

# 2022 and into 2023

christian  
response  
to  
eastern  
europe



What a year 2022 turned out to be! Who would have thought just one year ago when Ukrainians were celebrating Christmas and New Year with their family and friends their lives would change so much in just a couple of months. All of Europe is a very different place today, and not a very nice place, thanks to Mr Putin's oppressive actions.

The indiscriminate obliteration of family homes, shops etc. is shocking. The devastation resulting from the bombardment and destruction of power stations makes life in Ukraine so difficult, especially during these bitter winter months.

It is not surprising so many have fled seeking sanctuary in other countries. But millions remain under the constant threat of war and the unspeakable actions of the occupying Russian forces.



Although we cannot stop the conflict, **we can help alleviate some of the suffering.** Thanks to the fantastic support we have received we have been able to provide considerable help to so many in a practical way as well as letting them know we care and they are not alone.

The effect of this war has spilled over and affected thousands of lives all over the world, especially the neighboring countries of Poland and Moldova.

Moldova, compared to population, had the highest number of refugees of any other country. Moldovans live in the poorest country in Europe opened their homes to help the refugees despite their poverty. Their generosity impressed the world.

As a direct result of the support we have received by way of donations and the immense number of hours worked by our volunteers, in this year alone we have been able to dispatch seven fully laden articulated trucks. - That's more than one every two months! In addition we have sent over £199,000 to help those in Ukraine and Moldova. This is an amazing achievement for a small and voluntary charity. If we all do a little we achieve a lot.

Thank you to all who have supported our work; **ordinary people achieving extraordinary things**, albeit with a huge amount of effort.



Our team in Exmouth achieved an incredible amount sorting through so many tonnes of bedding and clothing to make certain everything is of the best quality. This was an incredible accomplishment.

***On behalf of all those in Moldova and Ukraine, we thank you all.***

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Our last truck was loaded with over 5,000 Christmas Shoeboxes together with other much needed aid. Each year we are concerned everything will not fit but as always, our fine team of loaders managed to squeeze everything in.



## The situation today

### Moldova

Prices are increasing everywhere and this includes Moldova. A year ago, prices were already rising quickly following the pandemic. Since then, the war in Ukraine means prices have rocketed yet further. The price of bread is 150% higher, wood 160%, gas 273% higher and an astounding 400% for electricity! Even the cost of the trolleybus to get to work is 40% higher. One of our good friends Mariana who lives in Bălți used to pay 100 lei per month to go to work, now she pays 40 lei per day!

Such price increases would be challenging for anyone, but when you have so little it is not just difficult, **it is impossible**. Many families are literally terrified and have absolutely no idea how they will survive. In most villages there is no work at this time of year and they fear all that awaits them this winter, hoping and praying they will survive until the summer when work will be available. Many families are forced to borrow money just to live without any real prospect of repaying the loan. The result may be the court and then prison! But what options have they got? What would you do if your family had no food for the table and no wood for the fire? Would you borrow to eat today in the hope of work later in the year with the expectation to repay the debt? Or watch your family starve and freeze? Electricity is disconnected even for the tiniest of arrears, there is no help from the state.

Pensioners have even more to worry about. Their meagre pension didn't cover the very basics even before these increases. Now there is no hope and no opportunity to earn additional money, they feel helpless and are having to depend on friends and neighbours in order to survive.

Mariana says, *"I don't even know how we feel about the whole situation. Frustrated, tired, worried or just sometimes we feel nothing just wondering what news will bring tomorrow. So many things happening. But everyone I know prays first of all for peace, because we don't want to be in same place as Ukraine"*. Moldova has no meaningful defence against Russian forces. They have no effective air force and only a few thousand in the ill-equipped army. Hence Moldova is an easy target.



Family happy to receive some food and toys



Health is a huge worry in Moldova. Most people feel their doctors are not good and only in it for the money. Our experience is doctors frequently give totally bizarre diagnosis and treatment to their patients. But the problem is, if your child feels unwell what do you do? Do you go to the doctor who you believe is no good or try to diagnose and buy treatment yourself?

Doctors will give treatment, medicines etc. but at great cost. Just look at the image on the left and the huge bag full of medicines Natasha was given when she went to the doctor saying she felt depressed.



## Ukraine

It is easy to underestimate the problems in Ukraine, even though the worries may seem obvious. The persistent bombardment of their country, causes untold misery, especially the damage to the infrastructure.

In an attempt to force people into submission Mr Putin has left millions without electricity. We have all experienced power cuts but these can go on for weeks. With no electricity, this frequently leads to no heating and the prospect of freezing to death.



Cooking over a fire is becoming the norm for many. CR2EE has been able to deliver tonnes of wood to many families, giving them security and warmth.

One less obvious problem in Ukraine is work, or the lack of it. The war has led to the closure of many factories in addition to the shutting of cinemas, theatres and other places of entertainment meaning many are without work. Generally, men are not permitted to leave Ukraine, so for those who are no longer in paid employment, finding paid work can be impossible. Despite the lack of a salary, they still have families to feed and care for. There is state benefit but this is small and frequently inadequate.

The need in Ukraine is obvious but changing. Coverage on the media is flagging as they perhaps think of it as old news and begin to move on to something new. Sadly, the support has also declined. In February we were inundated with offers of financial and humanitarian donations. We knew this initial surge would dwindle and therefore worked hard to secure additional temporary storage. Due to this we were able to sort everything in a controlled way. The need since then has, in fact, increased. We intend to make every effort to continue our aid programme for as long as we are able.

*There is so much we would like to do, so many challenges*

With all the missile attacks there are an increasing number of internal refugees with nowhere to live, nowhere to shelter their families. For those whose homes remain intact there are the “normal difficulties” of low incomes and very high and increasing prices.



It is a blessing it has been relatively mild in Ukraine and Moldova so far this winter. The normal snow and bitterly cold temperatures have abated so far this January. There is still plenty of opportunity for extremely low temperatures but for the moment things are not too bad, cold but not outrageously freezing. Many children will be disappointed with the absence of snow but this is a small price to pay.

For the moment it is imperative we make every effort to continue to send aid lorries and money to both Ukraine and Moldova. Even with a relatively mild winter life is difficult, sometimes impossible

You can see from the photo left, people are willing to join long queues just for bread.



These are very worrying times, in Moldova poverty abounds and prices go through the roof whilst in Ukraine war and destruction are an everyday event. The only thing we ARE certain of in these uncertain times is the promise of our continued effort to help.

The next Humanitarian Aid truck will be sent into Ukraine. We will send as many electric generators as we can, find as well as much needed clothing, bedding, food, medical supplies etc. Our team have been working so hard nevertheless we hope this truck may leave at the end of February or the very beginning of March.



We can celebrate in all that has been achieved and the help and happiness created with all the aid and Christmas Shoeboxes. Very good quality clothing, bedding etc. food and medical supplies is still very much needed.



We can look forward to the Spring and help people in the villages by buying seeds and birds, chickens, ducks etc. and hope for a bountiful crop at harvest time.



We can again plan for the Summer camps in the warm weather when children will once more have the opportunity to play and have fun. For many years we have run or sponsored these and it is a privilege to see all the children running around with seemingly endless energy, laughing, joking and just “messing around”. This can be a great contrast to their normal daily life.

On our last truck we sent a very generous donation of lots of solar powered Power-Banks, solar powered lanterns and torches, rechargeable batteries and so much more, a true bounty of wonderful things.



On our next aid lorry we would love to take more of these and also electric generators, candles etc.. We also would like more sanitary items for ladies, detergents, shampoo, soap, wet-wipes etc. All these would complement all the lovely used clothing and bedding, medical items etc.

Life here in the UK is becoming increasingly difficult and many families here will struggle to pay the bills and put food on their table. Despite this we are asking for help. If we are to continue our work we need your help to do so, with both financial and aid donations. If we can all spare a little, we can achieve such a lot and really help those in such greater need.

At my age I feel very much a child of yesterday and it is our children who must take over whatever we leave behind.

As a charity, for over thirty years we have provided help and hope to so many in Romania, Moldova and more recently Ukraine. This help has always been given willingly and voluntarily,- and I hope, from the heart.

We cannot stop the war or cure the inequalities of extreme poverty and suffering, but I hope the example shown by all our wonderful volunteers and sponsors will give confidence to our children and grandchildren so that they, in turn, will want to do whatever they can when they encounter human injustices, rather than just stand by and sympathise.