



BWB Backpacks for Ukraine - MANUAL

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This manual has been created specifically in the context of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, with the aim to initiate action and to share information and resources to create backpacks for Ukrainian refugees. [This manual is a work in progress and we will update it as the situation progresses and with the feedback we get.](#)

1) DON'T PANIC AND DON'T CREATE MORE PROBLEMS

It is normal and human to feel strongly about such a situation, you are not a robot, congratulations! ;) Breathe in, breathe out, slow down, talk to a friend.

Please don't let your emotions impair your judgment. We are all willing to help here. But **we don't want our help to become a burden, and our energy and money to be lost.**

We need a clear mind and focus, if we want to take informed, analysis-based and efficient decisions and actions.

Understanding the local context, its evolution over the course of hours and days, what people lack... **THEIR needs have to be at the core of this action, not yours and your assumptions.** Surely, some local people and organizations where you live, already have experience and practice with refugees or relief support that they can share. Make sure what and where is needed. Backpacks sent to borders and backpacks gifted in your city will look very different.

2) MAKE A LIST OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS

Make sure to **map what is already happening** in your area. **You can plug in your backpack initiative** to some organization or groups so **you don't have to invent the wheel all over again!** Look at what programs they have, what services they provide, see where you can plug in or enrich their efforts, or how they can help you. You might want to prioritize those where you have direct contacts already.

Get in touch with them. Try to get the details of a person / point of contact for each organization, if you can. Introduce the backpack project. Talk about the possibilities of collaborating.

Don't forget it doesn't need to be "organizations" all the time but FB groups, Ukrainian expats living in your country/city, active individuals...

REMEMBER, this is just the beginning. If you can't help now and you need to organize first, it is OK! There will be help needed for quite some time.

Here is [MASTERSHEET](#) where we/you collect all the information in your respective countries. It is editable for anyone so please be careful what you write where and make sure you don't delete someone else's information. **It is a PUBLIC document so make sure to put in contacts of people who are ok with that! For security reasons we would advise not to put contacts of people in Russia, we do not want to put anyone in danger.**

3) WORK ON THE MEANS OF DISTRIBUTION

Clarify what and where is your focus.

Population is being displaced internally inside the country of Ukraine, away from border areas and main cities. A lot of women, oftentimes with teenagers and kids, have crossed the border and are being hosted by local people or relatives in other countries.

The neighboring countries of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, that have a border with Ukraine, will likely host the most refugees. And/or be on the route to Czechia, Austria, Germany, Baltics and the North to take the refugee load, at least in the days and weeks following the beginning of the conflict.

DO YOU WANT TO:

- > distribute backpacks to Ukrainian refugees that have been welcome in your own country?
- > send support to their neighboring countries that host the most people?
- > try to find a way (likely complex) to support the displaced population inside of Ukrainian borders?

This will very much influence the content of the backpacks and with what organizations you should/have to cooperate with (especially if you want to get help inside of Ukraine).

Update on 28.2. - The list of possible content for the backpacks is currently being created in this [document](#). It should serve as inspiration and will be work in progress as the ideas come in.

Distribution

Make sure you know how to get the backpacks to those who need them. Please, ask these questions and plan with the answers.

LOCALLY:

- Do you have or can you find a place where backpacks and goods can be centralized, created, stored and sent out or picked up from?
- If the backpacks are distributed inside your city or country, have you identified a network of people, or an organization, that can pick up backpacks and distribute them to people (e.g. the Red Cross, People in need, a local association working with migrants, etc.)?
- If this is not coordinated through an existing organization, how do you call for people's help, collect their contact details and allocate missions to them? Do you have a team of volunteers that can support you with that?

ABROAD:

- If you want to send backpacks to Ukraine or to one of its neighboring countries, did you identify a peer, grassroots organization that can collect and distribute the backpacks?
- Are you sending full backpacks, or only the goods that it makes most sense to purchase in your country (make sure under what conditions the goods can cross borders!)?

IN ALL CASES:

- How do you put checks in place, in order to make sure that the backpacks have reached their target (geographically and in terms of content)?
- How do you collect feedback, so that you can readjust if what you do is not best tailored to your partner organization or the Ukrainian refugee's needs?

The borders are still real and you have to make sure that you know the conditions for sending goods across them - be it full backpacks or just goods for the backpacks to be assembled. Be aware of cross-border legislation and restrictions (for goods and for people taking them).

4) CREATE MEANINGFUL BACKPACKS

Make sure that the backpack is filled with **clean, functional and meaningful goods**. This backpack is not for things you wanted to throw away. It is aid to those in need.

If you create different targeted backpacks - for women, kids, teenagers... make sure to mark the bag so you or the distributor know to whom it should go.

Different situations = different content. Think carefully about the context where the backpack will be used.

- Is the backpack going to Ukrainian borders?

People there will need powerbanks, flashlights, isothermic foil, hand warmers pads, and a first aid kit (the whole car first aid kit might be a great idea!), wet wipes, snacks, a (hot) water bottle, warm socks, gloves, scarf, big bandana, toilet paper, women's pads, diapers, basic hygienic goods like soap and toothpaste... These people are in motion, they do not need a heavy load of things but essentials. There might not be a chance to diversify who gets what, but we can hope

people will give to others what they need. Kids will need something to comfort them - small plush toys can bring a lot of happiness. You can also add food for pets or create pet oriented backpacks.

- Is the backpack donated in your town/country?

People might not need isothermic foil anymore, but more hygienic goods, a good and compact sleeping bag, towels, vitamins, toys for kids (books, crayons, simple games). Gift cards to local shops. Imagine they are coming to a strange city so maps, lists of addresses/places of shops, services, doctors, charities, thrift shops, lawyers, translators, offices (ideally speaking Ukrainian/Russian, friendly places). Notes of encouragement and welcome.

FOOD - if you decide to add food to the backpack make sure it will last and preferable is food which does not need to be heated. If you add cans make sure they can be easily opened or add a can opener. Baby food purees are great snacks as well as trail mix, nuts, dried meat - remember what you pack for Burns. ;) **Make sure that the food can cross the border (if it should cross the border!) Do not send open, half eaten or expired things.**

KIDS - besides clothes, hygienic goods and food - special blankets, plush toys, picture books, music, crayons and papers, coloring pictures, and of course other toys... for the road something easy to grab and light, for the living in one place even balls and bigger things.

FIRST AID - if you are putting medicine in the backpacks make sure it is understandable what it is for - pain, cough, diarrhea (even google translate can help), write the notes. **Make sure that the medicine can cross the border (if it should cross the border!) Do not send open, half used or expired things.**

5) INSPIRE OTHERS

It is important to share what we do and inspire others to be active as well but we have to do it with dignity and respect. This is a humanitarian initiative in the first place and not a chance to photo shoot.

Share what you do. Share stories of the people who get the backpacks. Inspire!

But do not shove your camera to their faces, or ask for details about their personal lives and what they went through. Just because you helped them you are not entitled to their gratitude, to their lives and to their stories. **Consent is essential!!!** They are not animals in zoos, they are human beings who deserve help without being filmed or photographed unless they agree with it. Remember, kids are people too.

6) GIVE US FEEDBACK

Let the community know how everything went. Share your experiences, what worked, what didn't work so we can all learn in the process.

7) EXTRA NOTE

Not all needed things could or should be put in the backpack.

Clothing items are easily donated but coats, good shoes, warm socks and underwear, as well as clothing items for babies, are difficult to come across and always sought for. Also plus size women clothing items are less frequently donated.

Extra luggage where people can put their belongings and carry them around might be of use.

Bed linens, utensils, basic equipment for the temporary housing.

You can connect with local charities or special initiatives to donate these things. You can leave a note in the backpack with the addresses of these places, for the refugees to visit when they are settled in.