



Ukraine crisis response: 1-year report

Poland – Romania – Hungary – Germany – Slovakia

5,750+

refugees

served with free short- or midterm accommodations

1,400+

refugees

served with subsidized short- or midterm accommodations through social rental programs

3,300

emergency travel kits distributed

10,000

refugees

benefiting indirectly from services at the Ukraine border

17,000

refugees

receiving household items such as beds, appliances and dishes

700+

refugees

benefiting from spaces refurbished by Habitat for Humanity

3

refugee centers

refurbished



Olga, her daughters Lilja and Nastia, and their cats are staying in a temporary apartment in Hungary's capital, Budapest.

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine one year ago has forced more than **13 million people** from their homes, causing approximately **US\$40 billion** in damage to Ukraine's housing sector.

It has displaced some 5 million people within the country. Over 8 million are living as refugees across Europe. The conflict has destroyed Ukraine's infrastructure, decimated businesses and leveled homes as families flee for their lives, taking little or nothing with them, desperate for stability, warmth, and a place to live in safety and dignity.

Habitat for Humanity's response to this crisis – in keeping with our [Pathways to Permanence](#) approach – meets affected families where they are, supporting their short-, mid- and long-term housing needs to achieve stability and recovery. Before the conflict, Habitat for Humanity had already worked in the region for three decades, developing expertise, experience and a network of partners who bring their own skills, knowledge and contributions to the affordable housing market. In our Ukraine response, we leverage that experience to increase access to shelter and influence affordable housing policies, promoting Pathways to Permanence for families fleeing unspeakable violence, chaos and uncertainty. While our programs may differ according to individual needs and the context in which we address them – from Poland to Romania, Hungary, Germany and Slovakia – our vision remains firm: to help families build their resilience through affordable, dignified housing.

Over the past 12 months, we have served more than 35,000 people through a range of interventions, from emergency travel kits with items such as blankets and hygiene products to rental assistance, hotel vouchers, and the placement of refugees from Ukraine with host families in neighboring countries. In some cases, we have fully subsidized housing costs for families as they identify and secure employment. In other cases, we have furnished apartments with sofas, bed frames, mattresses, appliances, linen and other supplies to ensure comfort and habitability. And we have refurbished vacant buildings and spaces and provided upgrades to collective shelters to house larger numbers of refugees.

As we cross the war's one-year threshold, we aim to apply this Pathways to Permanence approach for the first time inside Ukraine – where an estimated 140,000 residential buildings have been damaged or destroyed – while we continue to strengthen our response in neighboring countries. Providing housing support inside a war-torn area is always a bold step, but our commitment and our mission command no less of us. As a global leader in the housing sector, we are committed to supporting the short-, mid- and long-term housing needs of the Ukrainian people as they prepare to rebuild.

We are identifying, creating and sustaining reliable, reciprocal relationships with government officials, civil society actors and other stakeholders as we develop a high-impact, low-risk presence in Ukraine. An operational presence in-country and a nuanced understanding of the context there will add significant value as we position ourselves to be the partner of choice in housing sector reconstruction and in the design of affordable housing models.

“

Home for us is family. What we like most in the apartment is sitting around the table with the whole family. We really enjoy being with each other. The apartment is cozy and comfortable. It is our home.

Yana, 33, from Kirovohrad, Ukraine

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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S ROLE IN UKRAINE

Habitat for Humanity has been exploring partnerships inside Ukraine since September 2022. During this initial phase of our in-country intervention, we are working with partner organizations to supply resources and technical expertise for home repair and winterization upgrades. In addition, we are engaged in a series of initiatives aimed at helping Ukrainian municipalities design social or municipal housing models relevant to their unique context. Our interventions depend on the situation on the ground and may include:

Direct home repairs and winterization upgrades:

Light and medium repairs with a focus on thermal insulation, including glazing or replacing doors and windows and repairing damaged walls and roofs.

Community infrastructure repairs: Small-scale community infrastructure such as public markets and open spaces or community centers that have been damaged in the war.

Provision of locally made stoves: These stoves will help families heat their homes and cook.

Information about and referrals to the government of Ukraine and related assistance programs:

Our partners will maintain a referral directory and will inform individuals and families about recovery services available to them. The directory will help minimize service duplication.

Energy-efficient modernization of multi-apartment buildings:

Energy-efficient modernization of multi-apartment buildings, improving heating systems, reducing energy consumption by 20-30%, and creating a warm, comfortable basement shelter to provide cover during air raids.

Housing sector reconstruction support: Leveraging our long-term expertise in housing and energy resilience in the region, we plan to engage in housing sector recovery and reconstruction in Ukraine, offering technical expertise where needed. A key strategic partnership in this is with the U.N. Economic Commission to Europe.



Korbochkyne is a community in the liberated and former frontline in Kharkiv Oblast of eastern Ukraine. Thousands of houses, apartment blocks and schools in the area have been damaged by shelling, tank fire and airstrikes.



This village school in Korbochkyne, a community in the recently liberated and former frontline in Kharkiv Oblast of eastern Ukraine, was struck directly by several rockets.



WINTERIZATION EFFORTS MITIGATE THE COLD FOR REFUGEES ON THE MOVE

As the months have led into winter, so too have our efforts leaned toward a targeted approach to ensure affected families have a safe, warm place to live. Our winterization work focuses both on the families arriving from Ukraine and on the owners of apartments and other buildings where refugees reside. In the immediate term, we have offered in-kind supplies such as blankets, clothing and stoves, and performed upgrades to insulate walls and windows of hostels and other structures housing larger numbers of refugees. We have conducted energy audits of select buildings, modernizing and installing new heat sources, even as we raised awareness of the need to be energy-efficient by producing literature that can be downloaded in multiple languages.

Building upon a robust response in neighboring countries

The scale and complexity of the Ukraine crisis and its impact on civilians requires a robust, multifaceted, multistakeholder response to support the efforts of the Ukrainian government. Habitat for Humanity is well-positioned to be a leader in the recovery of the housing sector by leveraging its experience in the region, including the proven ability to convene any number of partners and to design and implement any number of programs to serve the housing needs of individuals and families impacted by the war. Our teams in Poland, Romania, Hungary, Germany and Slovakia have been actively serving displaced people from Ukraine since the war began.

Through our Pathways to Permanence approach, we will continue to pursue a range of interventions that help meet the short-, mid- and long-term housing needs of refugees. This includes leading and supporting social rental programs; facilitating access to affordable midterm housing; coordinating and providing in-kind donations; providing energy-efficiency upgrades to apartments; and offering supportive services such as language classes, child care support and vocational training.

We will continue to advocate for legislative changes needed to clear the way for housing solutions, sharing knowledge and technical support with national governments and municipalities. And we will continue to engage with news media to raise awareness of the housing issues arising from the conflict in refugee-hosting countries. Following is a snapshot of some of those efforts from our national offices and partners in the region.



Winterization efforts at the Global Expo site in Warsaw, Poland, include bringing in mattresses and coats. The site has the capacity to host up to 5,000 people, making it one of the largest centers for refugees.

FAMILY STORY



Tatiana, Andrei and their two daughters were forced to leave their home twice in the past eight years because of the conflict between Ukraine and Russia – first to escape fighting in the Donetsk region, then to flee the shelling in Kharkiv. They hope to have found peace in Bucharest, Romania.

“We will stay in Romania until it is safe to return home.”

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia has forced Andrei, 44; Tatiana, 39; and their daughters, Nasta, 17, and Lisa, 12, from their home twice in the past eight years. In 2014, they left the Donetsk region in eastern Ukraine for Kharkiv in the country’s northeast, where they stayed until February 2022. That is when the city, Ukraine’s second largest, was bombed.

Days later, they left home again, seeking safer shelter elsewhere in the country. But the safety they sought eluded them. They decided instead to leave the country altogether. When they crossed into Romania, they urgently needed temporary accommodations. Volunteers at the border referred them to Habitat for Humanity Romania, where the staff immediately secured them 12 days in a local hotel. When that period expired, they decided to stay longer in Romania, so Habitat made arrangements for them to live indefinitely in an apartment in Bucharest.

In the interim, Andrei found a job right in the neighborhood as a mechanic, Tatiana as a nail stylist. Their older daughter, Nasta, is studying philology and in her free time is learning to play a bandura, a Ukrainian harp. Her younger sister Lisa has enrolled in sixth grade.



Andrei and Tatiana say they feel lucky to have met such good people in Romania who have helped them integrate more easily into a new lifestyle. Their story illustrates how a tiered housing approach – including short-, mid- and long-term solutions – can make all the difference for families from Ukraine who have left behind their lives and possessions in their war-torn home. “We will stay in Romania until it is safe to return home,” Tatiana says.

POLAND

Poland has faced the highest influx of refugees, with more than 1.5 million people officially registered in the country. Facing an unprecedented challenge, Habitat for Humanity Poland quickly pivoted from a program focusing on advocacy and policy change to administering a first-line refugee response, providing short-term accommodations by matching refugees with host families in Warsaw and coordinating stays at local hostels for over 2,400 people. After the first wave of short-term support, it became clear that long-term solutions will be needed. Habitat answered this need by scaling its social rental program by 400%, from 40 apartments to 200, and coordinating with other organizations and service providers to facilitate access to basic necessities in supermarkets, vocational training, language classes, career counseling and child care to permit single mothers to find employment and become self-sufficient. To respond to the numerous inquiries, Habitat launched a crisis information line, which provided over 4,400 consultations. The organization has used its Habitat ReStore as a logistics hub, supporting the furnishing of 160 apartments for Ukrainians, upgrading collective centers with in-kind donations of household items, and providing winterization assistance to more than 3,000 people. Habitat Poland also has advocated for sustainable, long-term affordable housing options and has invested in research and demonstration projects on increasing the affordable housing stock in Warsaw and Gliwice by renovating vacant or underused apartments and other structures such as dormitories and community centers. Back in February 2022, Habitat Poland employed 20 staff members. Given the urgency of meeting a vast need for refugee housing, the organization quickly expanded its capacity and now employs over 70 people. Habitat is a member of the expert committee set up by the government to advise on policy and good practice to ensure that vulnerable groups, including Ukrainians, are supported in Poland.



For me, home is first and foremost a place — physical. We often say that home is where your heart is. But I think everyone needs a physical place that can be called home. Home gives security, which is the foundation of everything. It allows you to make plans, have a job, take care of your family. Home gives you comfort.

A Habitat ReStore volunteer in Poland

MULTIPRONGED APPROACH FROM HABITAT POLAND BRINGS SAFETY, STABILITY TO FAMILIES FLEEING UKRAINE

Informing Habitat for Humanity Poland's Ukraine response are some of the solutions we had already launched and tested before the war started. We have adapted them to a refugee crisis context, aiming to sustain and grow the housing support we provide families arriving from Ukraine as they build safety, stability and independence.

Social Rental Program: We helped pioneer a social rental program in Poland, which the government has adopted into housing policy as Social Rental Agency. Municipalities are encouraged to learn from the model and set up agencies to increase the availability of affordable housing for Ukrainians and for Polish households. Habitat Poland, in its Social Rental Program, negotiates between property owners and families in need of housing. The result is a win for all parties. For the property owners, our Social Rental Program guarantees regular rent payments and proper use of the housing unit. For tenants, it offers access to affordable apartments in good condition for 12 months to enable them to settle into Poland and find employment. For those in need of financial support, our program provides subsidized rentals to further help them maintain their well-being during the initial year of displacement. Once the 12 months lapses, Habitat encourages the landlords and families to enter into a direct tenancy agreement.

Empty Spaces: Our Empty Spaces program mobilizes partners, expertise and resources to renovate so-called empty spaces, such as unused apartments, to make them habitable. Through the program, we also upgrade collective shelters and repurpose vacant spaces, such as an office space, to accommodate larger numbers of people. We published a corresponding toolkit in 2022 and discussed this model on various occasions with representatives from the national government, local authorities, the private sector and other international governmental organizations, paving the way to a broader uptake of this model in the future.

Partnerships and advocacy: In 2022, we partnered with a range of strategic stakeholders engaged in supporting the housing sector in Poland, including the International Organization for Migration and UNHCR, the U.N. Refugee Agency, which resulted in Habitat Poland co-leading the Shelter Working Group, which convenes aid organizations addressing the housing needs of refugees in Poland. Establishing these relationships and influencing the housing ecosystem by advocating for the adoption of the Social Rental Agency model at scale constitutes a significant milestone for Habitat in Poland and for the broader region. Thanks to our partnership with the city of Warsaw, we are able to renovate empty spaces and pilot social rental housing units. Similar coordination has occurred with municipalities and authorities in the Silesian region.



This property serves as temporary housing for Ukrainian refugees in transit in Warsaw, Poland.



Hotline employees at the Habitat for Humanity Poland office in Warsaw.

ROMANIA

Habitat for Humanity Romania has responded to the Ukraine crisis since the conflict's beginning, mobilizing support for families who have left the war zone. Staff members were present with teams at the most transited border points, in Siret and Isaccea, but also in Bucharest at the North Railway Station where the organization met refugees with on-the-spot information and answers to their questions. During those early cold days, Habitat Romania donated electric heating devices and backpacks with external batteries. Beyond meeting those immediate needs, Habitat Romania has helped over 2,750 refugees secure hotel accommodations and, when needs changed, rented 30 apartments, covering all rent and utility costs. Further, in partnership with the local government, the organization transformed three buildings in Bucharest into long-term housing, including a full refurbishment of a three-story building and the creation of a social hub offering a range of services to help stabilize hundreds of families.



Edmond Center, a formerly abandoned office building in Bucharest, Romania, has been transformed by Habitat Romania to create accommodations and social space for refugees.

WHOLESALE RENOVATIONS BY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY ROMANIA BRING COMFORT, STABILITY TO REFUGEES IN CRISIS

A key element in Habitat for Humanity's Ukraine response has been the renovation of empty buildings that can safely accommodate families fleeing the war. One of the most challenging renovation projects has been to refurbish and convert the top three floors of a long-vacant office building into a dormitory and social center. Working in partnership with the city of Bucharest, we successfully transformed the building into the Edmond Shelter and Social Hub, which, in addition to providing long-term accommodations for more than 100 refugees and transitory accommodations for more than 20 refugees nightly, also will house wraparound services such as medical, academic, psychological and legal support.

Renovations entailed extensive plumbing and electrical work, along with measures to enhance the structure's energy efficiency. We repaired a leaky roof and installed a separate hot water system for new showers and kitchens. We replaced some of the larger windows with more efficiently insulated panels that also bring in more light. We replaced old carpet with wood flooring, glass panels with opaque ones, to render a warmer, more comfortable, home-like setting for families. With the help of volunteers and partners, we enclosed spaces for bedrooms, bathrooms, laundry rooms and kitchens while dividing larger, open rooms into areas for studying, dining and socializing. Volunteers tore out carpet, painted, assembled furniture and hung curtains to ensure that the Edmond Shelter and Social Hub was welcoming to the families who would call the center home. Those families began occupying the space in early November 2022.

| GERMANY

Habitat for Humanity Germany has mobilized vital funds to support emergency response efforts in Romania, Hungary and Poland. It has also established an affordable housing program inside Germany, in two cities in North Rhine-Westphalia. There, staff members, volunteers and partners help refugees identify long-term rental options, which can prove scarce given Germany's housing shortage and affordability issues. The influx of refugees since 2015 has put additional strain on the housing system, making it increasingly difficult to find apartments that are affordable to refugees. Habitat's initiative provides administrative support and guidance for refugees applying for housing and relieves already-overburdened municipalities as they seek to support refugees through their own means. The effort is both scalable and well-structured, and Habitat Germany is presenting the model to municipalities in partnership with civil society organizations and peers.



I need care and support.
I need to feel that I have a little corner to store my things.
I was eager to feel that I own something. I'm so grateful and happy that it's coming true.
I finally have a home. I'm calm here, and I can finally sleep.

Lada, a refugee from Kharkiv in northeastern Ukraine

| HUNGARY

Early in its response, with activities in and around Budapest, Habitat for Humanity Hungary launched a Solidarity Accommodation program in cooperation with a local partner, placing over 100 families in no-cost, midterm housing. As needs evolved, Habitat Hungary began supporting families with rent assistance, mediating between refugee families and local landlords to establish rental agreements and contracts. The organization has continued to focus on helping families secure midterm housing, supporting them as they move and providing furniture and appliances such as washing machines, microwave ovens and refrigerators. At the one-year mark, Habitat Hungary's chief goal is to help stabilize families in long-term housing in Hungary. To that end, the organization assigns social workers to individual families, assisting with everyday tasks such as enrolling children in school, scheduling doctor appointments and preparing family members for the Hungarian workforce. Through Habitat Hungary's support, a temporary refugee shelter, administered by the Municipality of Budapest, built a social kitchen area. This shelter provides short-, mid- and long-term accommodations for approximately 100 refugees from Ukraine, offering families the opportunity not only to prepare their own meals, but also to socialize, build friendships and make connections, thereby establishing a vital social network as they begin and sustain their recovery.

| SLOVAKIA

In Slovakia, Habitat for Humanity began responding to the needs of Ukrainians in the country by focusing on a range of housing needs. An early assessment identified material support, such as hygiene and sanitation products, as the most urgent need of newly arriving refugees, particularly for the most vulnerable such as the elderly, those with disabilities, and women and girls. Meeting those needs has reduced the vulnerability of affected families. Habitat Slovakia hired a staff person to coordinate its response and establish partnerships with like-minded organizations that have proved essential to the implementation of Habitat's efforts in Slovakia. Habitat Slovakia has also distributed household appliances, such as washing machines, dryers, microwave ovens and refrigerators, to individual and collective shelters and to other organizations engaged in the response across eastern Slovakia.



Hygiene materials are distributed in Slovakia.



Appliances are delivered in eastern Slovakia.

As the war in Ukraine enters its second year, Habitat for Humanity remains committed to helping affected families secure durable solutions to their housing needs, whether in neighboring countries or inside Ukraine itself. We will continue to mobilize resources and partners, influence housing markets at the national and municipal levels, and lead in the housing sector. By designing and implementing these innovative and impactful programs, we will help families recover. We are and will remain focused on meeting families where they are on their path to recovery.

Visit [habitat.org/emea/ukraine-crisis](https://www.habitat.org/emea/ukraine-crisis) to learn more about our efforts to help refugees from Ukraine.



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