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## **Catholic Mission urges local churches to reach out to those seeking refuge.**

According to the UN refugee agency, 82.4 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes in 2020, due to conflicts, disasters, or persecution. 20.7 million of those have fled their country and become refugees. This number has been increasing in the last two years. The stream of refugees is an increasing concern worldwide, which if not addressed, will lead to further unnecessary loss of life and an increasing number of children growing up without a home or life opportunities.

The Ukrainian war has sadly highlighted the fate of refugees, fleeing from their home country, as they face violence and destruction. This moment has brought to focus the fragility of our world and reminded us not to take anything for granted.

Through this dark period, Catholic Mission has seen people rise up and reach out a hand to people in need through our Ukrainian Emergency Appeal. This emergency appeal provides material support and pastoral care to people seeking refuge in Poland and Romania.

“We are so grateful for the prayers and support we receive. For the last few months, we have been relying on the help we get from our overseas network” says Fr Eugen Blaj, National Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies, the Catholic Mission equivalent in Romania.

But while the situation feels miles away, Australia has recently welcomed its first Ukrainian refugees. In Cairns, for instance, the refugees have been welcomed by the local Church and community. But the uncertainty of their situation remains, as their visas are restricted, leaving them without the possibility of working and providing for themselves.

Bishop Mykola Bychok, bishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy in Australia, urges Australians to do everything they can to assist the newly arrived Ukrainians.

‘They need a lot from us, not only help with the visas, but also spiritual help and support. Some of them have a connection, friends, or relatives here, but in general, they need help.’ Bishop Bychok says.

By responding to this call for help, parishes are also responding to Pope Francis’ plea. Recently he called on every parish to adopt a family seeking refuge, and Catholic Mission is responding by promoting the Community Refugee Sponsorship Australia (CRSA) program. This advocacy program aims to engage Australians in the integration of refugees by focusing on creating local networks around families who have been accepted as refugees. This enables them to settle more smoothly into life in their new communities.

Parishes are already engaged in this work, and you can find out more by contacting Catholic Mission at [adultformation@catholicmission.org.au](mailto:adultformation@catholicmission.org.au)

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### **About Catholic Mission**

Catholic Mission is the Australian agency of the Pontifical Mission Societies – the Catholic Church’s global organisation dedicated to continuing Jesus Christ’s mission in the world: that all may have life to the full. Catholic Mission contributes funding and project support to critical church-run initiatives in Africa, Asia, Oceania, and South America. These include spiritual formation, pastoral care, education, health, sanitation, and agricultural programs. Here in Australia, we form people to go out and be missionary in their professional and personal lives; to pray, advocate and act for those on the margins. Catholic Mission has offices in 27 Australian dioceses.