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## How does the association Svenskbyborna work with emergency aid?

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The association Svenskbyborna has carried out aid work in Gammalsvenskby since the mid-1990s. Since 2014, together with Region Gotland, we have worked with a democracy project in the village. We therefore have well-developed channels with polyclinics, old people's homes, the municipal hall and the churches in the village. We have built up a trust and know each other well. Our channels help us so the most needed help arrives.

All money given to the Association of Swedish Villagers goes straight to the village. The association is run on a non-profit basis and has no administrative costs.

We help everyone in the village and prioritize children and the elderly. Before the war, we mainly helped with subsidies for medicine and operations for private individuals. We have also given renovation grants to schools, daycare centers and retirement homes.

On February 24, 2022, we began an extra war fundraiser. We managed to receive the first aid shipment in April, almost to the day 100 years after the Swedish Red Cross emergency aid reached the village and saved the lives of the villagers in 1922.

The aid shipment in April consisted mostly of necessary medicines and hygiene products. The villagers had then been isolated since they were occupied by the Russians on 24 March. The doctors in the village made lists for which medicines the villagers needed, so we could buy the right medicines. When Ukraine was still in chaos, we collected the aid shipment in Sweden, with help from the company Familjeläkarna. With our contacts, we were able to get drivers together to the Ukrainian border and then from the border to Kryvyv and further down to the village.

During the next few months, with the help of contacts in the free Ukraine, the association was able to buy medicine in the city of Kryvyv Rih, which was not under Russian occupation. Our brave driver drove through over 40 roadblocks into occupied territory, to reach way down to the village. But then the front was intensified north of the village and it became impossible to continue, as the roads between the village and free Ukraine were completely closed due to shelling.



*Food packages reaches people in need*



*Diapers for the home for elderly arrives*

In July, a water pump in the village broke, then we were able to finance its repair. We also bought 40 food packages for the bedridden in the village which were distributed through the corresponding home service. The village became isolated, but there was now medicine, food and hygiene items to buy within the occupied area. It was dangerous to go out on the roads, but our brave aid workers in the village went shopping in occupied territory with great risks. First to the town of Nova Kakchovka. But then the bridge over the Dnipro river was blown up, then they had to get to Kherson, which is a dangerous

journey of 80 kilometers. They were sometimes able to buy some goods in the slightly smaller, but closer town of Berislav.

Since the village was liberated on November 11, the need for help is great. The Russian occupiers destroyed the electricity grid, blew up and mined the roads before leaving. Since October 19, there is no electricity and the mobile network is very weak. As there is no electricity, there is also no water or internet.

The area is liberated, but is in the front zone, which means that the Russian army terror-bombs the village with shelling on and off. A family hit a landmine while fleeing, which placed them in hospital with shrapnel injuries. We have helped that family financially to be able to start over.



*Power plants unloads the truck*

The roads are now sufficiently protected from mines for experienced drivers to pass. However, the roads are so damaged or small that it is difficult to get down with larger vehicles. Winter is coming and it is now freezing in the village. The villagers have not been able to get fuel for their stoves. At the end of November, together with the aid organization Blågula Bilen, we organized an aid shipment from Sweden. We bought two cars, a lorry and a pickup, which we loaded with several power plants medical supplies, construction plastic, starlink (for internet) and tools. It was driven down by two Swedish drivers who left the cars for our aid workers in Kryvyv Rih. The truck reached the village on December 3.

We have now established an organization with an emergency aid coordinator in Sweden, an emergency aid committee in the village as well as

coordinators and drivers based in the big city of Kryvyv Rih. The truck with a local driver will now regularly drive to Gammalsvenskby with supplies.

Most urgent now are wood briquettes, gas cylinders (for kitchen stoves), batteries, flashlights, candles, adult nappies, hygiene items and medicines, before Christmas. We will also bring down another 20 power plants from Sweden, as power plants are in short supply in Ukraine. The power plants mean that families have the opportunity to pump up water, charge phones even when there is no electricity.

We have also helped some families fleeing the village with travel and start-up grants.



*Wood briquettes are unloading, for house warming*

Thank you to everyone who helps in various ways with time and/or financial contributions!

Together we are strong!

