

## Ukraine update

Hello friends, this is Martin Jensen writing just after returning from a to Western Ukraine, my 4th since the beginning of the Russo Ukrainian War. This 8 day trip enabled me to assess the needs of refugees who have been housed in the district around our farm and to review the support our local team has been able to provide with the help of your donations.

Last Monday I met the local mayor for the town of Radekhiv, Stepan Petrovytch. He is responsible for Radekhiv and 41 surrounding villages where about 1,000 refugees have been provided with local authority housing. Most of these refugees have made their way westwards from devastated and war-torn Eastern Ukraine. A third of them are children. These people are the immediate focus of our charitable efforts.

Throughout the last 8 months we have given local people and refugees clothing, first aid equipment, personal hygiene products, furniture, sports equipment for children and also financial help to families who have lost the breadwinner in the family. Now, we have a new project – the creation of a community centre for refugees living in the locality. In the last 5 weeks we began renovating a space adjacent to our offices to create the centre. The space is 144 m<sup>2</sup> (1600 sf feet), will have toilet facilities and a small kitchenette and can accommodate about 30 people. Staff from our farming business has provided much of the labour required free of charge towards the project. Also, our firm will sponsor electricity and heating for the centre.

In the evening children can come to study, have access to the internet, and enjoy films and play. We have a volunteer IT specialist who will provide the children with IT lessons. Also, we will provide the children with free English language education, a vital skill for their future.

During the day, the centre will provide a place for adults to meet together. The refugees have lost their homes, friends, communities and workplaces and the centre will be a place where new friendships can be formed. One special group are war widows who want to meet and share their grief. We anticipate the need to provide trauma counselling for individuals profoundly affected. We are working with Radekhiv town council to make sure that the refugee centre will be put to best use serving the wider community.

On this trip I also met with the headmaster of Vuzlove school (one of the 41 villages) and we have agreed to give the school and attached dormitory a small generator so that electricity and heating can be provided during power cuts. The latest Russian bombing of Ukrainian infrastructure means that power cuts will become the norm during this winter. The cost of the generator is around £1,000 (\$1,200).

Our support of the military also continues. Early in the war we made contributions to provide second hand 4X4 vehicles needed at the front to move mobile troops quickly. Recently we have helped to provide soldiers drafted from the locality with warm winter clothing. We also continue to provide regular hot meals to the local military hospital. The mayor of Radekhiv told me that the hospital is now very short of funds and struggling with salaries. Although we cannot pay salaries of government employees, we agreed to directly meet the needs of injured soldiers convalescing.

Thanks to your earlier support, we currently have enough funds to meet all these commitments for the immediate future. We will let you all know how the refugee centre develops and what will be needed going forward to sustain these people devastated by this war.

Martin Jensen