



Save Ukraine Now
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Save Ukraine Now Background

Establishment and Growth

Dr. Gary Kellner founded Save Ukraine Now (SUN) In September 2014 to alleviate the exploding humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. With extensive contacts and decades of experience in Ukraine, including with government leaders and faith-based communities, Dr. Kellner is uniquely positioned for this ambitious task. He directed social programs in Ukraine for more than 15 years and established the country's first program in leadership studies, benefiting more than 10,000 individuals through degree programs, conferences and seminars.

Shortly after its founding, Dr. Kellner made two noteworthy additions to the organization's growing staff: General (ret.) Wesley Clark, former NATO commander and Presidential candidate, became the Chairman of the Board. Neal Bratschun, the International Country Director, had previously headed a 100-person staff for the United Nations Development Program in Afghanistan for nearly five years.

Meanwhile, SUN rapidly established a permanent office in Ukraine to facilitate its activities, and a plan was formulated to provide humanitarian convoys to areas of "frozen conflict," where the suffering is greatest, and aid workers daily risk their lives. Working directly with the Office of President Petro Poroshenko, SUN forged an agreement with Ukraine's government to facilitate customs, provide the trucks and ensure security.

SUN's Ukrainian office, led by Tamara Zykova, has organized a distribution network of 12,000-to-15,000 local congregations to ensure assistance reaches every distressed community in eastern Ukraine. SUN also coordinates with agencies, individuals and organizations already providing assistance.

Activity on the Ground

The conflict, however, proved intractable with continued fighting throughout the winter. Save Ukraine Now helped where it could, providing food and heating supplies to its first refugee center within days of opening the Kiev office in November 2014.

Shortly thereafter, the first SUN medical team hit the ground running in the recently liberated city of Slavyansk in an urgent mission to alleviate some of the suffering.

SUN also marked the Christmas season on December 19th and 20th with special events at the Column Hall of the Kiev City Administration. More than 1,500 orphans and refugee children attended, and , thanks to SUN supporters, each one received a chocolate bar, a special honey cake and a card from Ukraine's Saint Nicholas.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation deteriorated dramatically during the winter, as the number of internally displaced people skyrocketed from 500,000 to 1.1 million within weeks. More than five million people have been affected by the conflict, including 1.7 million children according to UNICEF.

Ukraine Survival

Save Ukraine Now responded quickly to the developing situation. It organized a national shipping container campaign, dubbed "Ukraine Survival," and approached thousands of faith-based and civic associations across the United States. SUN asked organizations to collect clothes, blankets, household items, and healthcare and medical supplies. SUN provides the shipping container, and the participating group defrays the shipping costs.

To underscore the nature of the catastrophe and to show the unprecedented unity of Ukraine's faith-based communities, SUN invited their leaders to a U.S. tour to kickoff Ukraine Survival in Detroit and Chicago. Prayer breakfasts, banquets and strategic briefings by General Wesley Clark and Dr. Gary Kellner helped to raise awareness, mobilize communities and garner proceeds for the hard-hit residents and refugees of eastern Ukraine.

Save Ukraine Now is also making preparations for Ukraine Survival in general. A special area of the SUN website provides complete campaign and donation instructions as well as content to facilitate local publicity for participating organizations.

Concurrent with its humanitarian projects, Save Ukraine Now is also undertaking an informational campaign aimed at U.S. citizens and the federal government. The leadership of SUN believes wholeheartedly in the generosity of the American people and supports any form of assistance for Ukraine.

Moving forward, Save Ukraine Now plans to integrate its U.S. shipping container campaign with its Ukrainian convoy project. Established relief organizations have asked to partner with Save Ukraine Now because we “have the best people on the ground and the best network for distribution.”

Conclusion

Save Ukraine Now is forging a unique paradigm for the provision of emergency relief. It has created an unusual yet powerful alliance among government agencies, NGOs and faith-based organizations. Working together under SUN’s umbrella, these groups are making real headway under very adverse circumstances.