

**Written Statement
For the Subcommittee
On National Security**

Samaritan's Purse is engaged in a comprehensive humanitarian response assisting Ukrainians distraught and suffering from the Russian military invasion. Since the invasion began on February 24th, 2022, Samaritan's Purse immediately deployed in Ukraine with emergency medical clinics, mobile medical units, extensive food and non-food item distributions utilizing church and faith-based charity networks developed over 20 years while serving in Ukraine.

Samaritan's Purse through our Ukrainian church partners and faith-based organizations has delivered 5,429 metric tons of food rations to date to approximately 1 million people in 17 of the 24 oblasts (regions) in Ukraine. Our ministry served over 10,000 patients with medical intervention between 4 medical clinics and 3 mobile medical units. We have initiated a Burn ICU Training Course at L'viv Emergency Hospital and plan to expand to three additional medical sites in coordination with the Ukrainian Ministry of Health. These burn trainings aim to bolster the capacity of healthcare providers in local health systems who are caring for severe burn patients, a common malady in times of war.

Each week the Samaritan's Purse DC-8 aircraft delivers a new shipment of critically necessary relief supplies. Samaritan's Purse marshalled 15 airlifts from the United States carrying 151 metric tons of medical supplies and 442 metric tons of non-medical humanitarian supplies like tarps, blankets and emergency food rations. Five Samaritan's Purse DC-8 flights have transported 130 Ukrainian refugees to reunite with their families in Toronto, Canada. Fresh water delivery pipelines have been destroyed in the invasion and our ministry installed wells and reverse osmosis water systems producing 400 gallons of water per hour in assisted communities.

For the record, it is critical to note that it is our Christian faith and mission that compels us to meet people in their darkest hour and share the eternal love and hope of Jesus Christ. It is our faith that inspires us to share God's love in word and deed to those who are in crisis situations, in life's ditches, emulating the teachings from the story of the Good Samaritan. Obedience to this calling is the very reason for our existence, service, compassion, sacrifice and action. The love, hope and truth of Jesus Christ compels us.

Generous and private charitable giving from U.S. Citizens and a strong existing church network in Ukraine consisting of over two thousand churches are key elements enabling our ministry to respond in Ukraine immediately, no delays, with instant impact, in the midst of war and suffering, even to the conflict-affected populations in the high conflict regions in East Ukraine. Private and generous giving resourced our Disaster Assistance Response Teams (DART) to be on the ground in days to help victims of war, far before any US government or UN humanitarian effort could deploy and respond with humanitarian relief. We have deployed hundreds of our ministry trained DART members for the Ukraine response.

A combination of the church and faith-based private giving in the United States and our 3000 church partners in the Ukraine enabled our ministry to mobilize rapidly. This network of partners was developed over 20 years in Ukraine. The ministry has similar networks to partner with in countries worldwide through our international children's program named Operation Christmas Child which reaches over 10 million children each year. This network enabled our ministry to understand the critical needs and address the most desperate needs promptly. The US church and faithful supporters generously funded the emergency assistance efforts in Ukraine and the church partners in Ukraine allowed us to strategically reach and assist beneficiaries by utilizing our church partners to carry out food distributions and medical intervention in difficult regions. From a policy perspective, the value of the church and faith-based charities worldwide in helping others in their darkest hour cannot be overstated. US policymakers on both sides of the aisle need to never forget this in their policy and legislation. The strength of the church and faith-based organizations in the US and every country is critical for effective humanitarian responses and a multitude of other charitable endeavors.

For relief supply distribution initiatives in Ukraine, Samaritan's Purse mobilized our Ukrainian church networks who organically organized themselves to transport essential humanitarian supplies (food, medicines and non-food items) to civilians in hard hit areas as well as creating routes and systems to move individuals out of hard-hit conflict areas. Church networks are caring for displaced people and coordinating the movement of supplies across frontlines. Churches are nimble and agile local partners and Samaritan's Purse believes that local partners are *the only way* to successfully reach conflict-affected populations in the hard-hit areas in the east or south of Ukraine.

For example, on the day of June 6 alone, Samaritan's Purse local partners distributed 4.3 metric tons of food and Non-Food Items in one of the hardest hit cities in the Luhansk Oblast which is on the eastern border. Samaritan's Purse has also been able to install 3 reverse osmosis water purification systems in one of the hardest hit cities in Mykolaiv Oblast in south Ukraine. This is only possible through local faith-based partners who were already active, serving and caring for Ukrainians in these communities. These partners are familiar with the routes and terrain and the facts on the ground.

From a policy and strategy perspective regarding humanitarian assistance, the US government awards a majority of funding to UN agencies. The UN mechanism is large, established, structured but slow. Over 100 days into the conflict, humanitarian assistance from the UN is not visible from our on the ground observation in the hard hit areas of the country. Because the US Government has prioritized funding to UN agencies, there has been a delay in the visibility of US humanitarian assistance to Ukraine. Frontline, nimble NGO's like Samaritan's Purse and other NGO's are able to move more quickly with private donations, reach and assist beneficiaries, save lives, and display the goodwill and compassion of the American people to Ukrainians families who are suffering in the midst of war. The United States governments should consider reallocating some funding for assistance flowing directly to NGO's strategically positioned and on the ground. More humanitarian assistance is currently needed throughout Ukraine and especially in the hardest hit, high conflict areas of the east and south regions.

As a policy matter, Congress should continue to promote and protect charitable giving by our citizens through tax deductible donations to exempt organizations, including faith-based exempt organizations. Encouraging private giving not only fosters highly effective, efficient and timely humanitarian responses, it promotes generosity, engaged citizen participation, enhanced international relations with beneficiary nations, leveraged multiplication of volunteerism and human flourishing. Promoting and protecting charitable giving is a policy and ethos the United States has historically, wholeheartedly supported and this should continue. It is a national tradition and practice where the United States is among the best in the world. It makes us better. Universal charitable giving legislation allowing non-itemizers to participate and remain eligible for tax deductions enhances giving and expands charitable impact in the United States and around the world.

The value and impact of faith-based organizations in the United States and worldwide should be understood, acknowledged, and supported through law and policy to foster sustainable objectives and enhance human flourishing. The humanitarian response in Ukraine is the perfect example. Law and policy should recognize and respect the faith-based identity of religious charities; the expertise, value, sacrifice and passion that faith-based charities bring to the humanitarian and charitable sector; and allow the freedom for faith-based charities to live out their beliefs and do the important work of saving lives, transforming lives, and assisting those in the most difficult places and circumstances on the globe, including Ukraine.