



AFTER ARRIVAL

Integration of refugee families
in Hungary



ACTIVITIES OF
THE HUNGARIAN CHARITY
SERVICE OF THE ORDER OF MALTA IN

2023

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 HUNGARIAN CHARITY SERVICE
OF THE ORDER OF MALTA





THE NEW LIFE of refugee families in Hungary

During the second year of the war in Ukraine, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta focused on the integration process of refugees who seek asylum in Hungary, as well as maintaining a 24-hour service at the border crossing of Beregsurány. Up to 24th February 2024, 484 Ukrainian refugee families, totalling 1511 adults and children, took part in the integration program, during which they received skills sets needed to live in Hungary independently.

The Charity Service signs collaboration agreements with refugee families for a period of one year, so that by the end of the support period, having overcome the hardships they have experienced, they are able to take care of themselves independently. For this to happen, the integration program helps in multiple ways; from providing affordable living arrangements, to language education and an introduction to the Hungarian educational and medical system. Trained social workers look after the families and help them with everyday situations, like calling a plumber or translating in a doctor's office. One social worker usually helps 10-12 families at a time.

There is a whole team to help refugees find work, with dedicated persons to deal with issues such as the naturalisation of diplomas and the translation of official documents. Since the start of the program – which is supported by European Union funds – participants have included engineers, bookkeepers, operating room nurses, pharmacists, language teachers and economists, but most of them found work in factories or in the building industry, many of them as equipment operators. For now, only a smaller percentage could find employment in their original fields – some are working as assistant nurses, performers or in procurement.

The children of the refugee families attend school and kindergarten. They learn Hungarian more easily than adults, but their integration is made more difficult by the fact that many of them are psychologically affected by their war experiences, for example they are intolerant of noise, and often react to unexpected situations with either excessive anger or with withdrawal. A team of psychologists and counsellors help them to work through this, and the program offers recreational camps, cultural programs, and social events to help them with the process of



integration. Children who play sports usually find it easier to integrate, and Hungarian sports clubs have reported talented volleyball players, judo fighters and ice hockey players among the refugees.

During the last months of the integration program, the families are prepared for their unsupported future life in the country: they learn to calculate their living costs, including, for example, the deposit on their new apartments. Most of the families who have completed the program so far have become self-sufficient: many two-parent families have even been able to set aside some savings, while the change is harder for single mothers, but most of them became stronger by the end of the program.

Even two years after the start of the war, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta keeps a 24-hour presence at the border crossing of Beregsurány. 400-450 people arrive at the Help Point every month. Staff help them with food, lodging, medicine, information and administrative assistance, either for requesting refugee status or for onward travel. Families torn apart during their travel, sometimes stay for days at the Point, waiting for their relatives. Many people arriving from active war zones said that the most helpful thing for them was that somebody listened to their stories, enabling them to "talk away" part of their accumulated stress.



MEDICAL IMPROVEMENTS



I With telemedicine against the doctor shortage

The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta set up a state-of-the-art laboratory, a personalised medicine supply centre and a medical service based on telemedicine tools, in a project made possible by European Union funding. The central building of the Attila Naszlady Health Development Program was built in one year in Bicske. As part of the programme, mobile medical clinics were set up to provide health-care in the poorest small settlements, which had been lacking doctors for years. In 2023, almost 4000 medical examinations took place in 36 emerging settlements, more than 9000 eye examinations in 76 villages, and 1100 children received new glasses for free. The system is also bringing a paradigm shift in care, by bringing health innovation to the areas where there is the greatest shortage.

Twelve vehicles bring medical care to the poorest villages: eight of them are fully functional mobile clinics, and four are used for villages that have a clinic but no doctor. The program uses the most modern medical equipment and inter-communication programs: for example, an assistant puts the stethoscope on the patient's heart or lungs, and a doctor sitting in a different village will hear everything in real time. ECG tests and ENT tests work in a similar way and since September, the telemedicine vehicles can conduct ultrasound tests too, so pregnant women don't have to travel to a faraway hospital, but receive the tests in their own villages, free of charge.

The program creates the opportunity for those most in need to receive proper medical care without spending money or travelling long distances. The collected samples and doctor's prescriptions are brought to the main laboratory in Bicske, where the samples are tested and prescribed medications prepared in personalised pouches. The facility can test 200 samples and produce 3600 personalized medication pouches every day; it also coordinates treatments done locally in the villages.

I Renewed hospital power supply

The Blessed Gerard Hospital in Pomáz, which is managed by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, totally renewed its energetic system with financial help from the European Union and the Hungarian government. In the course of the modernisation process, it received new solar systems and heat-pumps, the building was insulated and most windows and doors were replaced. Four buildings were affected by the project: the geriatric psychiatry ward, the advanced dementia ward, the addictology ward and the nurses' residence.



INTERNATIONAL AID



Humanitarian aid after the earthquake in Syria and Turkey

On 6th February, an extreme earthquake shook Turkey and Syria, destroying whole city districts and villages; more than 60,000 people died and 120,000 were injured. Turkey received international humanitarian aid right away, but foreign aid organisations were not allowed to enter Syria due to the civil war: for many weeks, the only exception was the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, which had been conducting humanitarian aid missions in the region for the past ten years.

After the earthquake, the Hungarian Government donated 50 million forints to the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta for humanitarian assistance to Syria. The Charity Service relocated its mobile clinics, set up as part of its hospital building and healthcare program, to the disaster-affected region. In the cities of Aleppo, Latakia and Jableh the Charity Service was involved in treating the wounded and temporarily replacing the work of destroyed health facilities. The organisation, with its local partners, also created a medical hotspot where they received those in need of care and dispensed primary medical care. The Hungarian Charity Service's field mission stayed in the region for two months.

Later, the Charity Service helped in Turkey as well: at the end of February it sent five pallets of medicines, and at the end of March, 30 million forints' worth of hygiene products to the Hatay region.



Rebuilding a school in Croatia

The school in Topolovac district in the city of Sisak was officially reopened on 4th May, 2023. The school had become unusable during the earthquake of December 2020, during which more than 40.000 buildings collapsed. As part of the humanitarian aid offered by the Hungarian Government, the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta assumed responsibility for the rebuilding of the school. The Hungarian Government donated 60 million forints to the project.

Dehumidifiers for the flooded Slovenian villages

The Crisis Management Task Force of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta deployed in Slovenia with 15 industrial dehumidifiers, portable generators, hygiene products and non-perishable food on 10th August, after the largest flood in the country's history hit multiple villages. The dehumidifiers and generators were deployed in mountain villages located on the River Sava north of Ljubljana; the 7,5 tons of humanitarian aid, valued at 10 million forint, were taken to the city of Kranj where they were handed over to the crisis management coordinators.

Teaching children in Kenya about the proper use of hygiene products

As a follow up to its Kenya aid programme, the Hungarian Charity Service conducted a two-day educational course about the proper use of hygiene products and bathroom use for the 400 students of the Mashimoni School situated near Kibera, Nairobi's biggest slum. The school had received a new well and new bathroom blocks during the last year, as part of the Charity Service's mission in the region, and the children needed to learn their proper usage, hence the educational course. The Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta has been in the region since 2012, building multiple clean drinking water and sanitation facilities.



THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED IN 2023



| Meeting with Pope Francis

Two hundred and fifty people, including disabled and homeless, served by institutions of the Charity Service, as well as their helpers and volunteers, were present at the Church of Saint Elisabeth in Roses Square on 29th April, on the second day of Pope Francis's apostolic visit. During the Holy Father's visit, thirty Malteser first responders were on duty at two different Holy Masses, at the Basilica of Saint Stephen and in Kossuth Square.



| Diamond Jubilee Mass

Father Imre Kozma, founder and president of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, celebrated his Diamond Jubilee Mass at the Church of the Stigmata of Saint Francis on 18th June. He received congratulation letters from Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén, and Speaker of Parliament László Kövér. "From this vantage point, oppressions, setbacks, wars and poverty are not merely terrifying dangers, but opportunities to help (...) Let me congratulate you most sincerely on your Diamond Jubilee Mass, and wish you many more years of service, with your characteristic youthful spirit, leading more and more people on the road of the practice of active love." – wrote Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.



| Award

Lajos Győri-Dani, Executive Vice President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, received the Middle Cross of the Hungarian Order of Merit from Novák Katalin, President of Hungary, on the occasion of the national holiday of the 20th of August. Daniel Solymári, Head of International Relations and Alpár Lázár, Head of Resources, received the Knight's Cross. These were awarded by Zsolt Semjén, Deputy Prime Minister, on 18th August at a ceremony in the House of Tradition.

| Farewell to the late President

László Sólyom, ex-president of Hungary, first Chief Justice of the Constitutional Court of Hungary, academic professor, volunteer and supporter of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, passed away on 8th October. After his years as Head of State (2005-2010), he volunteered for service at the Charity Service. Every year, he made a significant



donation to help implement one of the priorities of the Presence program, he closely followed the emerging settlements, and he frequently helped make sandwiches at a homeless day-shelter. He always arrived at the shelter early in the morning, to avoid being noticed either by the guests or by passers-by.

| The Train is closed

After thirty years of service, the Charity Service closed the "Train" homeless shelter, stationed on an outer dead track at the Western Train Station, and moved the pensioners to a new, modern facility in Újbuda. The shelter, set up in a repurposed, military hospital train, first opened its doors on 6th December 1993. With its 180-250 residents per year, it was one of the largest homeless shelters in Budapest. Over three decades, more than 2500 homeless men found shelter here, and for many years, most of the working homeless of the city left for work every morning from here.

| The Presence programme received the Saint Martin Award

The Presence program of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta was honoured with the Saint Martin Award, given for significant contributions to social commitment and the preservation of national and cultural heritage. The award, founded by the Archabbey of Pannonhalma, the Herend Porcelain Manufacture and the Bábolna National Stud Farm, was handed to Miklós Vecsei, the Prime Minister's Commissioner and Vice President of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, by the Archabbot, Cirill T. Hortobágyi, in Pannonhalma on 17th November.

| Children in Focus

The Children in Focus program was completed after three years, at the end of December 2023. This early child development program, funded by the European Union and coordinated by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, included 29 religious and civil society organizations in 177 emerging

settlements, who implemented complex social work activities to ensure that children aged 0-3 from the most disadvantaged families receive what they need for their balanced development, especially during the most important period, the first thousand days of their lives. In 2023, more than 128,000 people visited the Presence Points established in the catching-up settlements. 6969 children were attended by 18 physiotherapists, and every Presence Point received a state-of-the-art play and exercise room which the families of the area can use freely. The program also funded and built 129 study rooms, 108 playgrounds, and 67 model gardens.



| Digital improvements in the schools of the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta

A programme focusing on active learning and 21st century skills was launched in primary schools run by the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta School Foundation, thanks to HUF 60 million in corporate donations raised by the Hungarian Association of the Knights of Malta. Thus, children living in the emerging settlements learn to use robots, laser cutters, 3D printers, and interactive mathematical programs.



**HUNGARIAN CHARITY SERVICE
OF THE ORDER OF MALTA**