working that is built on trust. The focus is on relationships as much as on contractual obligations.
FUNDING AND EXPENDITURE

Total funding for the Ukraine response as of February 2024: €61,218,231

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OGB (1)</td>
<td>€43,212,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONL (2)</td>
<td>€7,560,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ODE (3)</td>
<td>€4,246,793</td>
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<tr>
<td>OBE (4)</td>
<td>€3,363,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other affiliates (5)</td>
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Total expenditure as of 29th February 2024: €41,625,994

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>€22,629,699  (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>€11,021,584  (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>€4,156,988   (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moldova</td>
<td>€4,156,988   (9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure by theme:

- Water and sanitation and shelter: €9,504,268 (23%)
- Staffing, compliance, training & support (Oxfam): €10,652,117 (26%)
- Protection: €3,993,599 (10%)
- Food and livelihoods: €4,584,968 (11%)
- Cash distribution: €6,971,013 (17%)
- Staffing and support (partners): €5,920,029 (14%)

(1) Oxfam Great Britain’s contribution includes funds received through the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC) (€40m) and Ukraine Response Appeal Funds (€3m).
(2) 100% of Oxfam Novib’s contribution come from funds received through the consortium appeal fund Giro 555. The total contribution to Oxfam from Giro 555 is €12,000,000. Contributions to the following organisations were made for their work in Ukraine at the start of the conflict: Action Contre la Faim, HEKS/EPER, Norwegian Refugee Council, People in Need. €7,560,000 was dedicated to work by the Oxfam Ukraine response across Ukraine, Poland, Moldova and Romania.
(3) Oxfam Germany’s contribution includes funds received through the consortium appeal fund BEH (Bündnis Entwicklung Hilft).
(4) 100% of Oxfam Belgium’s contribution come from funds received through the consortium appeal fund 12-12.
(5) Other affiliate contributions came from Oxfam Australia, Oxfam Quebec, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam Intermon, Oxfam Denmark, Oxfam France, Oxfam New Zealand, and Oxfam America.
Our work in Ukraine
The last two years have had a devastating impact. The UN has reported at least 10,000 civilians have been killed since February 2022, with the actual figure likely to be far higher. Civilians continue to pay the price for this war.

Villages, towns and cities have been bombed extensively. This has resulted in the destruction of homes, schools, hospitals, and other essential civilian infrastructure - the building blocks of daily life. Humanitarian aid continues to be an essential lifeline for millions of people in Ukraine.

Marginalised communities and those closest to the front lines in the East and South have the most acute needs. Women, Roma and LGBTQIA+ communities, the elderly and people with disabilities are experiencing unique impacts of the war and face additional barriers to the support they need, including for gender-based violence.

Protecting people is one of the core objectives of humanitarian action in Ukraine, because in situations of violence or crisis, people often can’t access their usual systems of safety and support. It includes all activities aimed at ensuring that the rights of the individuals affected by the war are fulfilled, in line with laws that guarantee those rights. It involves improving people’s safety during situations of conflict and crisis and protecting them from violence through, for example, providing psychological support, helping safe evacuation, or providing information on services and civil documentation.
We have in total 15 humanitarian hubs. Some of them are for children, some mix for children and adults, and one for ‘Gender based violence.’ Six of these hubs were created with Oxfam. One was forced to close because of escalation, because it’s very dangerous and children were evacuated from that area. Another one was destroyed by an aircraft bomb. 

Lina Lashenko, Partnership manager, ‘Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv’

Over the winter, damage to infrastructure meant that many struggled to access basic essentials including heating, electricity, and water. Our partners have provided community spaces with heating and electricity where people can seek refuge and, importantly, come together. These spaces have provided both practical and psychosocial support and have been vital in supporting people to cope with the loss and trauma of war – and the daily uncertainty that comes with the threat of attacks.

Oxfam has been working with partners to identify how to adapt our response to the changing needs as the dynamics of the war shift. By working with organisations who are embedded in their communities, together we have been able to identify what changes are needed and responded accordingly.

Despite their resilience, war has taken a heavy toll on the civilian population. It has affected communities themselves and local organisations who are on the front line of the crisis response. With no immediate end to the war in sight, it’s essential that we continue to shift power and access to flexible, sustainable funding to these organisation - who are embedded in their communities - to enable them to continue the vital work they are doing. Over the last 2 years, Oxfam has worked with 17 partner organisations in Ukraine and together we’ve reached one million people, with access to basic services like water, sanitation, hygiene, psychosocial support, cash, livelihood support and more.

“Hello! I am from the city of Izyum. My happy life was cut short, like many people, when the war began. On the morning of March 9, 2022, Russian planes dropped aerial bombs on my five-story building, the house split in half. My neighbors and I were in the basement at that time and miraculously survived. And the wandering around the world began, it’s even hard to remember.

I am a man of respectable age, my roots have returned here, in Izyum, I rent a house, but the nightmares I experienced did not let go. And, fortunately, I learned about the Charitable Foundation “Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv”. I became a regular visitor, and my life changed! I felt warmth and care from the foundation’s employees. I don’t miss gymnastics classes for the elderly.”

Community Member, Izyum.
Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv – facing conflict as a community

‘Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv’ (PHK) was founded in 2022 with the aim of providing hot meals for the population of Kharkiv, but as soon as war started to affect the region in 2022, the needs of the population changed. The organisation adapted to support communities affected by the war, including those people returning to find their homes and communities damaged or destroyed.

Due to the severe damage to infrastructure, the population of Kharkiv region continues to face problems covering the most basic of needs: such as the purchase of food, heating homes, the ability to warm up and prepare hot meals, and there is also a lack of basic hygiene items. The needs of the population are high – with 1.6m in Kharkivska oblast requiring humanitarian assistance – and weather can be extremely cold with lows of -18°c in January this year.

In response, PHK have established 6 community hubs, where communities have access to humanitarian assistance provided by PHK and other organisations, all in heated spaces with internet access. The hubs have been used for distribution. The hubs were established in locations where communities have problems with electricity supply, heating and access to food, including ones in close proximity to the front lines.

These community hubs have been hosting psychosocial support activities to respond to the special needs of a population deeply impacted by the conflict. These activities extend beyond traditional therapy and encompass a diverse range of activities. Such as: Art therapy, music therapy development of children’s emotional sphere, dealing with fears, as well as awareness sessions on gender-based violence. As of February 2024, PHK have reached over 59K individuals through activities implemented in these community hubs with Oxfam’s support – this includes men, women and children (70% were women and girls).

"An acquaintance brought me to ‘Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv,’ I am very grateful to those who organized this institution! There are so many interesting things here, friendly people meet you, you feel cared for and there is no time to think about the war for all the interesting activities. Thanks to the team for the ‘Neurographics,’ which turned my feelings in a completely different direction, and I like it. Here it is like returning to childhood: We glue, sculpt, draw, embroider, it’s very distracting. I began to sleep soundly, there was no time to read the news, I had to register on time for the next interesting event. At such a time, it is very important to feel cared for.”

Community Member, Kharkiv Oblast.
Gay Alliance Ukraine (GAU) was established in 2009. GAU is the largest LGBTQIA+ organization in Ukraine and one of the leading LGBTQIA+ organizations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Since the escalation of war, GAU has opened three new offices in Kyiv, Odesa and Vinnytsia with support from Oxfam, these offices operate as centers for the LGBTQIA+ community. These centres have become safe spaces for mutual support, adapting to the new daily realities of war and learning. GAU have reached over 1K individuals through these community centers, many people visit multiple times.

For a community that doesn’t always feel safe and respected for who they are, the war has added another level of feeling unsafe, these centres are vital spaces where people can come together to reclaim some sense of safety and joy.

Since December 2022, GAU has conducted over 350 events and meetings such as information sessions, lectures, trainings, art-therapy, mutual support groups, movie screenings, table games and others activities aimed at improving socialization, helping individuals to adapt and empowering the LGBTQIA+ communities in Kyiv, Odesa and Vinnytsia.

Many households in Ukraine face challenges in accessing warm clothes for winter and access to heating remains a concern too, with some households lacking gas and electric heating systems, most notably in the oblasts closer to the front line. Since the war escalated, in winter, these community centers have been available for the community during blackouts to ensure that people can charge their mobile phones, stay informed about the safety situation, have a hot drink and stay warm.
**GAU LGBTQIA+ Storybook**

Since Feb 2022, as Gay Alliance Ukraine focused on responding to the needs and challenges of the community that were caused by war, it became noticeable that the representatives of the community felt that they were not represented enough by humanitarian organizations and lacked a platform to record and share their experience. GAU spoke to members of the LGBTQIA+ who had a strong desire to share their experiences within society, because of war and with Russian forces. This was compiled into a storybook, which includes interviews with representatives of different sexual orientations and gender identities.

**Art remains our way of being visible in a situation where full openness is a danger for the book’s heroes.**

**GAU storybook team**

**Behind the stories of the people interviewed are thousands of others. During the war, GAU has conducted about a thousand interviews with LGBTQIA+ people who have found themselves in crisis as a result of the war. Almost half of them are from Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson regions. This became the basis for the storybook.**

**GAU storybook team**

GAU wanted to shine a light on the experiences of LGBTQIA+ people in Ukraine and show that the community share the same problems, thoughts and worries as others, but also have additional struggles as representatives of this community, such as higher risk of discrimination, struggles with access to essential services, problems with adapting and lack of legal protections which support LGBTQIA+ couples and their families – and an overall fear of being targeted by Russian forces. The organisation also wanted to challenge the belief that all members of the LGBTQIA+ had moved abroad because of the war – when many remained.

Illustrations from the GAU LGBTQIA+ storybook. Credit: Gay Alliance Ukraine
The night before the invasion began, my girlfriend and I had been to the cinema, we hadn’t suspected a thing. In the morning, I got dressed and took off for work. I was on the bus when I realized something wrong was going on. I could tell from people’s faces.

LGBTQIA+ community member, Kherson

The campaign was launched in December 2023. It included publications in online media, two in-person events for GAU community members in Kyiv and Odesa; and an exhibition named “Those tempered at daybreak: LGBTQIA+ eyewitness reports of the war in Ukraine” – which ran for a month and the LGBTQIA+ community and public were able to enjoy safely – featuring stories and portraits of campaign characters in the Odesa National Fine Arts Museum, with an audio-book and e-version of the exhibition available too.

They (Russian soldiers) also asked if I knew any gays. Well, they didn’t say “gays” exactly... They used a completely different word. I think if they’d found out that I had anything to do with LGBTQIA+ people, I wouldn’t have gotten out of there.

LGBTQIA+ community member, Kherson

They included poster portraits of those interviewed, with short descriptions and QR codes leading to the full text and audio versions. Over 100 people visited the exhibition on opening day.

I have a stable job, I live with my beloved. Unfortunately, we cannot live openly, Ukraine is quite a homophobic country. As for our town, the attitude towards LGBTQIA+ here is neutral because no one advertises their ties to the community.

LGBTQIA+ community member, South of Odesa region

The campaign increased visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community by creating a platform where people could share their experiences - in a safe and dignified way - and have a discussion with other members of the community. The exhibition became the first art poster exhibition during the invasion which showcased the experience of ordinary representatives of the LGBTQIA+ community, beyond the armed forces or a volunteering context. It also showed the increased ability of institutions, like Odessa National Fine Arts Museum to resist the hatred that still exists – and increase public support, which has shone through in positive comments under publications, and discussions in the exhibition opening.
Since the escalation of the war in February 2022, 6.5 million refugees from Ukraine have been recorded globally, with nearly 6 million recorded in Europe as of February 2024. Those displaced by the conflict often require immediate support to access housing, education, and medical services, all while facing uncertainty over what their future holds.

While the number of refugees from Ukraine who are in Europe remains high, where people move to, how long they stay, and whether they decide to move on is evolving as the war in Ukraine continues. The number of refugees who have returned to Ukraine is estimated at around 4.45 million, with many moving in and out of Ukraine on a semi-regular basis.

Since February 2022, Oxfam has worked with 13 partners in Poland, to support refugees to access vital humanitarian assistance. We have prioritised partnerships with organisations who work directly with marginalised communities who often face additional barriers in accessing aid.

Oxfam’s focus has been to respond to the immediate needs of communities affected by the Ukraine crisis and to ensure that their rights are fully respected and upheld. We have worked closely with women’s rights organisations, LGBTQIA+ organisations, and Roma-led organisations, to ensure that these groups do not get left behind in the refugee response.
In Poland, we continue to focus support on refugees who face additional barriers to accessing the services they need. Over the last 2 years, together with partners we’ve reached 703K people in Poland.

By partnering with organisations led by and for people from these communities, we can better create a connection of trust to understand and address these challenges. We also support these organisations to raise the voices of people who are too often pushed to the margins.

In March 2022, the EU activated the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) for the first time - using this mechanism to collectively provide people fleeing the war in Ukraine with a range of essential rights across all EU countries. Supported by national governments, this has been a huge leap in refugee policy, enabling refugees to access – relatively quickly - temporary residency, employment, housing, medical assistance and social welfare, and education for children. On the other hand, as the TPD continues to be extended by only one year at a time, this creates uncertainty for many. Over 4.2 million people were under temporary protection in the EU at the end of February 2024, with 957K in Poland alone.

“The Ukrainian women we work with are now running different support groups, they are integrating the Ukrainian community, women refugees around themselves. It is great to observe how they open up and benefit from our experience. They have our support, and it really works. You can see how this network is widening, and it’s very, very nice...”

Monika Milewska, Ukrainian aid programme coordinator – Feminoteka

I think something very important about the Towards Dialogue Foundation is it is Roma people helping Roma people. People from your community, people who understand you, people with the same cultural background helping you – this is important.

Cecylia Jakubczak, Head of Communications, Foundation Towards Dialogue
Foundation Towards Dialogue – Championing and supporting the Roma Community

Foundation Towards Dialogue is a Roma-led organisation which celebrates, champions and supports the Roma community in Poland. They run a community centre in Warsaw, with the support of Oxfam. The Roma Community Centre is the hub for all the activities the organisation run and it’s crucial to achieving the overall goals of the project and supporting the wellbeing of the Roma community.

It improves the wellbeing and confidence of participants and community members who are able to acquire new skills, discover and develop their talents, building up their sense of agency and self-confidence. Our partner also found that wellbeing was directly improved by the mere existence of a place where people can always come, ask for help or simply talk without fear of being treated less favourably, ignored or discriminated against because of their ethnic origin.

Foundation Towards Dialogue take great care to ensure that the activities they offer are as inclusive as possible and that women, girls, men and boys, and people with different sexual orientations can be supported in a safe environment, while respecting their identity, distinctiveness, culture and traditions.
Foundation Towards Dialogue activities support people of all ages and families. Activities that have been implemented with the support of Oxfam include:

• Boxing classes for youngsters – which are an opportunity to spark young people’s curiosity about a new activity and encourage them to spend their time in an active way.

• Music therapy for under 5’s and music activities for teenagers – these aim to stimulate children’s interest in music as an engaging way of spending their leisure time that also supports development.

• Tutoring for children in English, Polish and mathematics.

• Working with individual residents of the center focusing on building their confidence.

• Peer and motivational mentoring involving members of Polish Romani community and activists working with Roma communities.

• Family conflict resolution

• Roma language and culture workshops

“We are working to maintain the positive developments at the center by continuing to provide support in the areas of safety, education, professional development, and family conflict resolution. These activities are crucial for the social and personal integration of the residents, and our goal remains to create an environment in which each family can find support and develop.”

Foundation Towards Dialogue

“A Roma woman all her life thinks about where to earn money, get food, how to feed the family and dress them. Not like school, sciences, education – no. Her problem is to dress up and to feed up. All her life. You understand? Like this...and here children come, and they have a lot. The Towards Dialogue team take children to some theaters, some swimming-pools, some museums. They come to the community center and run to the workers and say: And what shall we do now – we will make juice! The team pays attention my grandchildren. Nobody shouts at them. Nobody throws them, nobody calls them gypsies...”

Natasha Sarusinska, a Roma woman from Ukraine and a Foundation Towards Dialogue employee

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• Family conflict resolution

• Roma language and culture workshops

“I'm in charge of the warehouse, I'm in charge of distributing aid to Roma community, I'm an educator, and I'm definitely still the first one to talk to the Roma people, because many Roma don't know Polish language or even sometimes Ukrainian language when they arrive, and you have to get along with them somehow.”

Rajmund Siwak, who is Roma himself and Foundation Towards Dialogue employee.
The humanitarian situation on the Poland Belarus border

In 2021, a humanitarian crisis emerged on the border between Poland and Belarus. Since then, hundreds of individuals have faced pushbacks, violence and abuse as they attempt to cross the border. People on the move crossing the Poland/Belarus border are mainly from Afghanistan, Syria, and Yemen, in the Middle East, and Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and Ethiopia, in Africa. Many suffer from medical conditions such as hypothermia from extreme weather conditions, injuries caused by the height and barbed wiring of the wall, lack of food and drinkable water, and violence when spotted by the border patrol. And, in the worst of the cases, disappearances in the Białowieża Forest and deaths.

Over the last two years, there have been consistent reports of highly concerning violent incidents by border guards, sometimes involving vulnerable groups including children, the elderly and pregnant women. There is a desperate need to provide food, medical attention, psychological support and other lifesaving supplies to those who are crossing the border, but the Polish government continues to deny humanitarian groups access to the border zone. Despite this, groups of activists and volunteers risk legal consequences to find and support people in need of assistance.

The change in government, in October 2023, brought the opportunity for change and a new approach including designing a migration policy, ending the criminalization of humanitarian aid and pushbacks at the border. However, despite the government’s campaign on this matter, there has been no sign of ending pushbacks at the border.

As a humanitarian organisation who is already responding to a humanitarian crisis at the border with Poland and Ukraine, we recognize the importance of providing assistance to the other humanitarian crisis unfolding in Poland. We have developed partnerships with organisations who are delivering the much-
needed aid to people who are caught up in this crisis. We work with partners that have operations at the Poland/Belarus border or their work is related to ending pushbacks and human rights violations. These partners are Egala, the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR) and the Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH).

**Egala Association**

Egala focuses on building a welcoming, inclusive community for all people - regardless of their nationality, culture, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, or background. They support migrants and refugees in the process of adaptation and integration to life in Poland, developing the sensitivity of the host community to the situation of people with migration and refugee experience, developing the host society’s knowledge of migration and refugees among others. In response to the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border, they have been supporting migrants and refugees at the border with their physical and psychological needs, and providing information on legal matters and claiming their rights.

Together with *Egala*, we’ve reached 435 people. Key activities include:

- Medical and psychosocial first aid
- Legal information and counselling, and general information on the context of the country
- Food and water, and non-food item distribution to persons affected by displacement
- Individual caseworking services and safe referrals provision

**Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)**

HFHR has been long focusing on the protection of the rights of migrants in Poland, particularly by providing free-of-charge legal aid to migrants, monitoring the situation at Poland’s external borders and in the immigration detention facilities, conducting trainings for the state officials and advocating for human rights-centred migration policies. In response to the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border, since August 2021, HFHR focuses on providing legal aid both to migrants and activists delivering humanitarian aid in the forests who face criminalization for their activities among others.

Together with HFHR, we’ve reached 1393 people. Key activities include:

- Data collection, processing, and visualization about the disappearances of migrants
- Improving access to information and support for families of missing people.
- Legal support to the families of missing persons and strategic litigation
- Raising awareness through public and media engagement, including podcasts.
- Distribution of information packages and translated reporting forms.
Feminoteka – finding refuge and beauty in community

Feminoteka is a feminist and gender-based violence response organization. They run a helpline for women experiencing violence, offer free legal, psychological, and therapeutic support and campaign to change the law and society. Feminoteka expanded its operations in response to the war in Ukraine, with Oxfam’s support. Together, we’ve reached 2,362 people since February 2022.

Feminoteka runs a safe space where women can seek refuge, psychosocial support and attend a range of workshops. Workshops have become an integral part of Feminoteka’s work, that allows women to integrate, find new communities, help release stress, build trust, and spread awareness about the foundation’s work.

In October 2023, Feminoteka ran a workshop for women on pregnancy and parenthood as refugees in Poland. In December 2023, a workshop on professional self-presentation was held ending with a free photo session for the participants, so that all of them left with professional portraits for their portfolios, and also left feeling more prepared and confident approaching job interviews.

Jolanta, ‘Feminoteka’ staff member, on the phone. Photo: Magdalena Chodownik/Oxfam
Samo Dobro meaning ‘Only Good’ is an organic cosmetics company created by the founder of Feminoteka, Joanna Piotrowska. The social enterprise originally started during the Covid-19 pandemic to diversify funding sources and provide new opportunities.

In response to the needs and interests of survivors of gender-based violence and Ukrainian women who became refugees, Feminoteka evolved the Samo Dobro social enterprise to include economic opportunities for them. Samo Dobro provides jobs in a safe environment, so refugee women can earn an immediate steady income, as a stepping-stone towards financial independence. The jobs at Samo Dobro focus on collaborative product creation and production, and the women who participate receive ongoing, expert training and mentoring on all job aspects.

Currently, there are 5 (Ukrainian) refugee women employed in Samo Dobro. They all work part-time jobs and they all receive therapeutic support, social and multicultural assistance, and participate in an independence support program too.

“One of our first Ukrainian clients is a single mother of two (one of her children was born in Poland. For many months she had issues with accessing the benefits she was entitled to as part of the Polish system, due to systemic errors. Feminoteka has been supporting her for the whole time, by assisting her at the offices, help with translations and by providing all necessary help she required.

As soon as she entered Feminoteka support system, she asked about job opportunities. She was hired at ‘Samo Dobro’ as soon as she felt safe and stable enough to take a job. She proved to be a talented and passionate employee and for the whole time of being on maternity leave, she was missing her work a lot and was inquiring about when she could come back. She was very excited to resume work, as her maternity leave came to an end.”

Feminoteka client and Samo Dobro employee
OXFAM’S PARTNERS IN UKRAINE, POLAND, ROMANIA AND MOLDOVA

Oxfam has worked with 43 partners between February 2022 and February 2024. You can find out more about these organisations in this section.

UKRAINE

Women’s Consortium of Ukraine (WCU)
The WCU unites 45 women’s non-governmental organizations and has 15 branches in Ukraine. It plays a coordinating role in advocacy, training, and education initiatives aimed at strengthening the principles of equal opportunities for women and men, as well as child rights, in the country.

Rural Women Business Network (RWBN)
The purpose of the RWBN is to protect the rights and interests of rural women, to support their empowerment, equal economic participation, leadership, access to education and health care, and participation in local governments’ decision-making processes.

Caritas Odesa
Caritas Odesa is the Ukrainian member of the organizations Caritas Internationalis and Caritas Europe. With more than 30 branches in the country, its purpose is to assist the most vulnerable, regardless of their ethnicity, nationality, religion, social status, or other characteristics.

Gay Alliance Ukraine (GAU)
The main purpose of Gay Alliance Ukraine is to increase the level of tolerance in Ukrainian society, to promote the full realization of human rights for the LGBTQI+ community in Ukraine and beyond, and to promote the establishment of equality of all people and respect for people’s freedom.

The Tenth of April (“Desyate Kvitnya”)
The mission of The Tenth of April is to ensure access to rights for everyone in need and make laws and international obligations work. It has been providing free legal aid to refugees and asylum seekers, in partnership with the UNHCR, as well as psychosocial support and cash grants to people whose safety is at risk.

Because We Can, Anika Foundation and Rebuild

Makariv are community-based organizations providing support to people directly affected by the war in the Chernihiv and Makariv regions. They help clean the ruins of destroyed or severely damaged homes, rebuild houses, repair roofs, and install windows, and provide families in difficult conditions with everything they need to survive the winter.

Rokada is an organization that has been involved in supporting refugees and asylum seekers and since February 2022 has extended their support to displaced people and other population affected by the conflict. They provide with inclusive social and other protection services, community engagement activities, basic needs, and shelter.

Peaceful Heaven of Kharkiv is an organization supporting people in need in Kharkiv city and oblast with hygiene kits, food and non-food items and hot meals. The organization operates four humanitarian centres, in which they also provide psychosocial support and other relevant services such as warm places in wintertime for people affected by destruction of infrastructure.

Ecoclub

The organization was founded in 1998. They have a mission to create a safe environment by influencing policy and strengthening communities. Their approach is premised on educating people, aiming to preserve and minimize the negative impact on the environment while taking care of the present and the future of humankind.
SpivDiia
The purpose of the Foundation is to provide charitable assistance to individuals, territorial communities, non-profit organizations, as well as legal entities under private law in the specified areas, as well as the development and support of these areas in the public interest to help people in need and struggling small businesses become self-sufficient.

Eleos
The mission of ELEOS-UKRAINE is to serve the society, namely helping those who need support. Their main areas of support include providing food, clothes, and protection to people in need, creating decent living conditions for everyone; contributing to the spiritual growth of people; promoting access to education, work, quality medical care, food, housing, and other necessities.

Shchedryk
Shchedryk was created to provide assistance to the war-affected population of the region. Sectors of operations include food security, psychological and legal support of socially vulnerable population segments. They also provide information support for businesses.

Open Door Ukraine
Open Door Ukraine (ODU) was set up as a Dutch non-profit foundation (stitching) in December 2018 to bring actors and stakeholders from Ukraine and the Netherlands together, in order to promote cooperation among people and organizations from the two countries.

Voice of Romni
The Association of Roma Women Voice of Romni is a non-governmental organization based in Zaporizhzhya. Since the outbreak of the full-scale Russian invasion it relocated to Uzhhorod. The name of the organization reflects the very purpose of its activity: “Romni” means “a Roma woman”, so the organization works with women of Roma origin.

N-place (Ukraine)
NGO “N-Place” is a grass root community-based organisation established to support the local population. Before the war the organisation developed and worked on the promotion of automotive culture. But when the Russian Federation started a military offensive against Ukraine in February 2022, the organisation totally switched their activity to support the local population. Many initiatives are done on a voluntary basis.
POLAND

Migrant Info Point (Migrant Info Point – MIP)
Migrant Info Point is an information clearing house and assistance program for immigrants living in Poznan and vicinity. MIP offers legal advice as well as integration activities such as Polish language courses and professional counselling and training.

The Better World (Stowarzyszenie Lepszy Świat)
The Better World provides social assistance, supports education, and offers volunteer support. They have been involved in pro-migration activities since 2013, supporting refugees in Poland and around the world.

Foundation Towards Dialogue (Fundacja w Stronę Dialogu)
Foundation Towards Dialogue is a Roma led organization working on integration and awareness raising related to Roma issues. They assist Roma and other marginalized and vulnerable groups at risk of exclusion and create educational programs about minorities.

Feminoteka (Fundacja Feminoteka)
Feminoteka is a feminist and gender-based violence response organization. They run a helpline for women experiencing violence, offer free legal, psychological, and therapeutic support and campaign to change the law and society.

Ukrainian House Przemysl
Ukrainian House is supporting the integration of migrants into Polish society. They work to preserve the cultural identity of Ukrainian minority, promote Ukrainian culture, organize language trainings, and offer legal support to Ukrainians arriving in Poland.

FAI is member of a federation of organizations which works on integration and mobilization of people at risk of social inclusion (people with disabilities, seniors, people at risk of homelessness) and addresses the issue of homelessness for refugees.

Lambda Warsaw (Stowarzyszenie Lambda Warszawa)
Lambda Warsaw has been active in supporting and creating a positive image of the LGBTQIA+ community in Poland since 1997. They are working on providing LGBTQIA+ Ukrainian refugees with safe working space and opportunities through an integrated protection program.

Homo Faber Association
Homo Faber is a human rights organization specialized in anti-discrimination and integration of migrants. They have two main programmes, which focus on providing legal advice to migrants and asylum seekers and integration for migrants in Lublin.

SIP (Stowarzyszenie Interwencji Prawnej)
SIP is a human rights organization which supports refugees and migrants, including those held in detention centres. They provide legal aid and advice and seek social cohesion by promoting the equality of all people in the face of the law.

The Migration Consortium is a group of 9 organizations giving support to immigrants and refugees in different regions throughout Poland by providing legal and integration support, advocacy work and campaigns.

Egala Association (Poland)
Focuses on Building a welcoming, inclusive community for all people – regardless of their nationality, culture, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation, or background. Supporting migrants and refugees in the process of adaptation and integration to life in Poland, developing the sensitivity of the host community to the situation of people with migration and refugee experience, developing the host society’s knowledge of migration and refugees among others.
PAH (Poland) and NGO Forum Razem
PAH’s mission is to make the world a better place by alleviating human suffering and promoting humanitarian values. We support the victims of humanitarian crises caused by armed conflicts and natural disasters. We provide development aid by seeking long-term solutions and preventing further catastrophes. NGO Forum “Razem” — social organizations for Poland and Ukraine — was established to build understanding, enable cooperation and create solutions for people with refugee and migration experience in Poland and for the Polish society.

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (Poland)
HFHR has been long focusing on the protection of the rights of migrants in Poland, particularly by providing free-of-charge legal aid to migrants, monitoring the situation at Poland’s external borders and in the immigration detention facilities, conducting trainings for the state officials and advocating for human rights-centred migration policies. In response to the humanitarian crisis at the Polish-Belarusian border, since August 2021 HFHR focuses on providing legal aid both to migrants and activists delivering humanitarian aid in the forests who face criminalization for their activities among others.

ROMANIA (up to July 2023)
eLiberare is involved in prevention, early detection and awareness raising around human trafficking. It helps build the capacities of local authorities and civil society organizations to prevent and respond to cases of human trafficking.

The Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR) is one of the leading centres of expertise in peacebuilding and peace education and is involved in gender-based violence and anti-trafficking counselling, training and prevention.

Carusel is a human rights organization promoting and ensuring that the most vulnerable people receive both immediate and long-term support, enjoy equal opportunities and become visible to society.

easyECO is an inclusive and feminist organization combating any form of exclusion and discrimination and focusing on responding to the needs of women, Roma and LGBTQIA+ individuals and communities residing in state-run shelters.

The Romanian Federation of Community Foundations (FFCR)
FFCR aims to contribute to the development of social collective responsibility in Romania and supporting the refugee response through a range of activities encouraging social cohesion, education and food security (language classes, workshops, open events etc.)

Federation of Romanian NGOs (FONSS)
FONSS offer social services to vulnerable groups. Thirty-one of its 44 member organizations are involved directly in supporting refugees through a variety of actions including managing and providing services in large transit centres, as well as providing specialized centres for people with disabilities, chronic conditions and autism.

FEM Consortium (Centrul Filia, MozaiQ, E-Romnja)
Centrul Filia is a feminist NGO focused on advocacy, research and activism on gender-based violence. MozaiQ is a community organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life for LGBTQIA+ people in Romania. E-Romnja is a Roma feminist organization whose mission is to promote and make visible the implication of Roma women in society.

CLEAR Global
CLEAR Global are a non-profit helping people get vital information and be heard, whatever language they speak. CLEAR stands for community, language, engagement, accountability, and reach, the cornerstones of their work around the world.

THE UKRAINE CRISIS
COMMUNITIES AT THE FOREFRONT OF A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE
MOLDOVA (up to August 2023)

Women’s Law Center (WLC)
The WLC’s mission is to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and to prevent and combat gender-based violence in Moldova by raising public awareness, building the capacity of relevant actors, providing services to assist and protect women, and conducting research and analysis.

Amici dei Bambini (AiBi)
The AiBi Association’s mission is to support abandoned children and to promote every child’s right to a family through adoption. Over the past 15 years, it has been developing socio-educational programs in order to contribute to the integration of children from disadvantaged families and boarding schools.

Centrul de Drept al Avocatilor (CDA – Law Center of Advocates)
The LCA’s mission is to promote respect for the fundamental rights and freedoms of asylum seekers, beneficiaries of international protection, stateless persons, people at risk of becoming stateless, and foreigners in need (including foreigners in detention).

La Strada
La Strada is a non-governmental human rights organisation that supports the rights of women and children to stay free from violence through research, legal expertise, counselling and representation, capacity building programs and development of toolkits, with a special focus on anti-trafficking strategy in Moldova.

Y-PEER Moldova
Y-PEER Moldova is a youth led organization and the Moldovan member of the Y-PEER global network. Its mission is to promote youth health education, especially reproductive and sexual health education, youth leadership and global citizenship education, targeting both rural Moldovan host community and refugee youth from Ukraine.

THE UKRAINE CRISIS
COMMUNITIES AT THE FOREFRONT OF A HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE

Notes
1 Estimated cumulative number of people reached in Oxfam Ukraine Response. Marginal double-counts of people reached might not be removed due to operational constraints. While every effort has been made to ensure that all statistical information is verified, figures represent an estimate.
2 0.1% people identified as non-binary in primary data collected by 9 of our partners. This equates to 1,353 people.
3 Due to a standard end of year data quality review the reach figure for Poland has been amended since Oxfam’s previous report on the Ukraine response in January 2024.
4 The Oblasts [regions] highlighted in purple include front line areas with some of the most acute humanitarian needs. Oxfam works in areas of this oblast that are under control of the Ukrainian government.
5 Figures for Ukraine also include number of people reached through partnerships with Bank Lviv, NRC, ACF, HEK and PIN.