

Poland

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, more than 5.9 million people have fled the country. International Medical Corps immediately recognized an urgent need to provide services for refugees crossing Ukraine's western border, and within a week had deployed an emergency response team to Poland.

Initially, we focused on assessing immediate needs at border crossings and reception centers and coordinating response activities. We then provided healthcare, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response programs, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in Poland throughout 2022 and 2023.

Today, through partnerships with local organizations and health facilities, we're continuing to provide MHPSS services and other kinds of assistance to Ukrainian refugees and vulnerable members of the host community.



Between February 2022 and April 2024, International Medical Corps helped 50,000 people in Poland. We initially served health needs by mobilizing three medical units to provide primary healthcare consultations at border crossing points.

To meet the increase in demand at a children's hospital in Krakow, we procured and delivered medicines, medical supplies, physical rehabilitation equipment and hygiene supplies. We also provided surge staff—including Ukrainian translators and medical staff—to address needs caused by the influx of patients.

To address the situation's growing mental health needs, we trained first responders in psychological first aid (PFA) and on how to support crisis-affected populations appropriately. We also supported a conference for Ukrainian and Polish psychotherapists on how to strengthen networks and facilitated a platform for sharing best practices.

Throughout the course of our work, we have prioritized protection, including GBV prevention and response interventions. As part of a local partnership, we established a women's center in Warsaw that provided integrated GBV and MHPSS services, along with recreational activities and language courses. We also implemented a project focusing on strengthening inter-agency capacity for GBV prevention and response among organizations, staff and volunteers in Poland.

Based in Warsaw, International Medical Corps continues to provide services across the country, aiming to improve access to social services and healthcare for the most vulnerable groups. As the conflict in Ukraine continues, we remain ready to respond to future increases in refugees.



SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

Refugees living with disabilities face considerable barriers to adjusting to their new lives in another country. In Poland, we have helped a local partner organization extend its existing disability services to Ukrainian refugees by operating a free helpline in both languages. This enables refugees across Poland to receive practical information about financial and material support services, legal counseling, psychological counseling and other available resources.

We have helped provide assistive devices and specialized supplies to refugees with disabilities, including wheelchairs, walkers, specialized educational supplies (such as books in Braille), and orthopedic and medical supplies.

To support the integration of refugees with disabilities into Polish life, International Medical Corps and our partner organization provide educational and cultural programs. These include educational trips that facilitate a child-friendly environment where children with disabilities and their caregivers can establish new social support networks and become familiarized with Polish culture. We also support the organization of Polish language courses for Ukrainian refugees with disabilities.



MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

Many Ukrainian refugees in Poland have experienced sustained stress, so safeguarding their mental health is of paramount importance. Our comprehensive MHPSS programming improves mental health and psychological well-being among Ukrainian refugees, with a special focus on vulnerable groups such as women and children.

We are implementing a stepped care program developed by the World Health Organization, which uses interventions that have been proven to create acceptable, feasible, safe and effective mental health outcomes in highly exposed populations. These evidence-based interventions include Problem Management Plus (PM+) and Self-Help Plus (SH+), which provide holistic support and nurture resilience within vulnerable populations.





SUPPORT FOR UKRAINIAN-ROMA REFUGEES

Recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of Roma refugees from Ukraine, we are supporting a Roma organization in its efforts to expand its services to help Roma refugees get identification materials in Poland, receive refugee-specific subsidies, access medical services and more.

To ensure that Ukrainian-Roma people can access the services available to refugees in Poland, we support the operation of a helpline where Roma people can receive practical advice and be connected directly with resources. We also help provide translation and intercultural communication support at public institutions, such as hospitals and government offices.

Because many people in this community need financial assistance, we distribute vouchers for the purchase of food, hygiene items, household items and clothes. This program prioritizes Ukrainian-Roma refugees, but it also benefits other members of the Roma community in Poland who need it.

Adapting to Poland's education system poses challenges for Ukrainian-Roma refugees who face language barriers and discrimination, among other obstacles. With our partner organization, we're supporting cultural assistants who help Roma children and parents integrate into the Polish education system. These efforts include assistance with the bureaucratic processes involved in enrolling children in school—such as completing application forms—and translation services. Cultural assistants also provide awareness-raising activities aimed both at helping Roma refugees understand the Polish education system, and at improving school staff's cultural awareness of the Roma community.

To address discrimination, we're helping cultural assistants lead workshops for members of the Roma community about intercultural communication and coping with stereotypes, giving them the tools they need to cope with and stand against discrimination in Poland. These workshops, held in urban areas around the country, have proven effective in changing behaviors in Roma communities and wider Polish society. We also are working with our partner to provide leadership and self-advocacy workshops to Roma women, focusing on their rights and self-advocacy.



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A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance and become effective first responders themselves.

May 2024

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