



FONDATION  
**IMPACT HOPE**

## **Project to support families of displaced persons and refugees with disabled children in Ukraine.**

### **Context**

Children and people with disabilities are the most affected by the chaos of the conflict, as they face additional challenges and difficulties. With physical or mental disabilities, they are unable to go to bomb shelters alone. Families with people with disabilities are still present throughout the country and are in great need of protection. They need expensive medicines, special food, extra equipment, specially equipped transportation and housing.

The war has also affected disabled people living in Lviv: anxiety about sirens, constant fear of bombing, loss of employment, inability to buy necessary medicines, loss of social relations. People with autism are particularly affected. Parents of disabled children also need professional support during this particularly difficult time. Most often, these parents experience feelings of helplessness, fear, hopelessness, and even guilt for being alive.

### **Brief summary of the project**

Emaus is a Ukrainian organization based in Lviv whose mission is to make Ukrainian society more welcoming to people with disabilities.

In this time of war, Emaus is helping displaced families and individuals from other regions of Ukraine. True to its mission, it focuses specifically on displaced families with mentally disabled children. Emaus assists families from Lviv but also those who have migrated to the West in search of protection.

Within the first week of the war, Emaus organized a project to evacuate people with disabilities and their families from dangerous places in Ukraine. A call center was established to coordinate the care of disabled refugees and their families. Emaus staff and a team of volunteers are involved on a daily basis. Even displaced people who have lost everything offer to help the less able.

## Specific objectives

The objectives of the project are:

- To welcome families with disabled people coming mainly from war zones by providing them with logistical, medical and food assistance
- To help some of these families to cross the borders to seek refuge in safer places while waiting for a return to the country
- To strengthen the psychological and moral support to people with mental disabilities, their families and the people involved with them

## Activities

The major issues in the immediate future are as follows:

### - Transportation

The organization of transportation from the attacked cities requires the most effort and financial resources. It is sometimes necessary to provide specially equipped transfer places for people in wheelchairs or ambulances and for those with cervical vertebrae injuries who cannot be in a sitting position.

Emaus has been able to evacuate people to Poland and other border countries. For those who do not require special medical care or special lying down during transportation, Emaus organizes bus transportation.

Since the beginning of the war, 426 refugees have sought help from Emaus: 193 of them needed humanitarian aid

233 were evacuated abroad or to safer places in the Carpathians.

### - Accommodation

A few years ago, Emaus created an accommodation and meeting center for disabled people (Emaus House) within the Catholic University of Lviv (UCU). The free rooms were given to families with disabled people from Kiev and eastern Ukraine. In order to accept more disabled refugees in Lviv, Emaus cooperates with other organizations, such as Dzerelo (rehabilitation center), local L'Arche... The Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv also provides dormitories for these displaced persons.

Emaus employees settle the refugees, organize meals and, if necessary, look for people who can provide individual support.

Emaus often provides hygiene products, basic necessities, disposable diapers.... Food rations are prepared for those who travel.

### - Medicines, medical supplies and special food

Many pharmacies in the cities of eastern Ukraine have been closed as a result of the invasion. They lack important medicines needed by people with disabilities. Emaus has compiled a list of needed medicines and supplies. They will be transported by humanitarian aid to different cities in Ukraine. The families who have decided to migrate to the West will receive the medicines or medical supplies in Lviv.

The medicines mainly provided are analgesics, sedatives, joint ointments, anti-cold medicines, first aid medicines (tourniquets, blood stopper powder, painkillers, bandages, medical scissors, etc.) .

For half of the refugees, it is also a question of specific medicines: medicines against cystic fibrosis, hormones, psychotropic drugs, antidepressants, neuroleptics...

### - Psychological support

#### - Support groups for parents

Emaus has created a support group for parents of disabled children. Meetings are organized online for the different regions of Ukraine, including the areas currently occupied by the Russian army. The aim is to give them a sense of support and real empathy in the most difficult moments.

#### - Individual psychological support for parents of disabled people.

Emaus helps the parents to pay the therapist (50/50).

#### - Individual psychological consultations for children and people with disabilities.

#### - Support for disabled youth in the Lviv region

Due to the additional workload in wartime, the usual family support program can no longer be provided at 100%. Emaus tries to keep an eye on the specific needs of disabled people who were already living in Lviv during the war and offers them online psychological support.

### - Workshops for disabled children

As soon as the spaces are free again, Emaus plans to organize a workshop with educational activities for mentally disabled refugee children and their parents in Lviv.

These activities for children were conducted by Lviv social services in different parts of the city. Today, the resources of the social services are more focused on the refugees and Emaus has taken over some of the activities for the children.

## **Contribution of the project to real change**

Since February 2022, the structural project of Emaus has been replaced by a project to welcome and support families with disabled people. This support, often

carried out in very difficult conditions, validates the strategy of inclusion and special attention to these people, even and especially in times of war. A number of able-bodied displaced persons volunteer to help Emaus. All this contributes to the change of mentalities towards disabled people.

### **Location of the project**

The project is located in the city of Lviv, in the west of Ukraine. It is carried out for the benefit of families coming from the whole Ukraine and especially from the war zones like the East and the South.

### **Local partner**

The Emaus Center was founded in 2000 in Lviv, as part of the Ukrainian Catholic University, with the goal of training new generations of competent and uncorrupted Ukrainians who will transform the society of tomorrow.

The center aims to transform Ukrainian society as a whole, marked by Soviet ideology, by combating negative and stereotypical attitudes towards people with disabilities, and thus contributing to greater openness and benevolence towards all people.

### **Direct beneficiaries**

Since the beginning of the war, 426 refugees have sought help from Emaus: 193 of them needed humanitarian aid  
233 were evacuated abroad or to safer places in the Carpathians.

In general, Emaus can accept about 40 people per week. However, this number is not regular. It depends on how dangerous the situation is in the East, the transport possibilities and the capacity to receive them in Lviv.

### **Sustainability of the project**

It is easy to imagine that an emergency project in wartime is not meant to be sustainable. Emaus will resume its training and awareness activities as soon as the war is over. In the meantime, the organization is strengthening its ties with the Education Department of the Lviv City Council. There, Emaus provides in-service training courses for teachers (about 700 teachers per year) to raise awareness and include the topic of people with disabilities in the curriculum. These webinars have been initiated and will be continued and expanded in 2022 and beyond.

## **Monitoring and evaluation**

The project is monitored on a daily basis by the Emaus team. This team is supported by members of the university. Impact Hope supports the organization in its reflection, its orientations and ensures external evaluations.