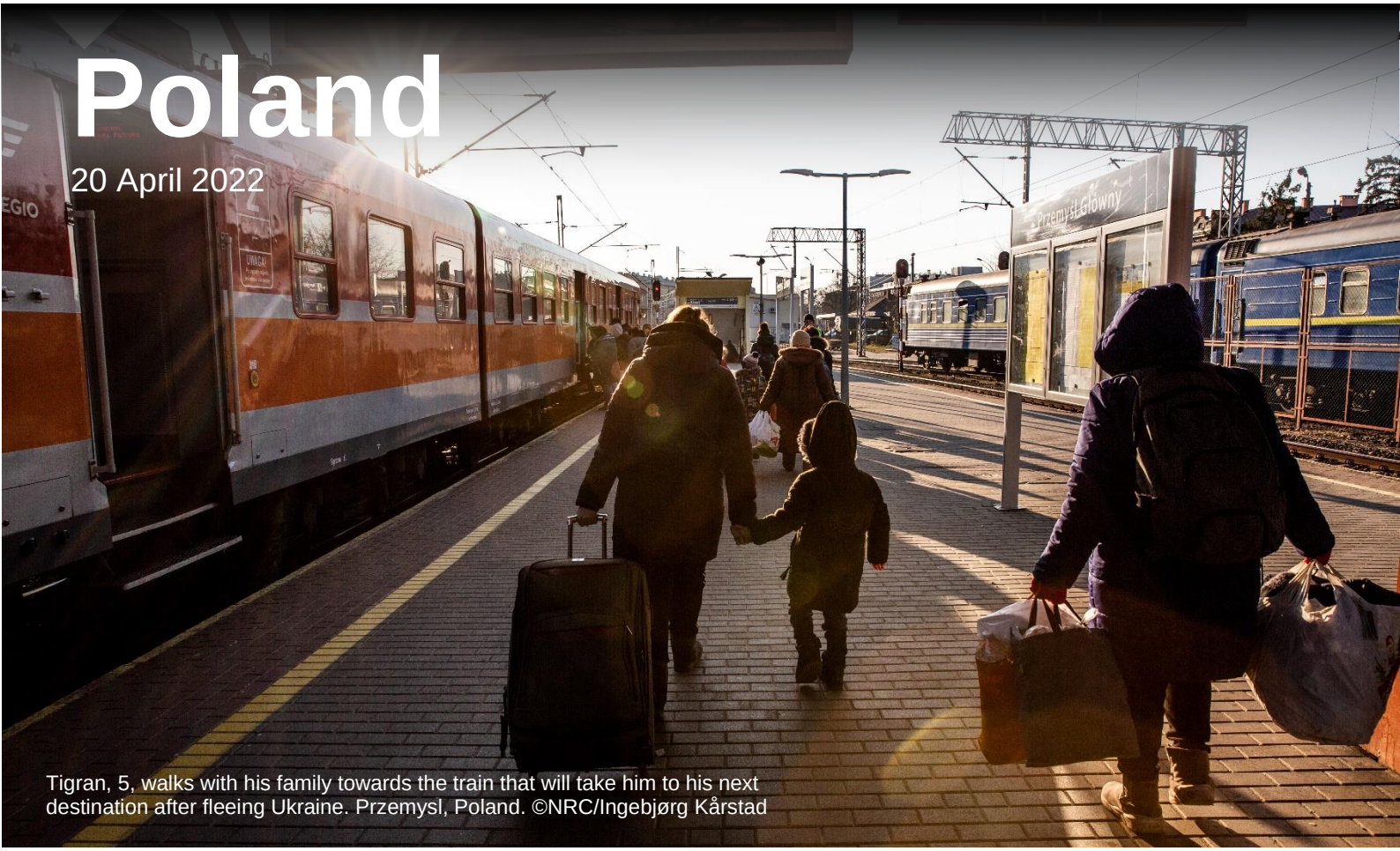
Poland

20 April 2022



Tigran, 5, walks with his family towards the train that will take him to his next destination after fleeing Ukraine. Przemysl, Poland. ©NRC/Ingebjørg Kårstad

Since 24 February, more than **2.86 million refugees** have entered Poland from Ukraine, constituting one of the largest refugee movements in decades in just over 6 weeks. New arrivals enter via eight official border crossing points. Poland has welcomed those fleeing the conflict with hospitality and solidarity and has been facilitating access to basic rights and lifesaving services.

The large majority of arrivals are women and children, including unaccompanied and separated children, persons with specific needs, as well as older persons, thus elevating protection risks, notably related to child protection, trafficking, and gender-based violence, alongside mental health and information needs. Volunteers and civil society organizations have been at the forefront of the response since its onset.

Poland has implemented policy measures to protect and include refugees in host communities and much of the work is led by municipal and local authorities. UN agencies, national and international NGOs, and civil society actors complement and strengthen response efforts of the Polish government and community initiatives. The Refugee Response Plan and its coordination architecture complement government efforts.

KEY NUMBERS

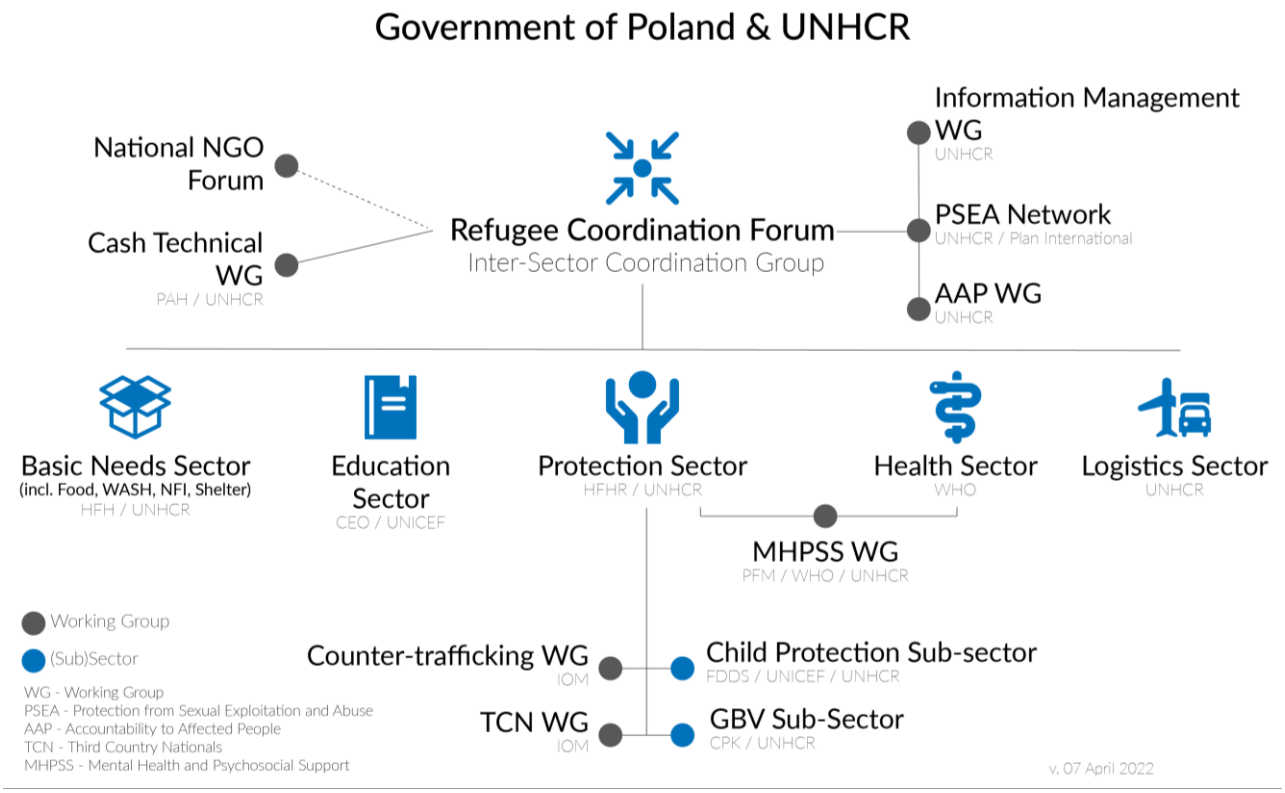
5 million

refugees from Ukraine since 24 February 2022

2.86 million

arrivals into Poland from Ukraine

REFUGEE COORDINATION ARCHITECTURE IN POLAND



Working in partnership

- UNHCR has activated the Refugee Coordination Model in the region, with a Refugee Coordination Forum (RCF) in Poland in support of government-led efforts.
- This mechanism ensures a holistic approach to the identification of needs and planned response and is structured around sectoral groups that focus on basic needs (food security, shelter/site management, non-food items and WASH), education, health (including nutrition), logistics and protection (including sub-sectors on child protection and GBV, and working groups on human trafficking as well as third country national matters). These sectors are supported by dedicated transversal technical working groups on Information Management, Multipurpose Cash Assistance, MHPSS, PSEA and on Accountability to Affected People (AAP), co-led by more than a dozen different organisations, notably national NGOs/civil society actors.
- The Regional Response Plan for Refugees from Ukraine, initially presented on 1 March, will be formally launched on **27 April 2022**, and will be followed by a national launch event in Warsaw, Poland.

RCF Partners

A21 Ukraine | ACF | ACTED | Americares Foundation | ASAM | Ashoka | Association for Legal Intervention | AVSI | CARE | Caritas Poland | CCE | CLEAR Global | CORE | Corus International | CPK | CultureLab Foundation | DRC | Fair Bnb Network | Faros Elpidas | FDDS | FEDERA | FIP | Foundation for Somalia | Foundation Towards Dialogue | Fundacja ADRA Polska | Fundacja Atid | Fundacja Autonomia | Fundacja Dobrej Edukacji | Fundacja Dokładam Się | Fundacja Feminoteka | Fundacja HumanDoc | Fundacja Nativated | Fundacja Polska od Nowa | Fundacja Think Tank Miasto | Fundacja Truskawkowe Pola | Fundacja Ukraina | Fundacja Uniwersytet Dzieci | Global Ahead | Habitat for Humanity Poland | Happy Kids Foundation | Help.NGO | Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights | HIAS | Humanosh Slawa i Izek Wolosianski Foundation | IFRC | IMC | IMPACT Initiatives | Information Society Development Foundation | Internews | Intersos | IOM | IRC | Kalejdoskop Kultur | Klub Inteligencji Katolickiej | Libraries Without Borders | LWF | MAITRI Movement Association | Małopolskie Towarzystwo Oświatowe | Medair | Norma | NRC | Oxfam | PCPM | Plan International | PLZ Cooperative | Polish Humanitarian Action | Polish Migration Forum Foundation | Project HOPE | PUI | Relief International | Safe Passage International | Salam Lab | Laboratory of Peace | Save the Children | Stowarzyszenie Wspólne Podwórko | Tech To The Rescue Foundation | Terre des Hommes Italia | The Center for Reproductive Rights | The Red Pencil | TNS | UNESCO | UNFPA | UNHCR | UNICEF | WCK | WFP | WHO | Związek Harcerstwa Polskiego

PROTECTION

Achievements and Impact

- The Protection Sector is co-chaired by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR) and UNHCR, and is composed of some 50 members who coordinate overarching protection activities in Poland, and engage in 5W mapping, development of repositories, standardized questions for monitoring, and referral pathways.
- Sector members are jointly establishing Blue Dot hubs across Poland, including 'Light' Blue Dots at high-traffic transit locations. Blue Dots are safe spaces offering a minimum set of protection services for children, families, and those with specific needs. They serve as critical points for refugees to access information, seek referrals to specialized services, and allow partners to identify persons at-risk. Related interventions, including mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) are integrated into the response. So far, two Blue Dot hubs are operational in Warsaw and Krakow, each co-located with cash enrolment points, and a Light Blue Dot is operational at the Medyka border crossing point. Preparations are almost complete for the opening of a fourth Blue Dot hub at the Tesco Reception Centre in Przemysl near the Medyka border crossing and one of Poland's largest reception centres. Other sites are under development.
- Sector partners are providing legal aid and disseminating information material on resources for refugees, including on access to international protection and information on legal stay in Poland, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), anti-fraud, counter-trafficking, gender-based violence (GBV), MHPSS, and other risks at locations where refugees transit and stay, including border areas, train stations, and reception centres. From 24 February, online resources have achieved more than 2 million page views, 80,000 of which are from within Ukraine.

  Posters, banners, and leaflets have been distributed at border points, reception centres and digitally, particularly with key anti-trafficking messages to raise awareness of immediate risks for self-protection.
- On 4 April, an inter-agency service mapping tool for protection referral purposes was launched.

Partner CwC materials ©UNHCR

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- In the absence of systematic registration at the border, data collection exercises are planned to be roll-out by partners in different field locations in order to obtain comprehensive data on concrete whereabouts and presence of new refugees in Poland as well as more detailed information on their specific needs.
- Third-country nationals (especially those without international protection needs) and stateless persons – except for spouses of Ukrainian citizens – do not enjoy the same rights and access to national services in Poland as Ukrainian refugees.

CHILD PROTECTION (CP)

Achievements and Impact

- The Child Protection (CP) Sub-sector is co-led by the Empowering Children Foundation (FDDS), UNHCR and UNICEF, and includes over 39 different organizations, 20 of them wholly dedicated to child protection activities. The Sub-sector aims to ensure the integration of child protection principles throughout the program cycle of the response, and to ensure protection risks and benefits are mitigated and mainstreamed.
- The CP Sub-sector is identifying Child Protection Referral Pathways addressing immediate needs of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC), as well as children at-risk of violence, abuse or neglect by parents, caregivers or other community members.
- In coordination with the Cash Working Group, the Sub-sector has outlined child protection considerations for cash-based interventions.
- A summary of provisions and impacts on UASC within the national *Act on Assistance to Ukrainian Citizens in the Context of the Armed Conflict in Ukraine* is being prepared by Sub-sector members.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Chief concerns include the limited identification, registration and documentation of children at-risk and unaccompanied or separated children (UASC); limited refugee awareness of available services and appropriate referral pathways; challenges of parents and caregivers to adequately care for children; and high levels of distress and MHPSS needs amongst children and caregivers.
- Additional concerns point to elevated vulnerability to trafficking from borders and reception sites, risks of GBV against children, and heightened challenges for children with disability.
- The engagement of actors and volunteers without technical expertise, awareness of child-friendly procedures and safeguarding, and understanding of risks underscores the need for increased coordination and capacity building.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

Achievements and Impact

- The GBV Sub-sector is co-chaired by Centrum Praw Kobiet Foundacja (Women's Rights Centre Foundation) and UNHCR, and is comprised of over 35 national NGOs, international NGOs, and UN agencies working on preventing, mitigating and responding to GBV and its risks.
- Key messages from the GBV Pocket Guide v2.0 and 5 Safety Rules for those Fleeing the conflict in Ukraine (developed by Sub-sector partners) have been disseminated to partners.
- The development of an initial GBV referral pathway is underway.

Children playing in the UNHCR-UNICEF Blue Dot child-friendly space in Warsaw. (c) UNHCR/Sophie Etzold.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- GBV risks remain high, given absence of border registration and inconsistent vetting of volunteers, and private transportation and accommodation providers. There is a need to mainstream GBV mitigation measures across sectors.
- Availability and accessibility of GBV response services remains a challenge to respond to the breadth of needs, with legal and practical barriers for survivors of incidents of violence. A particular need has been identified in survivor-centric clinical management of rape services, PEP kits, access to sexual and reproductive health services, safe shelter/accommodation, and access to law enforcement support.

PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (PSEA)

- The PSEA Network is chaired by UNHCR and Plan International. It has developed a rapid risk assessment tool to map risks and capacities to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). The network is currently mapping existing SEA reporting channels.
- Network partners are delivering trainings on PSEA and working with authorities to design dedicated trainings for volunteer induction. The Network has also proposed a simplified common code of conduct for volunteers and other actors which is being reviewed by partners.
- Information materials on PSEA in Ukrainian and Polish are disseminated among arriving refugees, including at border crossings, reception centres, Blue Dot Hubs, at cash enrolment points, and online.

Protection Working Groups

THIRD COUNTRY NATIONALS

- The Third Country National (TCN) Working Group is chaired by IOM. TCN and stateless persons represent around 4% of those who have crossed from Ukraine to Poland (more than 100,000 persons).
- Working Group members liaise with diplomatic missions on available assistance, and engage with TCNs to discuss return options and organize repatriation movements for those wishing to return to country of origin.
- Partners have been identifying vulnerable TCNs through vulnerability screenings carried out at border crossing points, referring them to relevant services and assisting with transportation provision, accommodation arrangements, facilitating medical and psychological assistance and return assistance.
- Partners engage with national and local authorities to advocate for non-discriminatory approaches, mapping organizations across the country providing support to TCNs fleeing Ukraine and providing in-kind assistance for a dedicated shelter for TCNs, including hygiene products and clothing, among other things.
- Partners have disseminated information leaflets in multiple languages, established helplines and provided web-based information (including on international protection procedures) in Arabic, Dari, Kurdish, French and other languages for third country nationals.

COUNTER-TRAFFICKING

- The Counter-Trafficking Working Group is chaired by IOM. Partners have developed various information materials, including information leaflets, the Polish Government's official poster, banners at border points, and a regional Stay Safe Campaign launched on social media, with key counter-trafficking messages.
- A partner also operates a counter-trafficking helpline, alongside the Polish Police's 112 number.

ACCOUNTABILITY TO AFFECTED PEOPLE (AAP)

- The AAP Working Group is chaired by UNHCR. The Group aims to ensure that two-way communication and trusted feedback mechanisms are integrated into all aspects of the refugee response, with considerations for the diverse needs of all refugees. A 3W mapping exercise is underway to identify actors and activities.
- A minimum set of questions on information needs and accessibility has been developed by the working group, for inclusion into all monitoring activities across all sectors.
- A 'Communication with Communities' bank of materials has been developed, for regular inputs by actors across all sectors, in order to minimize duplication of efforts and to establish common messaging.
- Efforts to establish a common framework for 'Do No Harm' is underway, including a review of a 'Constant Companion' sheet of key guidance for humanitarian workers, as well as a general guide of key principles on Do No Harm for all person engaging with refugees (including journalists, researchers, volunteers, etc).

Refugees from Ukraine register for cash assistance at a UNHCR centre in Warsaw, Poland. © UNHCR/Maciej Moskwa

CASH ASSISTANCE

Achievements and Impact

- The Cash Technical Working Group (CWG) is co-chaired by Polish Humanitarian Action (PAH) and UNHCR. Partners have identified eligibility criteria and standard transfer values for the joint transitional emergency multi-purpose cash assistance to cover basic needs and align with Poland's basic subsistence amount. Guidance on cash assistance for unaccompanied children has been developed by the Child Protection sub-sector. The CWG is currently undertaking a 5W mapping to mitigate duplication.
- One partner's emergency cash assistance programme for refugees from Ukraine piloted in Warsaw on 11 March, with expanded roll out on 21 March. As of 15 April, three cash enrolment centres are operational; two in Warsaw and one in Krakow, with **nearly 21,000 individuals (9,500 families) enrolled** so far**.**

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- Additional mapping is needed to identify coverage and capacity gaps within Poland's social protection programmes, avoid duplication, and to refine targeting to those most in need.

BASIC NEEDS – SHELTER, NFI, WASH AND FOOD SECURITY

Achievements and Impact

- The Basic Needs Sector is co-chaired by Habitat for Humanity and UNHCR, with a dedicated UNICEF focal point for WASH. Partners have been actively distributing hygiene items, thousands of blankets at border points, in reception points and accommodation centres.

- A partner is preparing to supply core relief items, bedding and accommodation items, partitions, and other equipment to identified reception centres in cities including Warsaw and Krakow, while another partner has opened a transit site at the East Warsaw Railway Station. This site is for short stay and includes a reception point, waiting area, medical point, office, storage, food distribution point, canteen and sanitation units. It is managed by a local partner with support from Warsaw City Hall and volunteers.
- Partners are reviewing accommodation solutions (including with private sector actors), developing a database of rental units for family accommodation beyond two weeks, developing a social rental program in cooperation with the Municipality of Warsaw, and providing information on the housing operation system for those who need and those offering flats for rent.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- The need for long-term shelter support is increasing. Special attention is being given to organizations who offer shelter/accommodation and who were invited to join the Basic Needs Sector meeting to present their activities in an effort to inform all actors of their activities as well as to prevent duplication of resources and efforts.

HEALTH

Achievements and Impact

- The Health Sector is chaired by the WHO. With partners, the Sector has developed health leaflets with contacts of medical and emergency services and has issued guidelines for supply donations to support the response, including a list of critical supplies for which support is urgently needed.
- A 4W mapping of health partners has been conducted, including for eight organizations providing direct clinical care in border crossings and/or reception centres.
- The Health Sector, in coordination with the Health Cluster in Ukraine, is exploring procedures for the evacuation of patients from Ukraine, via Poland, to other countries in the EU and beyond.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

- An understanding of health referral pathways is needed, from reception and accommodation centres to primary and secondary health centres.
- There is a need for appropriate accommodation, destination and access to healthcare and assistive technology for older persons and persons with disabilities.

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS)

- The MHPSS Technical Working Group is co-chaired by the Polish Migration Forum (PMF), WHO and UNHCR. It has updated a Polish version of Psychological First Aid material, while an online learning platform, MHPSS in Emergencies, is currently being translated into Polish, and a partner published a Rapid MHPSS Situation Analysis Report.

- MHPSS services are being integrated into protection services at Blue Dot Hubs, including psychological first aid, referrals to mental health care service providers, and links to the public healthcare system. Basic psychological education is also provided to refugees to validate symptoms.
- Refugees express needs for specialized health and social services for adults and children with pre-existing mental health conditions, family separation with partners, and addressing grief and loss of loved ones.

EDUCATION

Achievements and Impact

- The Education Sector is co-chaired by the Center for Citizenship Education (CEO) and UNICEF. By early April, nearly 160,000 Ukrainian children have been enrolled in the public school system in Poland as of the beginning of April, with 20% of learners already accessing preparatory classes to support their integration into Polish schools.
- The MHPSS thematic team held its first meeting to mainstream MHPSS in education activities. Minimum service standards are being piloted in Poland.
- The advocacy thematic group established within the Education Sector has completed a mapping of key advocacy issues for the sector and is developing actionable next steps.

Identified Needs and Remaining Gaps

Absorption capacities in local schools, particularly in urban areas, may soon be strained. Similarly, available preparatory classes and language training opportunities may soon be overwhelmed if capacities are not expanded rapidly.

LOGISTICS

Achievements and Impact

- The Logistics Sector, chaired by UNHCR, has provided different kind of non-food items to reception centres in various locations throughout Poland, particularly in border areas.
- In terms of the Sector's support to cross-border cooperation, partners have dispatched 106 trucks (40 FT) from a warehouse in Rzeszow to **five warehouses in Ukraine** containing core relief items and donations from the private sector of Poland. Items include over 143,000 high thermal blankets, 14,800 boxes of winter clothing, nearly 10,000 sleeping bags, 4,300 mattresses, 20,000 towels, kitchen sets, solar lamps, hygiene kits, clothes, generators and power heaters, and furniture for distribution to IDPs.

PAH providing hot meals at the Hrebenne border. ©PAH/Hrebenne

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LINKS

Poland – Operational Data Portal – Poland Help

Protection Sector | Child Protection Sub-Sector | Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sector | Accountability to Affected People WG | Cash TWG | Basic Needs Sector | Education Sector | Health Sector | Mental Health and Psychosocial Support TWG