

# Kangaroo Care in Conflict Zones Initiative



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# The Kangaroo Care Initiative

At the end of 2022 Ascend Group SRL in partnership with the International Rotary Fellowship of Healthcare Professionals launched the Kangaroo Care Initiative to provide aid to the neonatal units in the war ridden Ukrainian hospitals in order to provide fragile newborns, their families and clinicians helping them survive and thrive in the harrowing circumstances they ended up in.

In November 2023 the pilot batch of KMC tools was supplied to hospitals in the west Ukraine. The KMC aid packages were received with tears of gratitude and hope at 6 hospitals.

The pilot proved the need and impact of the donations and was followed by request to continue the project, as it proved its utility and impact exceeding expectations.

In December 2023 the next round followed with 3000 more KMC packages delivered to hospitals in East Ukraine, where the impact turned out to be even more significant.

# The Kangaroo Care Initiative

In partnership with Ascend Group Srl (Moldova), Heroes International (Ukraine / Moldova), the Ukrainian Institute of Neonatology (Ukraine) and the Ukrainian Embassy in Moldova the Fellowship organised the delivery of donated hats and baby carriers and education materials on Kangaroo Mother Care to the staff of beneficiary neonatal units.

The volunteers delivered the packages and organised training for the hospital staff at each of the hospitals.

A week after the delivery to the Dnipro perinatal centre, the hospital was shelled and the hospital building was destroyed. Thanks to the Rotary KMC Initiative donations, the 12 mothers with infants in the NICU managed to get to shelter before the strike, thus the infant positioning devices allowed to avoid terrible casualties in that instance.



**“Women come to our perinatal center for labor and delivery from all over the East Ukraine area. Many times upon discharge they have nowhere to go back to, as their houses were destroyed and for them the carrier becomes the first home for the baby”**

April 2024 report call quote

# The Kangaroo Care Initiative

In February 2024 the KMC Initiative was acknowledged with a gratitude letter from the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada (parliament) for the impact of the aid provided as part of the initiative.

Also in February 2024 the project scaled nationwide with the next round of 5000 packages that were delivered in April 2024.



In this third round of deliveries the project partnered with the All-Ukrainian Association of Babywearing Educators, who have prepared a comprehensive brochure on Kangaroo Mother Care and instructional posters. The brochures and posters content was edited by Prof Znamenska of the Ukrainian Institute of Neonatology and Dr. Douglas McMillan.

Each of the carriers supplied in round 3 had the brochure enclosed alongside with A1 size posters to be put up in the neonatal units



# Impact so far

## 01 KMC FACILITATION

In conditions of power outages the donations have proven to be highly reliable in implementing KMC to ensure the thriving of premature infants

## 02 KMC EDUCATION

The staff trainings organised in round 1 and 2 alongside the printed and video materials have increased the level of information and skills of the clinical staff. The project also led to the signing of a partnership between the Institute of Neonatology and the Babywearing Consultants Association for national scale collaboration in regards with KMC education

## 03 INCREASED SAFETY

Aside from the known benefits of KMC the beneficiaries of the donated carriers have been able to use them to increase the mobility of NICU patients, allowing them to reach bomb shelters while in tandem with the infants as well as for reaching their destinations upon hospital discharge

## 04 POST-NICU SUPPORT

While KMC is proven to reduce hospitalization length and increase parent engagement, freeing up clinical staff to address emergencies, the carriers supplied by the Fellowship can be used with children up to 15kg expanding the period of support for each family



# KANGAROO CARE INITIATIVE STAT SHEET

Kangaroo Mother Care - SAVING LIVES

## At a glance

In conflict zones like Ukraine, babies are born into a terrifying world of war. Newborn babies are spending the first days of their lives in shelters and basements (UNICEF). KMC is a simple life-saving solution in the NICU and beyond.

## Key metrics

So far the project has impacted thousands of families and clinical staff over 20 hospitals in Ukraine



**200**  
clinicians trained



**10 000**  
KMC Carriers distributed



**12 000**  
hats for premature infants

## CHALLENGES



During active hostilities, the number of premature births increases, and the lack of electricity complicates the uninterrupted operation of equipment in neonatal wards.

In addition, due to unpredictable bombings, it is necessary for mums to run to bomb shelters in haste. With the help of Kangaroo carriers, we can increase the safety of mothers and babies even in extreme circumstances.

## SOLUTIONS



As part of the project the Fellowship provides perinatal centres and neonatal units with infant positioning devices, hats and information packages for effective implementation of Kangaroo Mother Care, that are distributed and disseminated via partner organisations on a national scale, increasing infant safety and efficiency of the clinical staff.



Kangaroo Care  
Education



Implementation  
tools



Partnerships

## BENEFITS



**1**

### IMPACT

Each donation package positively impacts directly an average of 5 people - the infant, the parents, the neonatal nurses and clinical staff in the NICU.

**2**

### SUSTAINABILITY

Aside from the fact that the carriers provided benefit infants in the neonatal unit and subsequently upon hospital discharge, the families that finished using the donations have been consistently repurposing the carriers by donating them to the National Baby Carrier Library operated by the Ukrainian Association of Babywearing Consultants

**3**

### SCALABILITY

the project has consistently proved its efficiency, and the tools used as part of the project are easily adaptable to be re-used in other conflict zones across the globe.



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