



**REPORT FROM STEFAN ROMANIW OAM**  
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**Visit to Ukraine December 2022**

Regular visits to Ukraine are like regular check-ups to keep your finger on the pulse. It's a reality check that assists in making decisions based on what is happening on the ground.

My recent visit was a Ukrainian World Congress (UWC) and Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organisations (AFUO) mission.

The UWC presented Ministers, Government representatives and representatives of those fighting on the ground the support the UWC and its members are providing.

Reports can be found on the [Ukrainian World Congress](#) website.

Pavlo Grod, President UWC, staff Andrij Potichny, Olha Fediuk, Serhij Kasayanchuk and myself attended meeting in various combinations.

We as a diaspora have contributed in excess of \$500 million of support, including \$600,000 for the United24 Drone project, and much more.

**Advocacy - calling on Governments to support Ukraine.**

There was an opportunity to raise Australian support issues.

The AFUO has through its humanitarian aid program sent over \$25m medical and humanitarian aid. We support aid programs such as refurbishing shelters with Rotary for displaced people in Ukraine and providing the Nazaret Rehabilitation Program with Caritas (see below). The AFUO has also lobbied the Australian Government for military support for Ukraine – 90 Bushmasters have been promised by the Government, and we are now calling for 155 mm calibre field guns.

Our meetings with the below Ukrainian Government representatives gave us valuable insights into the latest tactics/strategy of Russian aggression and gave us an opportunity to test our work against the standard:

- Dmytro Kuleba - Minister for Foreign Affairs
- Kyrylo Budanov - Head of Intelligence MoD
- Meri Akopian - Deputy Minister for Internal Affairs

The asks continue:

- Lobby for support in the Asia Pacific area
- Generators
- Russia Terrorist State
- Sanctions against Russia
- Support for displaced people in Ukraine



- Rebuilding program
- Fighting russian propaganda
- Response to 'ruskij mir' is to build a Ukrainian environment.

## Church leadership

A UWC delegation met with:

- Blazenishy Sviatoslav Shevchuk UGCC
- Blazenishy Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine Epiphany



The meeting provided insight into the situations and relations with the Vatican and Constantinople.

Churches play a major role in ensuring that spiritual comfort is provided, and that Ukrainian identity is maintained.

The issue of church calendars was raised. Both churches at this time are leaving it up to people to decide as to how they celebrate Christmas.

There was agreement with a war raging in Ukraine, this was not the time to have widespread discussions about the issue.

The change of calendar is not only about moving one or two dates but has further consequences. These issues are not insurmountable but require time and work.



## AFUO work in Ukraine

The AFUO has been working in Ukraine with Caritas and Rotary for over 8 years. From the start of the invasion, we have provided wide ranging support.

Our Humanitarian Aid Initiatives subcommittee or Logistic committee have done a superb job.

Our programs are funded by the Ukraine Crisis Appeal through the generosity of over 12,000 donors. They are carefully developed with our partners to improve the quality of life of war affected civilians and veterans in Ukraine.

## Visits

### Shelters project - Irpin

Together with Rotary we are working in supporting PEOPLE in need.

On the visit to Irpin it was heartening to see children, mothers, fathers, and elderly people who had lost everything, being cared for and provided with warm accommodation and food.



Whilst they have lost everything, they are so grateful that they are not forgotten.



Driving through these war-torn areas destroyed to the ground by the russians, people want to rebuild. In the first instance they want to rebuild their lives mentally, and then think of a material rebuild.

A 92-year-old woman told me her story “After birth my parents gave me away. I survived. I survived WWII. I built a life. I had a house. Now I have nothing because of the russians. I am grateful for the mattress, bed linen (feel how soft it is), a pillow and that I am warm. Everything will be OK.”

I had the privilege to play St. Nicholas to the children of Irpin and Bucha. A box of chocolates and their eyes lit up. They were so grateful. A bit different to our lives here!

The Irpin and other Shelter projects must stay a priority. During winter, staying warm and being dry are critical to those fighting and to those who have nowhere to grow.

### **Nazaret**

*For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty, and you gave me drink, I was a stranger, and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup> I was naked, and you clothed me, I was sick, and you visited me, I was in prison, and you came to me. <sup>37</sup> ....., 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers,<sup>[a]</sup> you did it to me.'*



This passage best describes the work of a joint project with AFUO and Caritas at Nazaret Rehabilitation Centre in Drohobych, Ukraine.

A fantastic piece of Jesus' work. This is a place for those with addictions to alcohol or drugs; those from the front returning with depression; mothers with addiction and their children; the elderly with nowhere to go; those with serious medical problems, e.g. requiring dialysis; and those who have lost everything because of the invasion.



AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF UKRAINIAN ORGANISATIONS  
СОЮЗ УКРАЇНСЬКИХ ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙ АВСТРАЛІЇ

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I visited with Dr Maryna Poturai, a psychiatrist who works there. Speaking to those undergoing treatment, the elderly lying in beds, and the workers was an eye opener. It's a guided program based very much on self-help – getting people motivated.



We were greeted at the gate by a former prisoner who had been in prison many times, a drug addict who went through the program and fell over...he came back. He said, "I feel safe here."

I visited what resembles a gymnasium – an outlet for many who are locked in their lives, some who need physical rehabilitation.

In discussions i.e., how much to make this a real gym which would require AUS\$20,000, I see a challenge to us, those who love sport and fitness! It is our chance to do our bit of Jesus' work!

Fr Vasyl Bilas, an exceptional orator and spiritual director does amazing work at the centre. Fr Ihor Kozankevych, who heads up Nazaret, has a vision - to secure land and build a purpose-built facility. He continues to dream. "It will be completed," he said over a bowl of borscht.

From an AFUO perspective, I was very proud that we are associated with doing people's work. Our Humanitarian Aid Initiatives Director Darko Senko is in regular contact with the team at Nazaret.

Having witnessed what happens there, having seen from the youngest to the oldest, from the physically to the mentally ill, it is evident this is a project worth supporting – something that possibly not only the AFUO, but our churches and other organisations could eventually consider supporting.