

PROJECT TITLE: Help for Ukrainian refugees and host families

OBJECTIVE OF THE PROJECT: Provide the necessary support for people who were forced to leave their country, as well as their loved ones, by providing financial, moral, psychological, and supportive help.

Since we are the closest country to Ukraine, the sudden appearance of a spontaneous flow of displaced people in the Republic of Moldova due to the armed conflict in Ukraine made our country an involuntary host to people from neighboring countries.

Starting from February 24, 2022, early in the morning at the border crossing points, a massive crowd of people fleeing the path of war, both on foot and in cars, took refuge in the territory because the city of Soroca is located a short distance from the border with Ukraine.

People began to take only the necessary things in their luggage and everything that was most expensive for them: their children, who were the most scared because they didn't know that this was a war and why they had to go. They left their favorite toys and clothes and went to a foreign country with people and languages they didn't know.

In the desire to save their lives, several mothers with children had to separate from their husbands who remained in Ukraine being armed in the war, elderly, pensioners, people with special needs, and invalids, as well as being insecure and afraid that at any moment a misfortune could happen, they had to leave their home and all the goods they had accumulated throughout their lives.

SOARTA Public Association could not be indifferent to these people's situation and submitted several project proposals to help them, at least with what is strictly necessary, and be by their side in this challenging moment.

Starting **from February 2022**, SOARTA Public Association, in collaboration with our donors, tried to help the refugees from Ukraine located in the Soroca district, and to help the refugees in the territory of the Soroca district as the host families who received the refugees. The activities proposed by the Association for Refugees are the following:

- Granting cash support
- Granting vouchers for food products
- Granting vouchers for medicines
- Granting vouchers for hygienic products, clothing, and footwear
- Issuing vouchers for bed linens, duvets, and towels
- Providing aid during the winter in the form of wood and coal
- Conducting community integration activities
- Setting up shelters - shelters for refugees

For the procedure of awarding vouchers and cash to go according to the project's purpose, the Donor Association team organized a training for the implementation team and the volunteers,

through which they taught us the procedure for awarding cash and voucher assistance. Through this training, the project team and volunteers learned to detect the needs and selection criteria of the refugees.

To detect the social needs of refugees, it was necessary to prepare personal surveys, where it is essential to specify personal data, the date they crossed the border, where they are staying, and their needs, allowing them to inform us on their own what they need to ease the problems they face at the time of their arrival on the territory of the Republic of Moldova.

During these months of implementation, the social worker, psychologist, volunteers, and priests/pastors were involved in the activities with the refugees. Home visits were carried out 2 or 3 times a week, and both the refugees and the host families benefited from psychological counseling services, where the needs they faced together daily were identified. These visits were made separately, only with the refugees, where we tried to detect the atmosphere in the family that hosts them. If they are not neglected or abused, we push through discussions to see their shortcomings. We tried to see if they had what it took to give them to the refugees who had taken shelter with them. It was only through communication that the real problems of the refugees and the host families were seen.

Due to the lack of communication, the reason being the lack of knowledge of the language or being in a foreign territory, they were more withdrawn, sometimes even rejected, by foreign people because many of them did not even have the opportunity to fit in professionally, even if some of them had higher education in different fields.

Through the discussions with the psychologist and the social worker, we wanted to remove the consequences of post-traumatic stress that needed to be overcome by most of the refugees who went through moments full of pain, fear, and despair because of the war. When talking with them, you could see the fear and discouragement in their eyes, the hard times they are going through because it is not easy to leave your home and the place where you spent the most beautiful moments with your family.

With the support of local priests, meetings were held to improve their spiritual condition; they confessed and shared because most of the refugees were also Orthodox Christians. Together with the volunteers, we tried to accommodate them in hotels or rented apartments. Later, let's contact the local public authorities so they can get involved, and you can stay at the center of the temporary placement. Because this center was not equipped with what was necessary to prepare kitchens, the SOARTA Public Association has equipped the center's kitchen with all the needed items: refrigerator, cooking ovens, crockery, stove, bed linen, towels, etc.

We tried to mobilize our whole team to support them. Mutual support is critical; people must see that the person next to them is willing to help, listen, and understand.