

Russia-Ukraine war: Gift Of the Givers helps Ukrainians with food and medical supplies

With the ongoing unrest in the Ukraine due to the Russian invasion, the Gift of the Givers has sprung into disaster management mode, working with South Africans on the ground and various organisations to support repatriation efforts, deliver essential items and medical equipment to those in desperate need.



Source: Supplied

The initiative came to life at short notice through various messages the Gift of The Givers received during the first days of the attack. The first was a South African man, who managed to escape from the capital Kyiv with his wife, who is from Ukraine, when the bombing intensified.

At their new place of safety, the Gift of the Givers asked the couple to source supplies - including food, baby food, diapers, sanitary pads, hygiene packs, warm clothes and essential medicines - from small shops and wholesalers to ensure their availability as prices were skyrocketing.

“Incredible” volunteers commended

Providing disaster intervention training at a distance has been an interesting challenge for the Gift of the Givers, says founder Dr Imtiaz Sooliman who commends the volunteers who have been “beyond incredible in applying the theory practically”.

"We are expanding the teams and are organising them inside the "hot spots" where there is no entry point for supplies and are replicating the process, finding shops, supplying the funds, identifying specific needs and supplying. When you can't get items from outside, be resourceful and find everything inside.

"Orphans, the elderly, ordinary people are all being assisted. We are funding the intervention by paying for fuel and everything associated with the purchase and delivery of essential and very basic necessities. We are setting up multiple storage areas. The teams are held by the hand and guided on the approach to disasters on a daily basis," says Dr Sooliman



Attacks on Ukrainian hospitals, ambulances increasing rapidly

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The second request humanitarian organisation received came from a cardiothoracic anaesthetist who is also being guided on disaster management, with the first lesson being on how to practise "emotional distancing".

The person crossed into Ukraine on 10 March and is being provided with fuel and funds to purchase essential items from Europe to expand the scope, scale and speed of the intervention.

Teaming together

Foundations and companies alike are working with the Gift of the Givers to help in this time of crisis where so many people are devastated, displaced, in shock and in despair.

"The Ukraine Association of South Africa has partnered with us. They are connected to medical personnel inside Ukraine. Medical supplies are being sourced inside the country and together with their own financial contributions, we will commence purchases of these life-saving materials for health facilities "trapped" in the hot spots," says Dr Sooliman.

Discussions have been held with medical aid societies, pharmaceutical companies and health facilities in South Africa to supply essential medicines which will be sent by commercial flight to support all other medical requirements inside Ukraine.



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Nico Groenewald 10 Mar 2022



Suzanne Ackerman from the Ackerman Family Foundation has pledged R1.5m towards the repatriation of South African and African students, and McKinsey is putting together a package for the same purpose. The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (Dirco) has also been engaging with Gift of the Givers on the repatriation matter.

The Gift of the Givers have also launched a [crowdfunding campaign](#) on BackaBuddy, with a moving target of R1m for members of the public hoping to support humanitarian efforts in the Ukraine.

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