



**Cooperation between organizations assisting refugees
arriving from Ukraine:
An evaluation of the donations program of Habitat for
Humanity Hungary**

Research report



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Executive summary

After the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine started in February 2022, hundreds of thousands of people arrived to Hungary from the war zone. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that between 150,000 and 160,000 refugees from Ukraine were in Hungary in December 2022. Short-term (e.g. for those in transit) and long-term care for families fleeing the war was taken on by municipal social services, NGOs working with refugees and socially vulnerable people, and church organizations. The state did not step up, and thus played a marginal role in providing services to refugees.

The aim of this study is to assess the cooperation between Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH) and five of its partner organizations in the field of in-kind support to refugees. From spring 2022, Habitat for Humanity Hungary provided material goods (household appliances, beds/mattresses and other utility items) to five partner organizations. Furthermore, it provided other services, such as property renovation and conversion on a case-by-case basis. The five beneficiary organizations are: the branch of Caritas Hungary operating in the Greek Catholic Diocese of Nyíregyháza, the Budapest Methodological center of Social Policy and Its Institutions (BMSZKI), the Pest County branch of the Hungarian Red Cross, Kalunba Social Service Non-Profit Ltd (Budapest), and Strázsa Tanya Social Cooperative (Szabadszállás). The research report is based on interviews conducted in April-May 2023 with the five partner organizations and with colleagues of Habitat for Humanity Hungary responsible for program implementation.

Habitat for Humanity Hungary was also implementing a housing project for refugees from Ukraine together with From Streets to Homes! Association. The experiences of this program are not covered in this study; a separate research report on the evaluation of the program was prepared.¹

The material donations provided by Habitat for Humanity Hungary have been a valuable asset for the five organizations. This was even more the case because household appliances could not be provided in large numbers by other support organizations (neither to refugee families, nor to institutions providing services to refugee families). Habitat for Humanity Hungary had previous experience in helping households in need with material goods, and also had corporate contacts interested in donating durable consumer goods. These experiences and contacts also became valuable in HFHH's work to support refugees from Ukraine. Habitat for Humanity Hungary distributed and delivered the material goods either to the partner organizations' headquarters or directly to the families, based on the requests received from the partner organizations.

¹ Czirfusz, Márton, Pósfai, Zsuzsanna (2023): The possibilities and limits of a mid- and long-term housing program for refugees arriving from Ukraine to Hungary. Evaluation of the housing program run by From Streets to Homes! Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary. Periféria Policy and Research Center, Budapest.

Based on our interviews, the maintenance and repair of the donated material goods is only partially solved, already in the medium term. Internal expertise and organizational capacity for these tasks is only available in some of the organizations, mainly in ones where they provide institutional accommodation (shelters for refugees). Monitoring the fate of household appliances that have been handed over to private households is also beyond the capacity of most partner organizations. Some organizations also perceived gaps in the clarification of responsibilities for the maintenance of equipment.

Differences were found in the ownership of fixed assets between partner organizations. A solution that could be proposed in the long term is for the partner organizations to retain ownership of the high-value household appliances, and to only grant a right to use these appliances to the refugee families. This ensures that these assets serve the people in need in the long term and remain with the partner organizations even after a specific family is no longer the client of the organization. Other donations of smaller value and personal use (e.g. basic kitchen equipment, childcare equipment) could be kept by the refugee families. The ownership of goods and appliances was not always decided in a conscious way, and thus it could happen that these assets were not retained in the ownership of the organization only because of an acute lack of organizational capacities.

Some of the partner organizations mentioned shortcomings in the documentation of donations (e.g. acknowledgements of receipt) and in the contractual arrangements. It would be best to set the framework of the partnership in a framework contract, which also provides for sufficient flexibility in the details of the cooperation. At the same time, partner organizations have also expressed the advantages of being able to work together on a basis of trust between different support organizations, without the need to have all the details contractually agreed, as was the case in the cooperation with HFHH.

One of the shortcomings mentioned by the interviewed organizations is that sometimes - in other programs and donor relations - material donations arrived from donor organizations without a needs assessment. In many cases, donor organizations are not aware of the needs because they do not have personal contacts with the receiving organizations. The cooperation with Habitat for Humanity Hungary was a positive experience compared to this, because household appliances were provided based on an assessment of needs.

From February 2022, a number of Hungarian NGOs, which had previously not worked with refugees but had experience in social service provision, became involved in providing services to refugees from Ukraine. Some of these organizations were not involved in housing, so the housing expertise of NGOs such as Habitat for Humanity Hungary was also a much needed asset. HFHH helped Strázsa Tanya to build a community center and renovate its roof, and built a kitchen on one of the premises of BMSZKI. These services, as well as potential cooperation in the social rental agency model, were identified by the interviewed organizations as possible areas for further cooperation.

Among the possible future areas of cooperation with Habitat for Humanity Hungary, several partner organizations mentioned some that were actually not undertaken by HFHH, e.g. donation of durable food. In our experience, a division of labor has developed between refugee support organizations over the past year. Refugee families arriving from Ukraine know which organizations can help them with different issues, and they consciously build on this knowledge to meet their everyday needs. At the same time, coordination between organizations in the provision of services to refugees could be improved, in which public authorities could play a larger role.

The continuation of the HFHH program depends on securing funding for services to refugees. The Hungarian state authorities do not provide long-term funding to organizations delivering services to refugees. The attitudes of international donors have also changed: donations such as the first wave, e.g. of household appliances, have not continued. Habitat for Humanity Hungary could also count on the help of its regional office (in Bratislava) in securing funding for the program.

The research report makes four main recommendations.

- It is important to set up a system for the installation, maintenance and repair of the donated goods (household appliances) in order to ensure their long-term use.
- It is necessary to plan the ownership of donated household appliances: it is recommended to give them to refugee families for use, but to keep them in the long-term ownership of the service-providing organizations.
- In order to work out the details of the partnership and to avoid possible communication problems and misunderstandings, it is recommended that a framework contract be set up between HFHH and the partner organizations.
- Building on the relationship of trust between the organizations, they can think together to implement housing programs, thus helping to provide safe and affordable housing for refugee families in Hungary in the long term.

Objectives of the cooperation with partner organizations

The change in scale of the war of Russia against Ukraine in 2022, and the resulting wave of arriving refugees caught Hungary unprepared. This situation was aggravated by the fact that in previous years, the Hungarian refugee support system had largely been dismantled. Due to the lack of state engagement in the immediate crisis response, NGOs and church organizations were the main actors supporting refugees. While many organizations primarily provided clothing and food for the refugee people, housing organizations such as Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH), in cooperation with other partners, committed to providing housing for refugees. Providing housing for refugees fleeing the war was particularly important in the field of medium- and long-term housing solutions. Most solutions available were different forms of institutional accommodation (shelters) and ad hoc, courtesy housing offered by individuals. Habitat for Humanity Hungary (HFHH), together with From Streets to Homes! Association (ULE) launched a solidarity housing program in the spring of 2022, working with homeowners who rented their apartments to refugees from Ukraine for free or at a much lower price than the market rate for a period of between two weeks and six months. HFHH provided the logistics, while ULE was responsible for social work, legal issues and general management. From the summer of 2022, the program was transformed into a rental support program. A separate report describes this program in detail.²

In addition to working with ULE, HFHH assisted other organizations supporting refugees by providing material donations, and by contributing to the renovation of housing facilities and community centers. Their aim was to help as many refugees as possible to have a safe home. The focus was not on specifying the client base, but on providing a tailored service to organizations. Initially, there was a lack of resources, so donations already in HFHH's possession were primarily provided to organizations operating in the border area close to Ukraine. Thus, HFHH first worked with Caritas Hungary of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Nyíregyháza, which was active along the border, providing services to refugees in the Barabás crossing area, and with the Budapest Methodological Center of Social Policy and Its Institutions (BMSZKI), which was involved in the support of refugees in Budapest at the beginning of the war. HFHH then contacted the Pest County organization of the Hungarian Red Cross, Kalunba Social Service Non-Profit Ltd. and Strázsza Tanya Social Cooperative.

The aim of the research is to analyze the bilateral cooperations between Habitat for Humanity Hungary and the five organizations, the nature and process of support, the problems encountered in the common work and the future of the cooperation between the organizations. The analysis is based on interviews with program implementers of the

² See: Czirfusz, Márton, Pósfai, Zsuzsanna (2023): The possibilities and limits of a mid- and long-term housing program for refugees arriving from Ukraine to Hungary. Evaluation of the housing program run by From Streets to Homes! Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary. Periféria Policy and Research Center, Budapest.

organizations. In the recommendations section, we present options to address the gaps identified in the cooperation, and we present some dilemmas concerning material donations to refugees from war.

In the research report, we first describe the role of the organizations supported by HFHH in service provision to refugees. Then we assess how HFHH has provided donations and other services, the experience of funding the program, and options for the way forward. The paper concludes with a recommendations section. The Appendix contains a list of interviews and the interview outlines.

Presentation of the HFHH partner organizations

In this section, we present the five partner organizations that HFHH supported with donations or other services, with a special focus on their work providing services for refugees from Ukraine.

HFHH initially worked with Caritas Hungary and BMSZKI. HFHH later contacted three more organizations: the Hungarian Red Cross Pest County organization, Kalunba Social Service Non-Profit Ltd. and Strázsa Tanya Social Cooperative.

Caritas Hungary

When the war broke out, Habitat for Humanity Hungary sought to provide assistance to church and civil organizations in the Ukrainian-Hungarian border region, mainly through material donations. This is how it came into contact with Caritas Hungary, which carries out charitable activities in the Greek Catholic diocese of Nyíregyháza. After the beginning of the invasion against Ukraine in February 2022, the organization was given the task of providing for refugees arriving in Hungary through the Barabás crossing point (the different border crossings were distributed among different aid organizations). In response to the crisis, the organization primarily provided clothing, durable food and other immediate necessities to the refugees. Families who were unable to continue their journey from the border settlements were provided with accommodation there. In total, they were in contact with 70 families, but by the spring of 2023 most families had moved on or gone back to Ukraine, so the number of clients in contact with the organization has steadily decreased. Currently there are 25-30 refugees living in the diocese with whom the organization is in contact.

Budapest Methodological Center of Social Policy and Its Institutions (BMSZKI)

This organization of the Budapest central municipality opened their first refugee shelter in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. This shelter is on Gyáli street in Budapest, with 100 beds. As the shelter was

full immediately after opening, the Bányai Street homeless shelter was also freed up to accommodate 60 refugees. Initially, the aim was to provide short-term assistance as crisis accommodation, but as the war dragged on and the lack of long-term housing became more and more acute, the most vulnerable refugees remained in the BMSZKI shelters, unable to move on to independent housing. Today, 99% of the clients are families of Roma origin from Transcarpathia, for whom social work, mental and psychological support is essential. Between February 26, 2022 and December 31, 2022 the organization provided shelter to 964 people altogether. Initially, the two shelters were 100% full. Families with children are now accommodated in separate rooms, which means that fewer than the maximum capacity of 160 people can be accommodated.³ BMSZKI aims to help families move towards independent housing through personalized social work, mental health and psychological support and educational assistance. The clients have different needs, many come from very disadvantaged backgrounds, with high rates of illiteracy and abuse. Ongoing social services and the mental, health and physical needs of refugees can be met through intensive, and resource-intensive social and psychological work. BMSZKI continues to provide services to homeless people in Budapest alongside the Ukrainian refugees, so there is insufficient time and capacity to maintain all areas of service provision. For the refugees living in shelters, assistance is provided by external service providers (e.g. SOS Children's Village Hungary Foundation, Terre des Hommes Foundation, Emma Association, Menedék - Association for Migrants and the Hungarian Helsinki Committee). Coordinating work with them is also a major task. Meanwhile, meeting donors' expectations, taking into account professional criteria and maintaining day-to-day operations is very difficult in a situation where it is not predictable how long the work of service provision to refugees will last, nor how long the financial resources are secured to continue the support activities.

Hungarian Red Cross Pest County organization

The Hungarian Red Cross Refugee Center rents residential properties and accommodation in various schemes, which serve as reception points. Refugee clients receive free accommodation and board, and there is no time limit on the length of stay.⁴ The Red Cross Refugee Center accommodates refugee families and individuals sent by the so-called National Protection Committee, which coordinates refugee services at the national level. In addition to housing, a range of services are available within the Red Cross for refugee families: food, medicine, hygiene, health services, training, social and psychological support, language training, cash assistance, etc. While the housing program was

³ Budapest Módszertani Szociális Központ és Intézményei (2022): Ideiglenes menekültszállások – BMSZKI. Beszámoló a 2022. évi működésről. In: 2022. évi intézményi beszámolók. Budapesti Módszertani Szociális Központ és Intézményei, Budapest. [Budapest Methodological Center of Social Policy and Its Institutions (2022): Temporary refugee shelters - BMSZKI. Report of operations in 2022. In: Institutional reports, 2022, BMSZKI.]

⁴ Czirfusz, Márton, Pósfai, Zsuzsanna (2023): The possibilities and limits of a mid- and long-term housing program for refugees arriving from Ukraine to Hungary. Evaluation of the housing program run by From Streets to Homes! Association and Habitat for Humanity Hungary. Periféria Policy and Research Center, Budapest.

funded by the UNHCR, the services are covered by other financial sources. The Red Cross is made up of territorially based units, the HFHH has contacted the Pest County organization. The reception points needed household items, which HFHH provided, and the Pest County Red Cross assisted HFHH in ensuring that the donations were targeted and appropriately distributed between the reception points. There are 80 reception points in Pest County, which can accommodate around 1000 people altogether, but this number is even higher when including the apartments rented on the private market for refugees. The county organization provides its own capacity mainly for larger shelters, reaching about 250-400 people per week. The capacity of the reception points varies widely, with between 5 and 80 people per point.

Kalunba Social Service Non-Profit Ltd.

Kalunba has been working in the field of refugee integration since 2014. Its main objective is to provide refugees with education, integration into the labor market and housing in a holistic approach, so that it can help refugee families to integrate in these three spheres at the same time. In the area of education, it has partnerships with 13 schools and provides therapy for children with special needs. Recognising that integration is only possible through the provision of adequate, affordable housing, the organization has taken on the responsibility of renting housing from the market, paying the landlords the rent and arranging who lives in the accommodation at any given time. Kalunba can also help to bridge language barriers. This form of quasi housing agency is not very common among Hungarian support organizations, as most of them do not accept to enter into rental transactions as a contracting party. However, this form of responsibility taken by the organization can be a key to success in the field of housing support to refugees.⁵ Kalunba ran the housing agency program during the first year of the war against Ukraine, renting a total of 35 apartments: some apartments were passed on between refugee families. The housing program is now coming to an end and Kalunba will only continue to provide education and social work. The employment assistance has been successful in the past, they had supported 90 refugees in finding jobs so far. The organization's aim is to link housing and employment: they want employers to provide housing assistance for refugee employees in contact with Kalunba.

Strázsa Tanya Social Cooperative

Strázsa Tanya is a social cooperative that has been operating since 2010 and provides employment, training and education for disadvantaged, disabled people and people with reduced working capacity. Since the full-scale invasion

⁵ Pósfai, Zsuzsanna, Szabó, Linda (2021): Policy analysis and proposal for the improvement of the housing of beneficiaries of international protection in Hungary. In: Kováts, András, Soltész, Béla (ed.s): Social Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in Hungary – NIEM Policy Briefs. Institute of Public Affairs, Menedék-Migránsokat Segítő Egyesület, Warszawa / Budapest.

against Ukraine in February 2022, the organization has been involved in providing services to refugees with disabilities. It mainly provides housing assistance and employment opportunities for refugees, as well as food, hygiene products and leisure activities (theater, excursions, etc.) to help them integrate. Strázsza Tanya provides accommodation for refugees from Ukraine in a 13-room guest house where each room has a private bathroom. Since February 2022, 160 refugees have stayed at Strázsza Tanya, and currently 34 are living there. The organization has been in contact with HFHH previously, when they renovated a building for supported housing (for people with disabilities) with HFHH's help.

Experience of program implementation

The importance of donations and services provided by HFHH

Habitat for Humanity Hungary supported organizations providing services to refugees mainly with household appliances and furniture. Acquiring the donations, delivering them to the beneficiaries and most logistical tasks related to the distribution of the donations were carried out by Habitat staff, thus complementing the activities of the NGOs and church organizations directly serving the refugees. Without HFHH's contribution, either the aid organizations would not have had the capacity to collect and deliver these donations to the refugees or they would have had to provide them from their own donation stocks, which would have greatly reduced their stock. Some of the items provided by HFHH had the additional advantage of being new items with a guarantee, as opposed to the second-hand donations normally available to the organizations.

Most of the donations were offered to HFHH by two companies. Wayfair provided over 100 items (mainly mattresses and beds, complete with bedding sets) and Whirlpool provided 130 household appliances (e.g. washing machine, fridge, microwave, oven, clothes dryer, iron). They also provided their partner organizations with material donations that would support the settlement of the refugee families, such as cleaning equipment, basic kitchen sets and medical supplies. At the beginning of the Russian invasion in February 2022, mattresses and camp beds were delivered to the Hungarian side of the Ukrainian-Hungarian border, as some of the refugees were accommodated in schools and gyms during the first weeks. Caritas Hungary also received sleeping bags, tents and fire starting equipment, but as the refugees were accommodated in private houses in Barabás, the camp equipment received from Habitat was transferred to Transcarpathia. HFHH was able to provide the necessary equipment for the care of children, including baby bedding, prams and feeding equipment to the organizations - such as BMSZKI - which were caring for infants and young children.

In addition to material donations, they also helped with other services such as rodent control and administrative assistance (e.g. help with passport applications). There were some needs from the organizations which HFHH could not meet because they were not part of their mission. For example, there was a need for durable food and clothing from the partner organizations. HFHH did not contribute to the provision of durable food and clothing because, to their knowledge, other organizations providing assistance to refugees were focused on providing these items. HFHH aimed to provide material donations that were not available from other organizations.

In addition to material donations, HFHH also took a role in **renovating buildings**. For Strázsa Tanya, they helped to build a community center, mainly by financing the cost of building materials, paying for the work of craftsmen, and providing solar panels and air conditioning for the community center. HFHH also helped to renovate the roof of an apartment for refugee families from Ukraine. In the case of BMSZKI, HFHH built a kitchen in one of the shelters, which allowed refugee persons accommodated there to cook together. In this case, HFHH took over all the investment costs from BMSZKI (tiling, building electricity and water systems, etc.).

After contacting the five partner organizations, HFHH told them which needs they could meet. As a first step in the donation process, the partner organizations carried out an **internal survey on the needs of the refugees**.

The Hungarian Red Cross Pest County organization carried out several rounds of screening of needs at the reception points: it was important for them to recommend to HFHH for intervention the sites where the social workers would take responsibility in monitoring the donation process and in managing contacts with refugee households. In the sites which were more difficult to reach or which had higher staff turnover, the Red Cross did not propose to place the material assets provided by HFHH. The reliability and stability of the reception points was therefore the most important factor influencing the placement of the appliances. The reception points had a cooperation agreement with HFHH, so the Red Cross acted as an intermediary in the process, not taking on the follow-up of the assets due to the lack of capacity of the organization. In the case of Kalunba, the organization also carried out a needs assessment and decided where more household items and furniture were needed for the refugees based on the conditions of the housing. Strázsa Tanya also consulted with refugee families about their needs for equipment. In the case of Caritas Hungary, it was the diocese that identified an initial pool of clients, and the charity organization selected beneficiaries for the HFHH donations from this pool. HFHH staff also visited the families before delivering the donations, thus making sure that the appliances would support those who are most in need.

The requests received from partner organizations were aggregated by HFHH to assess how well they match the range and number of appliances available to them. The final list of appliances offered to each organization was agreed with the organizations concerned. Once the equipment had been purchased, it was generally delivered in large quantities to the headquarters of the five organizations. As regards the work of HFHH, the five organizations had different opinions: while one organization perceived the delivery of donations as imprecise and unclear (not always knowing

the timing of the arrival of the donations, not always informing the field staff of the arrival of the donations, etc.), while the other four organizations highlighted the precision of HFHH's operations, reporting a rapid response to needs, punctual arrival and smooth flow of information. There was also a difference between organizations as to whether HFHH delivered donations to the organizations' headquarters or directly to the families. While in the case of the Hungarian Red Cross Pest County organization, the equipment was delivered to the individual reception points, in the case of Kalunba and Caritas Hungary the donations were delivered directly to the families, thus HFHH also took care of the logistical tasks of distribution. Strázsa Tanya and BMSZKI forwarded the donations from their own warehouses to the individual clients after the central collection, so that they could even provide items from the remaining stock to the beneficiaries who would later be included in their programs.

During the receipt of the appliances, the Hungarian Red Cross Pest County organization reported documentation gaps. It would have been preferable to sign an acknowledgment of receipt after the receipt of the assets, because the lack of such documentation led to difficulties in the cooperation between the two organizations. No other organization reported the absence of a receipt.

In order for the assets to serve refugee families for a long period of time, it is important that they are **covered by a guarantee**. The material assets provided by Habitat for Humanity Hungary can be divided into two groups. The first group consists of assets donated to HFHH, for which there is no guarantee, as HFHH itself received these donations without any guarantee. The second group consists of donations purchased by HFHH on the basis of the needs of the organizations, with a guarantee and a declaration of warranty. In case of failure of the equipment, efforts were made to replace the equipment from the stock on reserve. If this was not possible and the cost of repair was low, then HFHH undertook the reparation of the equipment. According to the organizations, they have not yet been informed of any donations of faulty equipment. Nevertheless, the organizations claim that it is not clear who is responsible for the repair of material assets, and they suggest that the procedure and responsibilities of maintenance and repair should be formulated in a contract with HFHH.

According to the HFHH staff, there may also be problems with the **installation of the devices**, which was the experience in a case of a client of From Streets to Homes! Association in their housing program. In this case a refugee family tried to install the device after it was delivered, but the device failed due to a faulty connection. HFHH was able to deliver the items, but did not have the expertise to install the equipment. In this case, HFHH claims that the family should bear the service costs for the broken device, they are not responsible for the maintenance of the device. The five partner organizations in the donations program have not yet encountered any problems with the maintenance of the devices. The BMSZKI has both a maintenance person and a caretaker, so that the repair of the devices can be carried out within the organization. However, the responsibilities between HFHH and each partner

organization should also be clarified in this case to avoid possible misunderstandings between the cooperating organizations.

As with maintenance responsibility, it is important to clarify who owns the assets and who has the right to use the objects. If the refugee family using the equipment leaves the accommodation or is no longer in contact with the organization providing the assistance, the question of whether they can take the equipment with them or whether the equipment belongs to the organization may legitimately arise. Similarly, if for some reason the organization does not continue to assist refugee persons, there may be a question as to whether it should return the donations to HFHH.

The **ownership of assets** was reported differently by organizations. HFHH claims that the household appliances were owned by the organizations they supported and then given to the families only for use. Their aim with this arrangement was that if the family moved on from the host organization, the next occupants of the same accommodation could use the household appliances. Items of lesser value (e.g. school supplies, basic kitchen equipment, items for the care of young children) were transferred to the family, as personal items could continue to serve the family after they moved on.

Strázsa Tanya and BMSZKI confirmed the position stated by HFHH: their understanding was that the organization owns the high-value assets, giving them to the refugee families for use, and the small donations of less than 200.000 HUF (cc 530 EUR) value were the property of the family. Assets and small donations cannot be sold by the families. The three other organizations, however, disagreed with HFHH's position. In the case of Kalunba, the families own the assets and can take them with them when they leave the program. Caritas Hungary keeps a record of who has received household items of higher value and the family has an obligation to inform them if they terminate their relationship with the organization. However, our interview partner from this organization was unable to say whether in such cases they could keep the appliances or whether they would have to return them to Caritas or to HFHH. The Pest County organization of the Hungarian Red Cross reported a lack of registration of the assets in their inventory, which - according to the organization - was due to the unpredictable arrival of the appliances. Thus, they could not take on the legal and financial responsibility of taking ownership of the assets. They are currently working to clarify the process: the aim is to write acknowledgements of receipt which serve as background documentation proving that HFHH delivered the appliances directly to the families, but the Red Cross does not track what happens to the equipment and does not take responsibility for it. The differing organizational arrangements of the five organizations may be explained by the initial difficulties in providing services to refugees: under-resourced organizations had to meet needs in a rapidly changing legal environment. The state did not play a cohesive, coordinating role and provided virtually no financial support to organizations supporting refugees. Moreover, legislation guiding the organizations was amended on a monthly to bi-monthly basis, making long-term planning difficult. In this chaotic situation, it was difficult to implement cross-organizational solutions without making mistakes and clarifying all the details. Thus, the

initial omissions and lack of documentation had to be remedied a year later. Goodwill and partnership are therefore given, but the organizations will still have to develop and improve administrative procedures.

A similar lack of clarity has arisen in **contracting between HFHH and the organizations** it supports. HFHH intended to conclude a framework contract with the organizations concerned, but this has not been done until today. A contract could provide a framework for donations, which would help to avoid the misinterpretations mentioned above and could lead to avoiding further misunderstandings. However, according to the organizations interviewed, the absence of a framework contract allowed for flexibility in the way organizations could work together, as it is more difficult to amend a contract than a verbal agreement. In their view, it was precisely the absence of a framework contract that allowed them to sometimes receive assistance from HFHH beyond the agreed framework, based on their needs. Nevertheless, we believe that it is possible to set up a framework contract that is beneficial to both parties but also ensures the possibility of effective cooperation.

Experience of financing the program

The program was mainly funded by international donors. The largest amount of funding was received through Habitat for Humanity International's Europe and the Middle East (EME) office in Bratislava. The HFHI EME office had the contracts with the donor organizations, HFHH as a legal entity in Hungary did not have any contractual relationship with the donors. The availability of domestic funds was more limited, these mainly came from companies which approached HFHH with their donations in a targeted manner. Targeted, flexible funding was available to help people fleeing war. As the war progressed, the range of resources also changed: while in the first weeks and months after February 2022, donors supported short-term assistance with in-kind donations, later, as the resettlement of refugees in other countries became more certain, donor organizations increasingly favored programs that supported long-term integration.

The five organizations we interviewed made the following suggestions to donor organizations (in general, beyond this specific program):

1. Adopting a professional, complex approach

Organizations supporting refugees in Hungary often face the problem (beyond the current program) that the framework of funding organizations is incompatible with the reality and needs on the ground. On the one hand, organizations have reported a lack of complex, professional thinking: donors sometimes do not understand what the organization needs, what is required for integrated care (providing housing, labor market opportunities, educational assistance, etc.). Thus, providing material donations without a needs assessment is not successful. On the other hand, it is important to review whether the rules and guidelines formulated in the different contexts of the donor

organizations are applicable in the same way in the Hungarian context. Donor organizations need to have sufficient knowledge of the area they are supporting in order to be able to provide appropriate, context-specific support.

2. Flexibility in the aid framework

In many cases, additional needs and considerations that were not identified at the planning stage will emerge during the course of implementing the services. It is important for the donor and the recipient organizations to be prepared for this: the work carried out by the recipient organization should be monitored, and complementing this, flexible rules of spending could ensure more possibilities for regrouping budget lines and using available support for a wider range of purposes. For organizations working in the field of services to refugees, it is very helpful if the donor organization can provide a flexible framework for the program implementers, according to their needs. For example, if program implementers feel that it is important to extend the duration of support in response to increasing needs, it should be possible to continue cooperation and extend contracts.

3. Personal contact with the funded organizations

For donor organizations to know where they can best intervene and what is most needed, they need to have direct contact with the institutions they support. It is important that funders consult with implementers at the planning stage, which helps the implementers to effectively fulfill their mission. Standardized forms of funding may not be appropriate, as they may not offer the opportunities that are most needed or may not respond to complex situations. It is usually preferable to have grants delivered directly to the users, and to reduce the number of organizations that act as intermediaries and simply pass on donations. In the collaboration with HFHH, organizations saw an added value in them being intermediaries, because they also gave professional support. In many cases, the administrative workload is a burden on service providing organizations, which are already understaffed: it is important to have realistic expectations of organizations supporting refugees, and to build trust in this area.

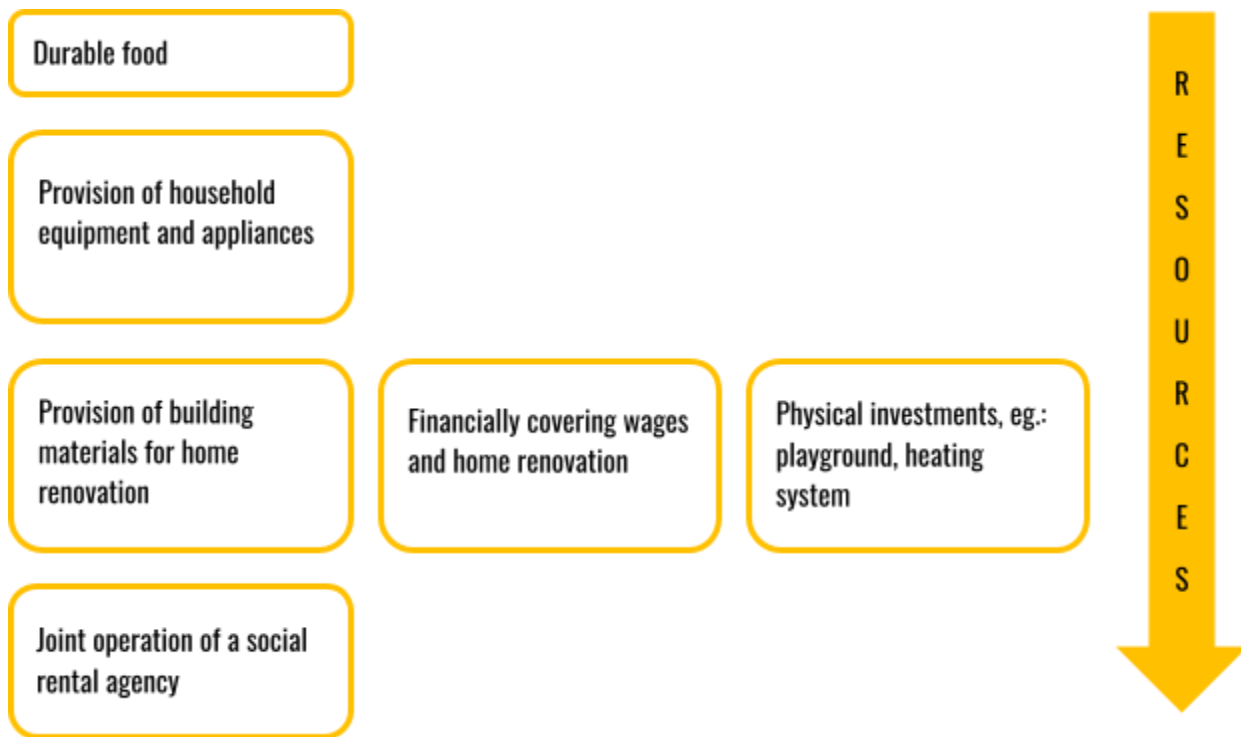
Lessons learned and ways forward

In the long term, providing affordable housing and job opportunities for adults, facilitating the integration of children into education and ensuring access to healthcare are essential for the integration of refugees. NGOs can often only provide a symptomatic response: without the engagement of the state and without regular, predictable and adequate funding for refugee support organizations, the latter cannot run high-capacity, resettlement-friendly, long-term integration programs. In an unpredictable environment, cooperation and capacity sharing between organizations is essential.

Overall, the five organizations we interviewed were satisfied with the services provided by HFHH. All organizations highlighted the values of the program, the fairness of the process and the trust-based relationship. Most organizations reported precise, predictable, reliable work: they highlighted that working with HFHH is one of the rare cases where the donor adapts to the needs of the implementing organization and not vice versa. The duration of the program is uncertain: it depends on external actors whether this cooperation will continue in the future. HFHH is keen to maintain contact with the five organizations. If funding for the program can be secured, they would continue to provide household appliances and to support organizations with renovations. In addition to these two activities, they would like to contribute to setting up long-term housing solutions, either by renovating and using empty apartments (and developing a housing agency concept for managing them, which can also involve municipalities as partners), or by building new units for housing refugees. For the moment, these are still preliminary ideas.

The partner organizations were also asked about which forms of support they would see as most helpful from HFHH. The options that emerged range widely in terms of the material and human resources needed for the intervention. Figure 1 outlines the cooperation opportunities listed by the five organizations.

Figure 1: Organizational suggestions for further cooperation with HFHH in service provision to refugees



The cooperation opportunities mentioned by the organizations have very different resource requirements. While one organization sees the provision of durable food as the most helpful (which, as mentioned above, is not a service to be provided by HFHH in the future), most organizations identified longer term and larger scale interventions as most useful - beyond the continued provision of household appliances and equipment. These longer term interventions are the provision of more complex, longer-term assistance in housing renovation towards independent housing, or the development of a housing agency run in a division of labor between organizations. In the case of housing renovations, assistance could include the provision of building materials (in which HFHH already has experience, for example in the case of the renovation of the Strázsa Tanya community house); or partial or full coverage of investment costs (e.g. electricity and water, as was done in the case of the kitchen in the BMSZKI shelter); or covering the labor costs of renovation. In a housing agency arrangement, it could be possible that while HFHH manages the renting of the flats and liaises with the landlord or the owner, the other partner provides the social work for the residents. So the scope for further cooperation is wide, but implementation depends on reliable, longer-term financial resources.

Recommendations

The material donations, logistical and renovation services provided by Habitat for Humanity Hungary to its five partner organizations have been able to fill a significant gap in the supply of services to families fleeing the war in Ukraine. However, the evaluation of the program has also identified lessons that can support the improvement of long-term assistance to refugee families.

- **Durable consumer goods are a particular asset** in service provision to households in need. They are not consumable like food; they are not personal items like clothing; they cannot be spent like cash donations or vouchers. Their prolonged use requires installation, maintenance and repair, for which the owners of the assets have to invest financial resources or skills. Organizations assisting refugee families need to ensure these capacities, and donor organizations are encouraged to include the maintenance of these durable consumer goods among the eligible costs.
- **The ownership of major household appliances used by refugee families should be clarified when planning donations.** It is recommended that the household appliances remain the property of the assisting organizations and that the appliances are given to the households only for use. When the household's relationship with the assisting organization is terminated, the equipment can be reclaimed from the users. A written agreement should be drawn up on how the costs of repair and maintenance are covered, and on the responsibilities associated with the use of the equipment. The use of household appliances also depends on the type of housing. For example, the question of ownership of appliances does not arise in the case of washing machines in the laundry room of an institutional accommodation (where it clearly belongs to the

property and is listed in the inventory of the institution). In the case of an institutional accommodation temporarily run/rented by an organization, the owner of the property may also need to be involved in the agreement on how assets are owned. Clients living in private homes may also have very different contractual relationships with the property, which may also have an impact on the ownership of household appliances. When providing household appliances or furniture as material donations, it is necessary to take this into account. As the financial resources available for supporting refugees from Ukraine are expected to decrease in 2023 and 2024, but the needs are not decreasing, it is necessary to consider that the needs of future clients will likely need to be met with the equipment already in the system.

- In the case of cooperation between organizations assisting refugees, **we recommend concluding a framework contract setting out the details of the cooperation.** The framework contract should include the services to be provided by the partners to each other, the responsibilities of the partners, the methods of communication between the two organizations and the external communication. When donating material goods, it is important to have a protocol in place that deals with some details essential for the refugee household - e.g. handover, delivery of goods. When dealing with clients, attention should also be paid to data protection issues if client personal data needs to be shared between the two organizations in order to provide the service. Framework contracts should, according to our interviewees, provide flexibility (i.e. not be over-regulated) to 'fit' different clients and more complex cases within the scope of the contract. The different circumstances of HFHH's partner organizations also highlighted the need for framework contracts to be different in content - e.g. the same washing machine as a donation could be delivered under a different contractual framework to an institutional shelter or to an organization working with clients in private housing.
- **The relationship of trust built up between organizations creates further opportunities for cooperation. Habitat for Humanity Hungary has particular expertise in longer-term, more complex collaborations with a housing component.** Some of the partner organizations have not previously worked with refugee housing, and some of the refugee-support organizations have not previously run housing programs. Habitat for Humanity Hungary's decades of experience in property renovation and construction projects are of great help to organizations that also run housing program components for refugees arriving from Ukraine. HFHH's previous policy advocacy work, such as the Black Apartment Campaign⁶ advocating for the better legal-institutional regulation of private rentals, or the proposals on the institutional framework of social rental agencies, can contribute to the creation of secure and affordable housing for refugee households in the long term in Hungary.

⁶ <https://habitat.hu/sites/feketelakas/>

Appendix

List of interviews

Szervezet	Az interjú időpontja	Az interjúalany munkaköre
Habitat for Humanity Hungary	April 12, 2023	director; colleagues responsible for communications, donations, logistics
Caritas Hungary (Nyíregyháza)	April 13, 2023	director
Kalunba Social Service Non-Profit Ltd.	April 13, 2023	director
Hungarian Red Cross Pest County organization	April 14, 2023	director
Strázsa Tanya Social Cooperative	April 20, 2023	director
BMSZKI	May 2, 2023	colleagues responsible for methodology and for donations

Interview outlines

Interview with organizations

Presentation of the organization

How do you help refugees from Ukraine?

- Do you have a narrower target group of refugees?
- How many households are you currently assisting?

The process of entering the program

- How did you come into contact with Habitat? How did the two organizations find each other to help refugees from Ukraine together?
- Were you in contact with Habitat before the war broke out? If so, in what way?
- How does the organization's work fit into the service provided by Habitat?
- How did the onboarding process go, how smooth was it?
- Was there any written agreement between Habitat and the organization on what assistance they would provide to each other and under what conditions?
 - Is there anything missing from the contract?

Assistance provided by Habitat

- What assistance did Habitat provide to the organization?
- What donations have you received from Habitat?
- Why exactly did you need these donations?
- Were there any donations you needed that Habitat was unable to provide?
- Who owns the appliances? The family, the organization or Habitat?
- Who decides who gets the appliances?
 - What criteria or principle is used to distribute the appliances?
 - What happens to the appliances when the family is no longer in the program? Can they keep the assets or do they have to be returned to the organization (possibly Habitat)?
- Other than donations, could Habitat help in any other way?
 - If other needs arose, were they able to help with other supplies?
 - If the family needed to move, did Habitat assist in moving the family, transporting the supplies?

Evaluation of working with Habitat

- Overall, how do you rate your cooperation with Habitat?
- What was your experience of the contact, how available was the Habitat staff?
- What was the experience in terms of acquiring the equipment, distribution of donations?
 - How predictable was Habitat?
 - How accurately were the supplies delivered, were the tasks completed on time?
 - Did they provide assistance in getting the supplies?
- What was the experience with the quality of the assets?
 - Is there a guarantee on the appliances?
 - In case of malfunctioning equipment, did Habitat undertake to repair the equipment or to purchase new equipment?
- Has anything been requested from the organization that Habitat could not provide?
- What do you think Habitat could do to improve? What else would be of great help to the organization?
- Is the collaboration still ongoing?
 - What are the plans for further cooperation? What is the organization's perspective on how to continue?

Interview with Habitat for Humanity Hungary

Background

- What was the preliminary concept of Habitat's donation and service delivery?
- What funding is being used to implement the program?
- What is the experience internationally, how difficult is it to find funding?

About donations

- Where do donations come from?
- To what extent have they built on previous relationships with donors (i.e. from whom Habitat has received the appliances) and to what extent were these new relationships established after the outbreak of the war?
- What types of donations does Habitat provide?
 - Are the donated items owned by the families or by the organization?
- Why were these particular donations provided?
- Why do these appliances help, what purpose do they serve?
- How did Habitat's donations help the families, and what other acute care needs did the families have?
- Do the donated appliances have guarantees?
- Once the equipment was provided, did they help to explain how to use it or provide for its continued care?
- Can Habitat play any role in ensuring that these equipments can be used in the long term?

Other services

- What other services are provided to organizations, other than donations, based on what criteria and procedures?
 - In this case, can they provide guarantees and assistance in their use?
 - In which cases are these services provided (e.g. renovation, relocation) and what is your experience?

Organizational capacities

- How many people from Habitat have worked on these contacts and with what capacity (how many hours per week)?
- How has the program evolved over time? When did they start, when was the peak/lowpoint? Were there multiple waves? Is the collaboration still ongoing?

Organizations, target group

- Who was the target group of refugees, was there a more narrowly defined target group?

- How was it decided where to channel donations, was there a criteria system, prioritization in the selection of organizations?
- Was Habitat in contact with these organizations before the war broke out? If so, in what way? How did the two organizations find each other in helping refugees from Ukraine?
- How many households are currently reached through the organizations?
- Was there a written agreement between Habitat and the partner organizations on what assistance they would provide to each other and under what conditions?
- Did they have any influence on who within the organizations received the appliances? Do they want to have a say in this?
- How can they be sure that the resources and equipment are going to the right place?
- What experience do they have of working with the organizations?
- What has worked well, what difficulties have arisen?
- How can the current set-up be improved?
- What help was requested by partner organizations that Habitat was unable to provide?
- What was the role of international organizations (e.g. UNHCR) in building and maintaining links between supply needs and organizations?

Future plans

- Are there plans to open up to new organizations?
- What is the organization's perspective on continuation?
- Do you have the financial resources to take this project into the longer term or are there no additional resources?