



# Ukraine – winter is coming, the need is desperate



**‘Kidogo kidogo inakuwa nying’ - ‘Little by little, little becomes a lot.’**

In my May and September updates I wrote about working closely with the family run, Scotland based, charity **Siobhan’s Trust ([www.siobhanstrust.uk](http://www.siobhanstrust.uk))** who have been tireless, with a team of volunteers, working under the slogan “Make Pizza not War!”. David Fox-Pitt invited us to come back again, this time accompanied by Dan Harrison, Headmaster at Sedbergh School and Stu Oliver, Houseparent and Director of Sport, to travel into Ukraine to see, first hand, the work that he and his volunteers do from their base in Lviv.

There is nothing so powerful as to witness in person the resilience and indomitable spirit of these desperate people.

Through Siobhan’s Trust we have also been supporting two projects on the border with Ukraine in Poland - the ladies on Platform 3 at Przemyśl Station and the 560 vulnerable women and children housed in an old school in Radymno, looked after by a local charity, Poland Welcomes.

## Poland

### Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022

We arrived at Platform 3 Przemyśl Station in time for the 8pm train from Kyiv. The now predictably sad daily sight of up to 400 mothers and their children dismounting, looking travel weary, disorientated and apprehensive, onto the platform where they have little more than 10 minutes to board trains to Prague, Warsaw and Hanover. This wretched sight is played out as if in black and white only illuminated by the warm smiles and the affectionate greeting of the ladies (two teachers and two nurses) who run the humanitarian stall handing out welcome packs to children as well as much needed hot drinks, snacks, toiletries and warm clothes. The volunteers at Platform 3 now have a new tent and heater which replaced a ramshackle construction that not only let the rain in but provided limited protection from the wind and the cold. This is especially valuable and much appreciated with winter approaching. Thanks to your contributions not only can these ladies sit and display their goods in relative warmth but, as a result of the boxes transported from the UK by Simon Morris Transport Ltd and Eden Aid, their stall is now stocked to the rafters.



## Ukraine

### Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> & Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November

The group crossed the border into Ukraine at Medyka and headed to Lviv. At midday we met up with the Siobhan’s Trust team and started serving pizza to a large group of displaced Ukrainians who were being housed in temporary portacabin style accommodation. This consisted of one room per family which passed as both a living and sleeping space with communal loos, showers and a dining area also on site. Three of the six sites we visited with the pizza vans were of similar design, home to those evacuated from bombed out cities and towns in the east for the past 6

months or more. We also visited an old and neglected holiday complex repurposed to house a cheerful group evacuated from Mariupol, as well as some 200 Ukrainians housed in the Lviv Football Stadium, built in 2012 for the European Championships.

It is believed that there are somewhere between 5 and 6 million internally displaced Ukrainians now being housed in this type of accommodation as well as in schools, libraries, council buildings, former hospitals and the like.

In each of the sites we heard the personal accounts of loss, hardship, fear, and separation from home, family, relatives, friends and from fathers and husbands. It was totally overwhelming. One example of these many tales of woe came from an 81-year-old grandmother evacuated from Mariupol who showed us a photo of her three children and nine grandchildren whom she has not seen or heard from since they were 'voluntarily repatriated' into Russia. All attempts at communication have failed and have left her feeling more isolated and alone. Despite crying herself to sleep every night clutching the photo of her family she keeps going, comforted in the belief that she will be reunited with her family, if not in this life, then the next. Her faith, as for so many Ukrainians, is a source of strength and comfort even though they have every reason to feel abandoned. We were all touched by the resolve and resilience of those who have suffered hardships that we find impossible to contemplate.



To witness the joy that pizza brings (pizza is aspirational food in Ukraine and those we feed are in desperate need, they are hungry), alongside the music, dancing and the distribution of football and rugby balls, art materials, cuddly toys, as well as aid, is inspirational and humbling. It reminds whole Ukrainian communities that they are not alone in their suffering and that some people beyond their borders care, helping them to believe they are not forgotten. A simple act of love that raises spirits and gives hope - without hope they have nothing.





Whilst travelling between sites a hundred or so km north of Lviv towards Belarus we stopped at a cemetery between two villages. As always beautifully looked after, graves belonging to fallen soldiers are marked with Ukrainian flags. The striking significance of contemplating this ultimate sacrifice in the cause of freedom coinciding with our annual remembrance of those fallen in the first and second world wars was deeply poignant and upsetting. It's all too easy for us to take our freedom for granted but history reminds us it has to be fought for. This photo was taken on a camera phone, not photoshopped, and seems to reflect the Ukrainian flag and the bloodshed; all in one night's sky.



'At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them'

## Poland

### Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> November

We crossed the border back into Poland and made time to meet Kamil and Kasia, the Polish aid workers we met on previous trips ([www.polandwelcomes.org](http://www.polandwelcomes.org)) who look after 560 Ukrainian women and children in a disused school in Radymno about 20km from the border with Ukraine. This vulnerable group now look towards a cold winter anxiously, as food is running low and warm clothing is scarce. Most have nowhere to go back to. Their homes and towns have been destroyed. More people will come as trying to survive a Ukrainian winter living in a tent or outdoors is impossible. The majority of your donations in the past weeks have been given to the community at Radymno. You will be directly making their winter more bearable through your kindness.



## Thank you

We could not have delivered any of this crucial support without the Sedbergh Schools and wider Kirkby Lonsdale community, Gareth and Rhian Pearson and Christ College Brecon and the English speaking community of Normandy so wonderfully galvanised by Hilary Crossing. The sad reality, now, is that Ukraine is becoming less of a priority to

many; news coverage is declining, funds are drying up and warehouses emptying. The pressure in Ukraine on services and society is extreme. All public buildings including village halls, sports centres and stadia and even libraries are housing families. Hospitals are only able to give critical care and schooling is patchy at best. The war rages on, Ukrainians continue to die, winter is coming and there is a desperate need for support.

The Siobhan's Trust team is now based entirely within Ukraine. They have 5 pizza vans (30,000 pizzas are donated per month from ITALPIZZA Bologna) and a refrigerated support van which go directly to where the most vulnerable families are; be it in and around Lviv, in Kyiv or as far east as Kharkiv, Kherson and south to Mykolaiv and Odessa. The ever-changing nature of the war means that, in reality, the vans are able to track and respond to the need as it moves around the country, working in partnership with the police who see this vital work as a massive boost to their morale mission. On average 4,000 people per day are fed pizza, along with fruit, vegetables, biscuits and hot drinks. Cuddly toys, rugby and footballs and sweets are given to the children.

Jozef said, "Being in Ukraine again and seeing thousands of totally unprepared vulnerable women, children and elderly was shocking and deeply worrying with a cold winter coming. Their resilience and strength are phenomenal but without help, for many, this winter could be their last. How would I react in their situation, trying to protect my wife and children? I feel blessed for my good fortune and chilled by their realities."

To conclude, we are determined to keep flying the flag, literally and figuratively, whilst fully acknowledging that times are very tough in the UK too. We must not forget Ukraine and its people, not forget their incredible fight on behalf of all of us. Military aid is, of course, crucial but we have seen at first-hand how "small acts of kindness and love" will, more than anything else, help Ukraine endure Putin's cruel ferocity. Kidogo Kidogo inakuma nying really can and is making a difference.



Thank you so much for reading this, we are so grateful for your interest, support and any help, on any scale, that you may be able to give.

Help = Hope.

Sincerest thanks to the Sedbergh / Casterton / Kirkby Lonsdale family without whom this would not have been possible and to all the individual donors of goods and funds which made this happen. You are all a crucial part of the Kidogo family: Casterton Sedbergh Prep School, Sedbergh School, Eden Aid, Kirkby Lonsdale Golf Club, JT Atkinson Builders Merchant Ingleton, BPI Plastics, The Zero Pantry, Stephen Hailey Building Services Ltd, Lunesdale Decorators, Kendal Sports, The Body Rehab Clinic Staveley, Lunesdale Home & Garden, Little Walkers, Plaskitt & Plaskitt York, Dales Traditional Butchers, Pure Lakes, The Bath House, Settlebeck School Sedbergh, Queen Elizabeth School (QES) and Rugby Tots Leeds **and so importantly** all the unnamed individuals and companies in our community who contributed in so many kind, crucial and personal ways to this collective effort.

For more information and to see more photographs and footage of our work please go to [www.kidogokidogo.uk](http://www.kidogokidogo.uk)

## How you may be able to help

We have committed to continue supporting Siobhan's Trust (and associated charities) in Ukraine with warm clothing, blankets and sleeping bags for winter, with funds, rugby balls, footballs, cuddly toys and sweets. We will also be collecting food, toiletries and sanitary products along with colouring books and art products to engage the children.

A very exciting development is raising funds for another pizza van for Siobhan's Trust, through Sedbergh School, to be able to increase their reach – Please see **The Wolf!!** [www.justgiving.com/page/sedbergh-school-siobhans-trust](http://www.justgiving.com/page/sedbergh-school-siobhans-trust)

Please do kindly consider helping the initiatives detailed above **and the very people you see in these photographs** by:

- Sending donations directly to Siobhan's Trust, [www.siobhanstrust.uk](http://www.siobhanstrust.uk) (Charity No SC049842) – you can Gift Aid your donations this way. Please kindly reference "Kidogo".
- Contributing to The Wolf!
- Making a financial contribution through Jozef.
- Donating unspent holiday money - US dollars, Euros and Polish Zloty especially welcome which Jozef can get directly to where it is needed most in a matter of days.
- By donating goods through various local collections – please keep an eye out for local flyers and information on social media.

To give you an idea (our operation has zero overheads and 100% of any donation goes to helping the most vulnerable in Ukraine):

£1	feeds 2 people pizza on one day
£10	feeds 20 people pizza on one day
£100	buys vital supplies of fruit and veg or tea, coffee and hot drinks
£500	is a big help towards pizza van fuel costs
£1,000	feeds 2,000 people pizza on one day
£2,500	literally feeds the 5,000.... for a day
£3,500	replaces a pizza oven if required

**- End of piece –**

**21<sup>st</sup> November 2022**

For further information or if you can help, please contact Jozef Mycielski (based in Kirkby Lonsdale and a Sedbergh School parent) at [jimycielski@gmail.com](mailto:jimycielski@gmail.com) or on 07796 691832.

Team Kidogo fundraising and support is also driven by Nick Higham and Tim Parker (Sussex) and Ian Jamieson (London). Providing aid to Ukraine in partnership with:

