



2022

International aid assistance

– for global health and sustainable care

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During a follow-up trip in Somaliland in October of 2022, visiting a hospital that had received material assistance from VGR.



During a follow-up trip to Romania in December of 2022, visiting housing for Ukrainian refugees in the town of Piatra Neamț who had received material assistance from VGR in the past year.

Sahlgrenska International Care

Sahlgrenska International Care is Sahlgrenska University Hospital's centre for international collaborations contributing to the development of healthcare – both locally and globally.



Highly specialized care for international patients



Medical equipment aid



Specialist training programs for international doctors and dentists



Development cooperation for global health



Exchange programs for healthcare professionals



International partnerships
to improve healthcare for patients and staff in Västra Götaland, Sweden and the countries we work with.

Vision

Sahlgrenska International Care's vision is for more people around the world to have access to care, the opportunity for good health and a good life.



The 2030 Agenda - for a sustainable healthcare

Whether it is medical equipment aid, education, healthcare or international exchanges, the starting point is how Sahlgrenska International Care can contribute to a sustainable care.

We have prioritized four of the seventeen global goals that Sahlgrenska International Care (SIC) can contribute most to. We have translated the global goals and Region Västra Götaland's sustainability goals into the context of our organization and formulated our own goals that clearly define what it means for us.

All for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide our daily work in a sustainable direction.

The sustainability goals are integrated into our action plan and is a policy instrument for Sahlgrenska International Care's activities – sustainability therefore plays a key role. The way in which our work contributes to the SDGs is analyzed annually. For more information, read Sahlgrenska International Care's annual report where a sustainability summary is included.

This report is labeled according to selected global goals that our international aid assistance work contributes to.

Our sustainability goals



- **Contribute to specialist healthcare expertise in other countries**

*VGR's sustainability goal:
Good health and well-being*

- **Contribute to the improvement of healthcare systems in low and middle-income countries**

*VGR's sustainability goal:
Good health and well-being*

- **Develop new partnerships with healthcare providers in other countries that promote global health**

*VGR's sustainability goal:
Good health and well-being*



- **Training that attracts candidates from more countries**

*VGR's sustainability goal:
Equality and equal rights*

- **An SDTP/SMTP training that promotes awareness of equality and human rights**

*VGR's sustainability goal:
Equality and equal rights*



- **Develop digital forms of education for a reduced climate footprint**

*VGR's sustainability goals:
Low climate impact*

- **Contribute to a more responsible resource use through increased reuse of healthcare equipment**

*VGR's sustainability goal:
Resource-efficient and non-toxic*



- **Developing partnerships that promote sustainable healthcare development internationally**

2022

– systematic aid efforts provide critical support during crises

The importance of having a functioning international aid system has been particularly clear in 2022. With a war and a humanitarian crisis in the immediate area, Region Västra Götaland ensured that its on-site resources were able to provide rapid assistance there, while simultaneously contributing to the development of long-term care elsewhere in the world.

When Russia launched its violent war against Ukraine and the situation quickly developed into a humanitarian crisis, Region Västra Götaland was able to respond immediately with medical equipment aid, in great part due to the fact that systematic aid work had been carried out in the region for many years.

This was important as we could make use of our committed colleagues in the region and meet the demands of our partners, which enabled them to act swiftly.

Region Västra Götaland as a partner has continuously contributed with the resources we have had at our disposal. As such, we have not only continued to support our established partners but also initiated collaborations with new ones. These partnerships have not only been one-offs but actually sustainable and continuing into 2023.

Civil society is key

There has been a debate on how the world should respond to a humanitarian crisis like the one currently in Ukraine, and how the established aid community works. It has become clear that small civil society organizations, here and in Ukraine alike, have played an important role in delivering aid and support. Good knowledge, short decision-making paths and the ability to encourage local commitment have been highlighted as critical factors. However, this is not entirely unproblematic. In a complex humanitarian crisis, coordination and massive resource transfers are critical. The UN, the Red Cross and other major actors were created for this purpose and should therefore shoulder that responsibility accordingly. However, the recognition of smaller actors is welcome and

in 2023, it is possible that mechanisms will be created at a national level in order to support them and put their strengths to good use. Small organizations and local initiatives are an important part of the humanitarian crisis response, and in 2022 it became evident that the initial chaos often associated with the onset of a humanitarian crisis has gradually been replaced by a higher degree of professionalism.

Changing focus of Swedish aid – how does it affect us?

No matter the case, it is crucial to consider the broader context in order to fully understand the situation. The new Swedish government has clearly indicated that the direction of Swedish aid will change into having a larger focus on our immediate area, not least Ukraine, and more on humanitarian efforts. The support for dissemination of information and research will be reduced. What will it mean for the commitment of the Swedish public and how will

it affect aid organizations in civil society? That remains to be seen. For Region Västra Götaland it is important that we and our partners continue to contribute to long-term development in places where it is needed. We have shown that we can respond to a humanitarian crisis in our immediate area, but our aid efforts of donating quality medical equipment and consumables should not be focused solely on that.


Strengthening civil defense and preparedness

Another visible effect we have observed in 2022 is that the pandemic and the subsequent war in Ukraine has also meant that our local region, as well as other regions and Sweden as a whole, will now put more emphasis and work on civil defense and preparedness. This is important for our ability to respond to a world that is becoming more uncertain. For international aid work, this means adapting to a new flow of medical equipment and consumables.

Aid continues to reach other parts of the world

Despite the war in Ukraine, our partners have continued their regular work in recipient countries around the world. Other countries that have received the most aid from Region Västra Götaland in recent years include Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania, Congo-Kinshasa and Romania. In the past year, Sahlgrenska International Care carried out two follow-up trips together with our partners.





One year of aid to Ukraine at war

The first truck with medical supplies from Region Västra Götaland left the day after the war begun. Since then, over 40 shipments have reached health facilities in various cities in Ukraine and neighboring Romania and Moldova.

On February 24, 2022, Russia attacked Ukraine. War in Europe, in Sweden's neighborhood, became a new reality for Region Västra Götaland to deal with. How will the war affect our region? What can we do to support Ukraine? Many questions without any clear answers.

A special organization for Ukraine was quickly established in Region Västra Götaland (VGR). Medical equipment aid to Ukraine through Sahlgrenska International Care has been an important part of this.

How VGR reaches Ukraine

Ukraine is one of several countries in Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Africa where aid organizations that Region Västra Götaland cooperates with have continuously carried out assistance efforts in. Besides our regular partners, Human Bridge and Agape Foundation, VGR has this year supported further initiatives through Help Ukraine Gothenburg (HUG) and Kristna Läkare och medicinstuderande (KLM).

– One of our partners has worked in Ukraine for many years and others had contacts in the country they could reach out to. We saw the importance in this – to ensure that our donations matched the needs on site and reached their destination, says Anders Lygdman, in charge of international aid at Sahlgrenska International Care.

As early as February 25, Region Västra Götaland was able to send medical supplies and, thanks to local partners, ensure that



they reached hospitals, rehab centers, nursing homes and organizations that assist the elderly in their own homes.

Since then, VGR has contributed to more than

40 shipments, ranging from more advanced medical equipment such as ventilators and ultrasounds to hospital beds, assistive devices and consumables. For the first time ever, a backup generator was also donated for delivery during the winter.

In Ukraine, residents of Kiev, Rivne, Krasnodar, Kharkiv, Odessa, Uzhhorod and Slovenche have received medical equipment aid from Region Västra Götaland. This was aided by



Centre for ukrainian refugees at RomExpo in Bucharest, Romania

organizations such as Ukraine's largest children's hospital, OHMADYT – National Specialized Children's Hospital in Kiev and Mechnikov University Hospital in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. The assistance also reached Ukrainian refugees in the surrounding countries of Romania and Moldova.

– In December, Sahlgrenska International Care visited Romania and was able to see the results of the work done for Ukrainian refugees there.

In Bucharest, we met with the UNHCR site manager at RomExpo, the hub for Ukrainian refugees in the country, where they receive help and support in a range of areas. We then got an insight into how their collaboration with Motivation, a local help organization that provides assistive devices from VGR in Romania, had worked. The collaboration had helped them solve a gap in the refugee reception and made it possible to directly provide disabled people with assistive devices, says Anders.



Significant increase in donations

The level of commitment and willingness to support Ukraine was very high, and in the first months a significant increase in donations of medical equipment from departments around Region Västra Götaland was observed.

– Almost immediately after the outbreak of the war, employees in the region started getting in touch and we noticed a large increase in aid donations from our departments. Especially consumables for different types of emergency care were common items, and in 2022 more than 100 pallets had been donated. In all my years as responsible for international medical equipment aid I have never experienced anything like this.

– At the same time, we received many requests for donations, both from companies and individuals. We were able to connect many of these people with Swedish organizations that had solid connections in Ukraine, says Anders Lygdman.

”In all my years as responsible for international medical equipment aid, I have never experienced anything like this.”

Anders Lygdman, in charge of international medical equipment aid



Cooperation with aid organizations

Cooperation with proper aid organizations is crucial to ensure that assistance reaches the places where it is most needed. The following is a summary of the assistance efforts our partners carried out in Ukraine together with Region Västra Götaland.

■ Kristna läkare och medicinstudenter i Sverige (KLM)

KLM is working together with the Ukrainian organization Christian Medical Association (CMA) and has shipped over 60 pallets of consumables and other hospital equipment such as surgical instruments and blood coolers to their distribution centre in Lviv. From there, the material is distributed to various healthcare facilities across Ukraine.

■ Agape

Agape has carried out transports in cooperation with the Romanian organization Motivation in support of the territorial defense around the city of Bolehiv in southern Ukraine. In early May 2022, Region Västra Götaland funded a transport through Agape containing items such as bandages, medicines, patches, nutritional drinks, gloves and visors, as well as hospital beds, walkers and wheelchairs. Region Västra Götaland has also supported refugees around the border town of Sirte with food parcels, hygiene items and various assistive devices.

■ Help Ukraine Gothenburg (HUG)

Help Ukraine Gothenburg has a broad cooperation with many partners in Västra Götaland and good contacts in Ukraine. In 2022, Region Västra Götaland made three special donations of medical equipment. For example, 18 diathermy machines, 1 vascular closure device, 16 infusion pumps, 4 monitoring devices,

6 dialysis machines and 3 oxygen concentrators. These donations went mainly to OHMADYT – national specialized children's hospital in Kiev and to Mechnikov hospital in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast. Region Västra Götaland also contributed with consumables that were donated to both regional and district hospitals in cities such as Krasnodar, Kharkiv, Odessa, Kiev, Rivne, Uzhhorod and Slovenche.

■ Human Bridge

Since the outbreak of the war, Human Bridge has sent over 30 shipments to Ukraine and 3 to Moldova. The organization has been working with local partners in Ukraine for over twenty years and has good contacts and access to Kiev, Rivne, Uzhhorod and Slovenche, and other cities. Human Bridge regularly collects surplus material from Region Västra Götaland for its shipments. As for Ukraine, Region Västra Götaland has contributed, among other things, 4 ultrasounds, 2 incubators, a backup power generator, a ventilator, more than a hundred hospital beds and examination tables, as well as consumables.



Follow-up in Somaliland together
with Human Bridge, October 2022



Somaliland

– increased healthcare
needs due to severe
drought and famine

In recent years, the Horn of Africa, where Somaliland is located, has experienced its worst drought in many years. This affects the entire society, not least the health sector which is in great need of external aid. Region Västra Götaland has contributed to the opening of a new ward for maternal and child healthcare, which has increased their capacity by 30 percent.

In October 2022, the third follow-up trip to Somaliland was carried out together with Human Bridge. VGR has contributed to Human Bridge's more than 20 shipments to the area in the past year and has previously followed up on the aid on-site in 2014 and 2017. Carrying out follow-ups are necessary for quality assurance, to observe the impact of the aid and to ensure that it has reached the intended recipient.

Drought and famine affect health

Somaliland is vulnerable because it depends on two annual periods of rainfall to provide water and to irrigate crops. These rainfalls have been largely absent in the past two years, which has had disastrous consequences. Livestock has died and many people have been forced to leave their traditional lifestyle and move to the cities to survive. From being vulnerable to diseases such as malaria and cholera under normal

circumstances, the situation has now been exacerbated by a famine.

Better care for women and children

During the visit, seven health facilities that had received aid were followed up on, ranging from the university hospital in Boroma to the Bali-Gubadle Health Center, a rural maternal and child health center.

The Bali-Gubadle Health Center's primary target group is women and children from 600 households in the local area. The clinic aims to provide basic maternity care. By doing so, they hope to reduce the number of deliveries that take place without trained staff.

In the spring of 2022, Human Bridge donated a container of hospital equipment and consumables to the clinic. This enabled the clinic to open a new inpatient ward, increasing its care capacity by 30 percent.

– With the help of donated medical equipment and consumables from VGR and other partners, the Bali-Gubadle Health Center in Somaliland has been able to open a new ward and increase its capacity by 30 percent. This has strengthened maternal and child health services for women and children from 600 households in the area, says Anders Lygdman, head of international material assistance at Sahlgrenska International Care.



Facts

Bali-Gubadle is located 150 km south of the capital Hargeisa, by the Ethiopian border. The district has about 18,000 inhabitants who are mainly pastoralists. This means that their main livelihood is livestock breeding, consisting mostly of camels but also goats. The pastoralist, or nomadic way of life means that families are not permanent residents but goes wherever there is grazing lands and water available for their livestock, which is usually seasonal. In the Bali-Gubadle urban area, there are some public services available, such as schools and care facilities, but they are far from reaching everyone.

Romania

– cooperation to strengthen the rights of people with disabilities



If you need assistive devices in Romania, the support from the government will be limited. To deal with this, local aid organizations such as Motivation are stepping up and taking a great responsibility in providing what they believe should be a right for many of the country's citizens.

10 years ago, the Swedish aid organization Agape Foundation and the Romanian organization Motivation reached out to each other. Shortly thereafter, Region Västra Götaland became a partner through Sahlgrenska International Care's aid efforts.

Motivation has a head office on the outskirts of Bucharest and several local teams scattered across the country. Out of 200 employees, 30 of them have disabilities. This number equals 15 percent, which can be compared to the 4 percent national requirement for employers with more than 50 employees. Many of Motivation's aid recipients have gone through difficult life-changing events. They get to meet like-minded people among the staff who can show how the use of assistive devices can significantly increase their quality of life and sense of independence.

Accessibility is an obstacle

Some aid recipients are school-age children. According to Cristian Ispas, General Manager at Motivation, around 30 percent of schools in Romania lack running water. Installing water mains is therefore prioritized over adapting facilities for people with disabilities. During the follow-up trip, Sahlgrenska International Care visited five different cities and made a total of eight home visits.

One of the days was spent near the city of Buzău, where we met Seb who suffers from muscular dystrophy, and his mother. He has received an advanced wheelchair from Region Västra Götaland. Every day she drives Seb in a specially adapted car to school, and she makes sure she is nearby if he needs to go to the toilet, for example.

– She is one of the people who have been in a constant battle with authorities to raise awareness of this diagnosis, and to strengthen her child's rights. Seb really enjoys going to school, but without his mother's involvement it would simply be too difficult, says Anders Lygdmann, head of international material aid at Sahlgrenska International Care.

Assistive devices are matched with the right recipient

All assistive devices donated from Region Västra Götaland to Romania goes to the organization Motivation through the Swedish aid organization Agape Foundation. Motivation has its own workshop where they adapt equipment and ensure that donated materials reach suitable recipients around the country. Once they are handed over, the material becomes the property of the recipient. During the visit, it was decided that the follow-up of the long-term sustainability of donated equipment will be intensified in the coming years.

Support for Ukrainian refugees

In May 2022, a transport departed from Falkenberg through Bucharest to the city of Sirte on the border between Romania and Ukraine. It was funded by Region Västra Götaland and contained items such as bandages, medicines, patches, nutritional drinks, gloves and visors, as well as hospital beds, walkers and wheelchairs.

In cooperation with the organizations Agape and Motivation, Region Västra Götaland was able to support the territorial defense around the city of Bolehiv in southern Ukraine and the Ukrainian refugees who had fled there since the outbreak of the war.

In December 2022, a follow-up was carried out in Romania together with representatives of Agape and Motivation to see, among other things, the results of the work carried out for Ukrainian refugees who had fled there. After Poland, Romania is the country that has received the most refugees since the outbreak of the war. Sahlgrenska International Care visited housing for Ukrainian refugees in the city of Piatra Neamt that had received donated material from Region Västra Götaland in the past year.

– We visited the UNHCR at RomExpo in Bucharest, which is a center where Ukrainian refugees receive help and support in various ways. There we could see that aid from VGR were on-site and ready to be distributed to those who needed it, says Anders.

Quick facts

19 million inhabitants

Joined the **EU in 2007**

Major challenges:

- Corruption
- Investments in healthcare and infrastructure
- Skilled labor (emigration is common)

About 15 %, or 2.8 million of the population are in need of assistive devices. The aid organization Motivation provides assistive devices for about 20% of these.

Car accidents are the most common reason for needing assistive devices.

The most common recipients of assistive device from Motivation are people with:

- Spinal cord injuries
- Cerebral palsy
- Muscular dystrophy
- Amputated limbs
- Stroke

In 2022 Sahlgrenska International Care conducted its **third follow-up trip** since the start of the collaboration.

The road to more international co-operations

A survey shows that healthcare professionals at Sahlgrenska University Hospital want more options to get out into the world – and to be able to host colleagues themselves. Work is now being intensified to develop cooperation in training and development that promotes global health.


In 2021, a survey was conducted on behalf of Diana Swolin Eide, Head of R&D and Education, which was made into a report titled The road to more international partnerships. Alongside this, a pilot study on international development cooperation was also carried out.

The surveys confirm that there is a great commitment to international issues in the hospital, but they also point out that people are

expecting more internationalization and a need for greater coordination and support. Comparing this with other university hospitals in Sweden shows that all of them see this as an area with potential for development.

An attractive employer with a global outlook

The pilot study also presents research results which show the positive effects of participating in global projects for health professionals. In addition to an increased knowledge of the world, it also broadens and develops their medical expertise which in turn is transferred to the care establishment. It leads to personal development and an increased self-reliance, it also makes the individual better prepared for crisis situations and periods with high workloads.



“We have a lot of available resources. I think we should share them in a sustainable way. We have an obligation to try.”

Resident physician, Sahlgrenska University Hospital



Swedish delegation outside CHUCK, University Teaching Hospital of Rwanda

This corresponds well with Sahlgrenska University Hospital's goal of becoming the leading university hospital in Sweden, as well as the region's priority goals of increasing its clinical quality and being Sweden's most attractive public employer.

New steering group for international cooperation

In 2022, a new steering group for international cooperation was formed, consisting of representatives from the education unit at the Department of Research, Education and Innovation and Sahlgrenska International Care.

Mission and tasks

The steering group has a mission statement that can be summarized in the following points:

- Strengthen Sahlgrenska University Hospital's brand and future supply of skills.
- Offer a more equal and broader range of international cooperation and develop relevant local, regional and national cooperation to become more international.
- Enable skills development by making it easier for businesses and employees to engage in international cooperation and exchanges.
- Increase Sahlgrenska University Hospital's contribution to global health.

Examples of ongoing tasks:

- Thailand. Agreement with Mahidol University in Bangkok. Start of the exchange: 2023. First departures from SU in January 2023, arrivals from Thailand in spring.

- Indonesia. Renewed exchange agreement with Indonesia in plastic surgery.
- Rwanda. Exchanges at resident level, first departure in fall 2023. Results of a delegation trip to Rwanda and a visit by the Rwandan ambassador to Sahlgrenska University Hospital. Possible new partner for combined education and assistance projects, including digital lectures.
- USA. Strengthen cooperation in areas such as AI and Innovation.
- Develop clearer structures, guidelines and procedures for incoming/outgoing staff
- Create and maintain a single page for "all things international" on the intranet and external web
- Contractual advice
- International evenings for residents at SU
- Explore long-term funding for global projects

The steering group includes a project team that is operationally responsible for the implementation of planned activities.

Step by step towards a greater internationalization

We can't do everything at once, but these are some milestones on the road to more international cooperation. The steering group has started working on several of the conclusions of the reports and would like to thank everyone involved for their commitment. Your voices have been heard and played a very important role in the work to intensify Sahlgrenska University Hospital's internationalization work.

Statistics

Summary

Following the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the number of requests for aid increased significantly. This was most noticeable during the period March–May 2022 when the need for information was high. Donations of different types of consumables were particularly in demand during the initial phase.

The period between 1 March and 31 May alone saw 47 successful donations carried out, and we estimate the number of requests was at least double that. It is important to remember that these donations can be seen as a direct result of the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, and that regular aid work continued in other countries alongside these.

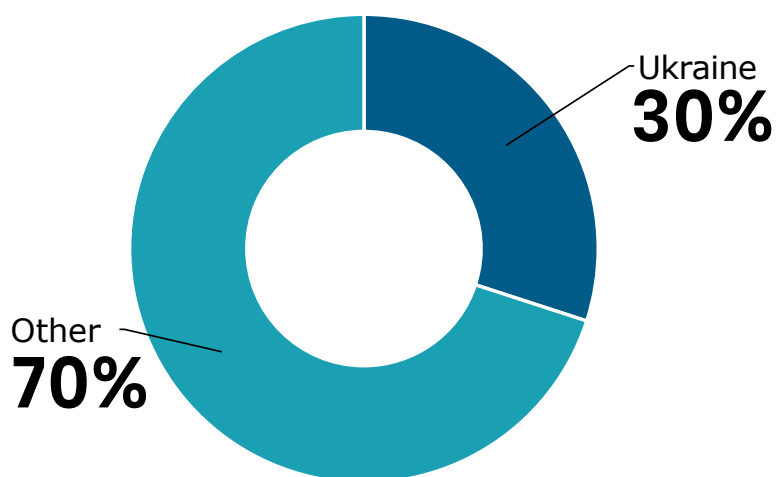
When it comes to consumables, we have made an exception for 2022. Given the huge demand, we have allowed our partners to accept expired materials. This only applies to donations to

Ukraine at war, expired consumables would normally not be donated by Region Västra Götaland in accordance with WHO guidelines.

A large number of requests also came from the public, municipalities in West Sweden, private companies and non-profit organizations and networks. In many cases, we were able to refer them depending on whether they were material donations or volunteer requests.

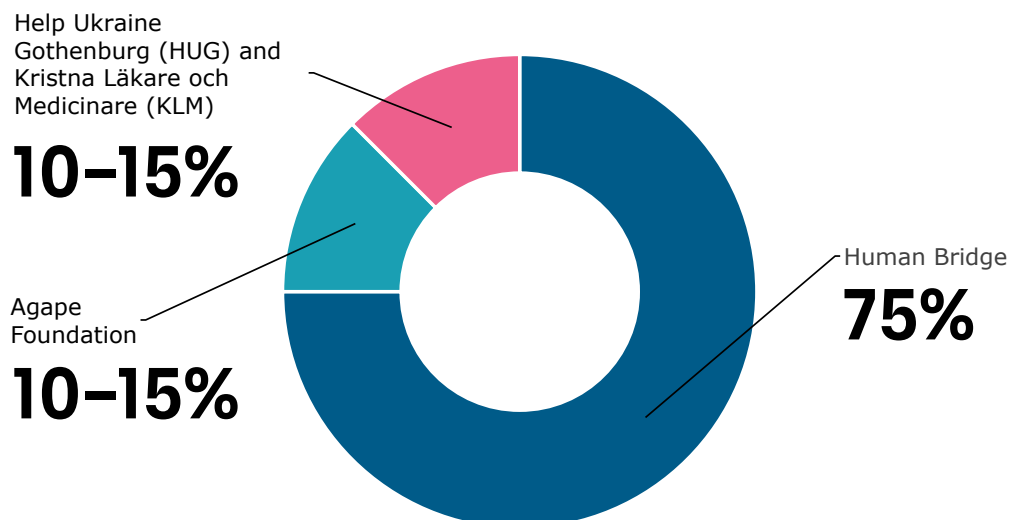
It is important to note when reading these statistics that there has been a set procedure for the donation of consumable materials for aid within Region Västra Götaland for many years. Our administrations can return surplus consumables directly back to the Sisjö warehouse where they are later picked up by our partners. This procedure was clarified under *Special Organization for Ukraine* in various channels, such as the Region Västra Götaland's intranet, which subsequently reduced the number of requests.

Distribution – countries



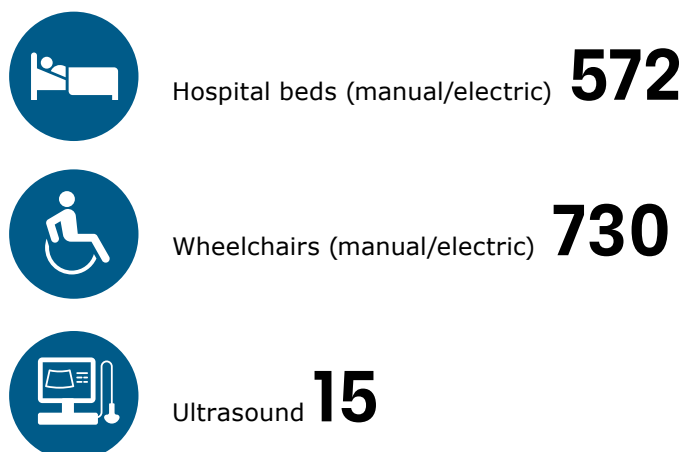
Other refers to countries in East Africa and Eastern Europe, of which the major recipients are Ethiopia, Somalia and Romania.

Distribution – aid organizations



Human Bridge is still the organization that receives the majority of donations from Region Västra Götaland, followed by Agape and its two new partners HUG and KLM. The introduction of two new partners in 2022 has allowed donations to reach more people in Ukraine.

Distribution – main categories



This is not a complete list of all donated material, but a selection of main categories. As in previous years, certain products are used as key figures to measure the inflow, and based on those figures a general trend can be observed as well as any deviations within certain product groups. The key figures are also important for finding out if any of our partners have stopped accepting a product, that the demand has been met. This allows us to redirect donations to other partners or to our own projects.

Donations that stood out

1 backup power generator donated by Västfastigheter

1 heart monitor from the NU Hospital Group

18 diathermy machines from the Department of Medical Technology at Sahlgrenska University Hospital

10 dialysis machines from Renal Medicine at Sahlgrenska University Hospital

30 new walkers from Hjälpmedelscentralen, Regionservice

This section presents examples of donations that stood out during the year compared to previous years. The list could be longer, but the important thing is of course that this equipment is now being used somewhere where it is needed.

Climate compensation

Account of climate compensation for booked international air travel.

Destination	Amount (SEK)
Romania	2,000
Somaliland	2,000
Total	4,000



Notable efforts by administrations

International aid efforts have been very productive in 2022. Certain administrations have excelled in various areas.

Sahlgrenska University Hospital has continuously donated important medical equipment such as hospital beds and consumables on several occasions.

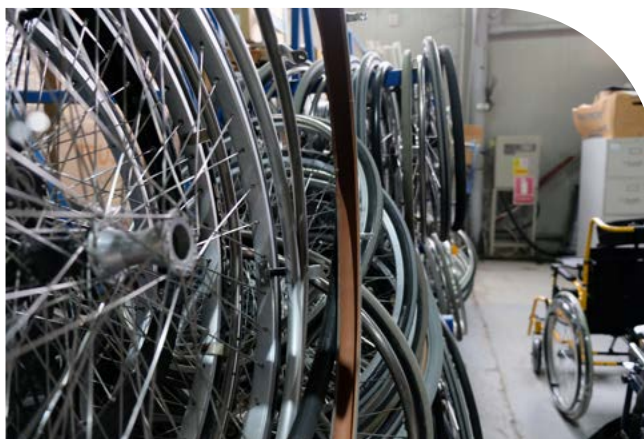
Regionsservice has continued to contribute significantly with various types of assistive devices and healthcare textiles. For example, every week our partners receive between 6–12 loads of healthcare textiles from the Alingsås laundry that are sent together with the aid shipments.

During 2022, **the NU Hospital Group** has been very active with donations, and in 2022 the "aid container" placed at the Trollhättan hospital was emptied 4 times by our partners. Also worth mentioning are the 13 patient monitors reprogrammed into English by the medical technology department (MTA) to be used in aid efforts.

Närhälsan with its large network of health centers has contributed large amounts of consumables in 2022. As part of the aid effort to Ukraine, 17 health centers have made one or more donations. The adage "Small steps lead to big results" seems fitting here.



Recipient hospital in Tanzania sorts donated healthcare textiles from Region Västra Götaland.



The aid organization Motivation's headquarters and warehouse outside Bucharest, Romania.

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