More than one million refugees have been forced to flee Ukraine in the first seven days of bombings and attacks by Russian military forces according to the United Nations. By comparison, it took three months for one million refugees to leave Syria in 2013 when departures there were at their height, according to the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency.¹

The refugees have fled their homes seeking safety, protection and assistance in five of the bordering countries: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Moldova. Many of the refugees who have left Ukraine, in the first wave, have family or friends in the surrounding countries and the financial means to travel. If the occupation of Ukraine continues, the next wave of refugees will not have the same means and will be forced to rely on the host countries for food, lodging, healthcare, etc. As the situation continues to unfold, an estimated five million people may flee Ukraine in the weeks and months to come, in which case the surrounding countries would not be able to provide services for all of them.

Significant infrastructural damage has left hundreds of thousands of people without electricity or water, while bridges and roads damaged by shelling have left communities cut off from markets for food and other basic supplies. Thus far it does not appear that major infrastructure in the surrounding countries have been impacted by the increasing numbers of refugees, apart from border crossing between those countries and Ukraine being overwhelmed. The most pressing humanitarian needs are emergency medical services, critical medicines, health supplies and equipment, safe water for drinking and hygiene, and shelter and protection for those displaced from their homes.²

HHI has been communicating with partners since the start of the invasion and is prepared to deliver hygiene kits and medical supplies to those affected by the crisis. Saturday, March 5, an HHI Advance/Assessment Team is deploying to Romania and Moldova to connect with local organizations that are providing services to refugees. The team will determine how HHI can support their ongoing efforts as well as future efforts.

Heart to Heart International (HHI) has a long history of providing aid to the people of Ukraine, starting with an aid shipment worth $6 million in 1994. HHI has sent more than 60 aid shipments in the years since.

“It is incredibly difficult for everyone here to watch the news and see human suffering on that scale, but I know this is why Heart to Heart International exists,” Heart to Heart International CEO Kim Carroll said. “Our mission is to bring help and health access to people in crisis, and that is what we are going to do. Our hearts are with the people of Ukraine.”

https://www.hearttoheart.org/ukraine-crisis/

² https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2022-02-26_Ukraine_Situation%20Report%20%231.pdf