
World Jewish Relief is delighted to present the following report to you outlining the life-changing impact of the B'nai B'rith programmes in Lvov and Kiev on vulnerable older Jewish people in Ukraine over the last year.

Ukraine: The Forgotten Crisis

Sadly, the devastating situation facing older people in Lvov and Kiev has yet to improve. After the destruction of World War II, this generation spent their 20s and 30s rebuilding the country, and the rest of their working years keeping the USSR going. They retired just in time for Ukrainian independence only to watch their entire pension repeatedly diminish.

Now, with the civil conflict showing no signs of coming to a resolution, older people are under strain once more. Instability has led to the price of household staples rising by 20%, and many pensioners are spending over half of their income on food.

Their tiny pensions are almost worthless and they are having to make the almost impossible decision of whether to buy food or medicine in order to survive. B'nai B'rith have become their lifeline, ensuring they are able to live with dignity and in good health under these appalling circumstances.

B'nai B'rith 'Leopolis' Charitable Fund, Lvov

The Healthcare Programme was created more than 20 years ago in order to support vulnerable Jews from Lvov, supplying them with essential medicines and dental care. In the last year, 11 people have received dental services, 269 people have been provided with vital medicine and 23 people have had medical check-ups.

The majority of older people in the Jewish community in Lvov live on minute pensions. Now that they no longer have to worry about the expense of buying medicine, participants are able to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables amongst other items, so they are able to retain a healthy lifestyle.

Many of the participants suffer from various heart conditions but don't access services because of the long queues and waiting times at public clinics. As a result they are unable to receive the necessary medications and may leave it too late for their health issues to be resolved. Our Healthcare Programme provided a free cardiological examination. Participants no longer have to queue for hours in public clinics as they are given specific dates and times for their appointment rather than having to turn up and wait. With the introduction of this examination, the process is significantly easier and less stressful for participants, meaning that they can get the help they need before it is too late.

This past year, we have managed to not only enhance the participants' health, but also give back a sense of belonging and optimism to those who have felt hopeless or forgotten about. The majority of participants have little or no family around to support them, be it financial or physical. This programme brings them back into the Jewish community and helps them feel valued once more.

The B'nai B'rith Kiev Programme

B'nai B'rith's Critical Needs Programme provides life-saving food and medication to some of the most vulnerable people within the Jewish community in Kiev. Over the past year, 137 people received assistance from the project. Without our help, these people would quite simply not survive.

We distributed food packages to 110 people on a monthly basis which are designed by a medical professional in order to meet the nutritional requirements for each individual, taking into consideration factors such as age, physical healthy and chronic diseases. These are carefully chosen in order to provide high quality food to maintain a healthy diet, and they all include fresh fruit, vegetables and dry foods.

137 medical check-ups have been carried out over the last year at which participants were educated and made aware of particular conditions such as high blood pressure and diabetes, and how they can help themselves through diet or physical exercise.

Who We Have Helped

Lyudmila, pictured below, is 64 and had a successful career working at what is now the South Ukrainian National Pedagogical University. She is married and has one daughter. Following the Chernobyl disaster, she was part of the mission to rescue and save local children and did so by making trips to the children's camp in Odessa. Her own health deteriorated rapidly due to radiation exposure, and so Lyudmila and her family moved to Kiev.

She was able to resume her career in education once more, managing to keep contributing to her and her husbands' savings. However, inflation had such an adverse effect on this money, she was left with almost nothing to live on upon retirement. Unfortunately her husband died of a heart attack soon after retirement, leaving Lyudmila alone to support herself and her daughter. Her health began to worsen once again and she developed hypertension and diabetes.

Unable to afford the necessary medications, life became painful, miserable and unbearable. Lyudmila knew she needed our support and so decided to join the B'nai B'rith programme. She began receiving monthly packages containing medicine and medical advice which helped to improve her health greatly. She looks forward to regular visits from our volunteers who bring her the medicine and is safe in the knowledge that she is being cared for.



Lyudmila reading about relationships between Jewish people and Ukrainians

Irina Ctoroizhskaya was born in 1945 in Lvov. An active person, she used to be a pharmacist in a busy chemist whilst also caring for her disabled brother who needs full time care. She was extremely passionate about her job, enjoying the interaction with her customers and being able to use her knowledge about medicines, and at the same time, continually learning about new developments within the industry. After her retirement, she struggled to buy food, and to provide her family with decent living conditions on such a paltry pension, whilst at the same time, suffering with hypertension and tachycardia.

Becoming a volunteer on the Healthcare project has given her a new lease of life, enabling her to fulfil her passion for helping others. Her knowledge of medication has been a huge help in the project whether it be consulting with patients, ordering medication and dispensing it. Consequently, being given this responsibility has had a beneficial impact on her own mental health.

World Jewish Relief has provided vital medicines and medical help, including cardiological examinations to Irina which has had huge positive impacts on her physical health, enabling her to fully immerse herself into her new position at the pharmacy.



Irina working in the pharmacy

Irina tells us 'By the time I became a member of the project, it was very difficult for me to afford even the most basic medications because they are too expensive and the prices for them are constantly rising. Now this problem has been practically solved. I feel much better and can spend time doing my favorite work, which I was sorely lacking after retirement. My gratitude to the Charitable Foundation and its sponsors is endless'.

Looking Forward

In the coming year, we aim to provide medical support to 394 people in Lvov in urgent need. Volunteers will deliver the appropriate medicines to those who are less mobile and retired volunteer doctors will carry out medical consultations on approximately 223 people. Subsequently, the volunteers who are also older will feel that they have a sense of purpose again and that they are part of a community once more.

In Kiev, we will continue providing medicines for 137 vulnerable older people and food packages for 110 people which will be delivered twice a month.

This year, we wish to continue providing these services with an increased focus on active ageing. This involves providing information on healthy living, nutrition and exercise. The cost of these programmes will be £30,000 for the year, split equally between B'nai B'rith Lvov and B'nai B'rith Kiev .

Conclusion

Thank you for taking the time to read about the exceptional impact of the B'nai B'rith programmes in Kiev and Lvov over the last year. Should you have any questions regarding these programmes, or any other aspect of our work, please do not hesitate to be in touch with Paul Anticoni, Chief Executive, on 0208 736 1250, or paul@worldjewishrelief.org. I would be delighted to hear from you.



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