**Ukrainian Refugees in Deep Water**

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Expeditiously swelling to more than three million, Ukrainian refugees are the worst victim of the war between Ukraine and Russia.

With the trauma of leaving their own homes, bombarded neighbourhoods, dead bodies of dear ones and exodus miseries, evacuees feel completely doomed.

Their lives are shredded. They do not know how to cope with war-related pangs. Given the perilous humanitarian situation that showcases hideous effects on children’s innocent hearts and minds, anguishing evacuation of physically impaired people, elderly’s health suffering, pregnant women’s precariousness, Ukraine refugees have plunged into unending awfulness.

They are compelled to get battered with the onslaught of war hardships despite the fact that they have nothing to do with War. They never wanted the war that was imposed upon them; putting them into a deadly tailspin.

Among the displaced influx, unaccompanied minors, single mothers and orphans are in dire straits. Their rescue and rehabilitation remain a bigger challenge.

One of the biggest challenges for the EU is to ensure normalcy for the displaced children.

There have been countless painful scenes and various sob stories but one revelation would make any heart flutter. Ukrainian men have been barred from leaving the country lest they need to be called on to fight. “One woman, Evgenia, has just crossed from Ukraine with her daughter. She says her husband stayed behind and she doesn’t yet know if he will be called to fight,” revealed a media report.

That is why on most of the crossings, there is a dramatic gender imbalance — the refugees are almost all women and children. UN spokeswoman Joung-ah Ghedini-Williams told the media that it was mostly women and children making the crossing into Poland, with some waiting for over 24 hours. In some cases, children were travelling with distant relatives or family members who returned to Ukraine after dropping them off, she said.

As a flood of refugees is on the rise, concentration infrastructures at various places have been showing an insufficiency to accommodate the fast influx.

Displaced Ukraine refugees wearing fur coats and carrying pets or babies have empty eyes with no prospects in their minds. It seems their eyes have been dried by their displacement ordeal. Long lines of Ukrainians in winter coats can be seen waiting to board buses that will take them to big cities further west and away from war.

Apart from refugees’ living conditions, many kind-hearted volunteers from various bordering areas have been turning up for rescue. As per media reports, one Polish volunteer Tom Madry has been driving here every day to help, and right now keeps unloading palettes of water from the back of a truck.

“There are tons of people trying to help, but it’s very difficult to organize in a very structured way,” he said. “For example, here is the soup, here is just a fireplace for refugees to warm up, here is just a pile of trash.” “It could be better organized, but I have no idea how to organize it better.”

A few miles up the road, an indoor reception centre holds resources for people planning the next leg of their journey. It’s an entire ecosystem that sprung up in just two weeks.

It is heartening that global rescue efforts have been exerted. The UN’s High Commission for Refugees estimates that 12 million people inside Ukraine will need assistance. It says people in southern Ukraine desperately need assistance like bedding, medication and heating – and that food, water and shelter are desperately needed in the east. The UN says it is offering humanitarian assistance inside Ukraine “wherever necessary and possible.” This includes: delivering supplies from west to east, including food and tarpaulins for homes damaged by shelling providing folding beds to people in bomb shelters, setting up reception and transit points for internally-displaced people. The EU believes the total number of refugees could climb to seven million.

From my perspective, the EU response to the Ukraine refugee crisis is enormous showing the “unprecedented” unity of 27 countries. EU home affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson told journalists that “Unfortunately, things are getting worse, the bombs are falling, more people are being killed, we are going to see more and more people fleeing. We don’t know exactly how many but I should guess many millions will come.”

More than two million refugees have flooded into the EU in the two weeks since Russia invaded.

The bloc has rushed to grant those fleeing temporary protection as it grapples with one of the fastest-growing crises on the continent since World War II.

One of the biggest challenges for the EU is to ensure normalcy for the displaced children to make them go to school, or to childcare that facilitates parents to work and be a part of the new society. Brussels has announced €500 million (S$740 million) in initial emergency funding to help deal with the humanitarian consequences of the war. Officials are also pushing to release another €420 million in additional support to help integrate arrivals and say that billions more could go towards supporting the refugees.

Meanwhile, the UK is also launching a new visa scheme to help people host Ukrainian refugees in their homes. Under the Homes for Ukraine scheme, which is now being launched, people in the UK will be able to nominate an individual or family to stay with them rent-free, or in another property, for at least six months. Applications will be made online, and both hosts and refugees will be vetted. Hosts will receive £350 a month and there will be no cap on the numbers able to come to the UK.

Refugees are told they do not need documents, but should preferably have their internal or foreign passports, birth certificates of children travelling with them and medical documentation.

To get refugee status, they need to be Ukrainian citizens or people legally living in Ukraine, such as foreign students. The government of Poland, which has received the highest number of refugees, has said it will need more money than the EU is currently offering to host the number of people arriving there.

Moldova, which has by far the largest concentration of refugees per capita, has also appealed for international help in dealing with the numbers arriving.

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