

HUNGARY HELPS PROGRAM NEWS - 2020-2023

SYRIAC CATHOLIC PATRIARCH OF ANTIOCH PRAISED HUNGARY DURING THE VISIT OF POPE FRANCIS



The support of the Hungarian government greatly contributed to the reconstruction of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Qaraqosh, which was destroyed by the Islamic State, said Syrian Syriac Catholic Patriarch of Antioch Ignatius Joseph III Yonan in his speech at the rebuilt church on the occasion of Pope Francis' visit.

During his four-day visit to Iraq, the Pope Francis visited Qaraqosh in addition to several major Iraqi cities to meet in person with members of the local Christian community who have been forced to experience severe persecution as a result of armed conflicts in recent years. Hungary provides significant support to persecuted Christian communities worldwide through the Hungary Helps Program. In Iraq, a number of humanitarian and reconstruction projects have been implemented since 2017 with Hungarian support, which has enabled local Christian communities to survive.

The basic principle of the Hungary Helps Program is that help should be taken where the trouble is, not the trouble be brought to Europe. As a result, in the last nearly four years, we have made it possible for more than 100,000 people living in crisis areas to stay in their homeland or to return there.

TO CURB MIGRATION, THE HUNGARY HELPS PROGRAM IS HELPING IN AFRICA - HUNGARY HELPS



HUNGARY HELPS



The Government of Hungary is committed to preventing migration and mitigating humanitarian crises, which pose both a security and epidemiological threat. That is why it supports the communities of Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Mozambique through the Hungary Helps Program, enabling people living in crisis areas to stay in their homeland.

As part of Hungarian assistance, a new secondary school for internally displaced youth is being built in Nigeria. A program to promote the social reintegration of families living in poverty has been launched in Kenya. In Ethiopia, education, water management, and agriculture projects are supported by the Hungary Helps Program, and in Mozambique, support projects provide assistance to thousands of internally displaced persons. The latter will include the construction of two schools, a primary care center, and about three hundred dwellings, and in order to prevent food crises the Program distributes seed packages to asylum seekers who fled from armed conflicts to the country. These projects of the Hungary Helps Program in Africa are implemented with a total of 1.2 million euros.

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2021.03.23.

HUNGARY IS DOING A LOT TO MAKE OUR PLANET MORE LIVABLE THROUGH THE HUNGARY HELPS PROGRAM



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Under the Hungary Helps Program, the Government of Hungary provides help where people suffer innocently for any reason and where a humanitarian crisis arises. And in many cases, one of the causes of human suffering and humanitarian crises is environmental degradation and climate change. In addition to supporting persecuted Christians, the Hungary Helps Program has launched a large number of humanitarian projects in recent years.

When assessing humanitarian crises, the environment is an important aspect. In developing countries, in conflict-affected areas, environmental impacts that make it difficult for local communities to thrive can be caused by local pollution, the effects of climate change, or social sustainability issues. Climate change is directly or indirectly generating a series of conflicts that are forcing tens of millions of people – and, in extreme cases, hundreds of millions – to leave their homeland.

The Hungary Helps Program responds to these problems with environmental education programs, the support for the development of sustainable agriculture and renewable energies, facilitating access to water, and supporting initiatives such as the Pan-African Great Green Wall Program.

Hungary also supports projects closely related to Earth Day, including sustainability and environmental protection, in at least 8 African countries, including Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ecuador.



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Benin

With Hungarian support, a Multifunctional Sustainability Center is being built in Benin, Africa. Benin, like many other sub-Saharan countries, is particularly vulnerable to climate change, in particular the expected rise in temperature and rainfall, which will also pose significant challenges for the agricultural and forestry sectors. Droughts and floods harm the country's food and water security. Agriculture is of paramount importance to Benin, employing more than 70% of its population.

The project, supported by the Hungary Helps Program, aims to help Benin communities develop role models that can provide them with long-term opportunities for the long-term preservation of their natural environment, the reform of environmentally unsustainable social and economic processes, and the development of their environmental organizations. Under the project, a Multifunctional Sustainability Center will be established in Bohicon, which will also serve as an environmental education center, a plastic waste recycling point, and a drinking water collection point.

Mauritania

Mauritania is severely affected by the effects of climate change, and the humanitarian situation in the country is already in crisis. The expansion of the Sahara to the South is leading to the desertification of vast areas of land, resulting in the migration of local communities. The Great Green Wall Initiative, set up to halt desertification, covers some of the world's poorest countries. It aims to help people staying in their homeland by improving living conditions, with a special focus on the most vulnerable groups.

Hungary supports the development of local women's agricultural enterprises in Mauritania. As part of the Hungarian donation, three warehouses will be built, a well will be built and the local chicken farm will be developed. Also, it will be possible to train members of three existing women's cooperatives. The project will improve the food supply of the three villages affected, eliminating chronic malnutrition and improving living conditions.

Ethiopia

Ethiopia faces many environmental challenges: rising temperatures, droughts, floods are hitting the country. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations estimates, locust infestation in Ethiopia during 2020 was the worst in 25 years. Nearly 8 million people in the country are in the need of food aid, and the nutritional situation of approximately 3.9 million children and women is critical.

Through the Hungarian Interchurch Aid, Hungary supports the implementation of certain educational, water management, and agricultural programs, which will last for a total of 15 months. The aim is to support future self-sustainability through longer-term professional follow-up. The project, launched in Western Ethiopia, will be implemented in two locations, both in the fields of agriculture – well drilling, milling, livestock development and improving market competitiveness – and basic education development – school renovation, equipment development.



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Ghana

The consequences of climate change in Ghana are mainly reflected in declining rainwater volumes and the increasing frequency of natural disasters. Forty-five percent of the whole population and 90 percent in the northern regions work in agriculture, and farming relies predominantly on rainwater. As a result of climate change, increasingly unpredictable weather could lead to a more serious food crisis, which could lead to a surge in the propensity to migrate.

The aim of the project of the Association of Hungarian Farmers' Cooperatives (MAGOSZ) and the Africa Knowledge Center is to transfer Hungarian agricultural know-how in Ghana. With the knowledge gained in this way, local farmers can increase the marketability of their crops.

The Democratic Republic of the Congo

Environmental change is taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the form of rising temperatures and irregular rainfall, but its social effects are much more severe. The greatest threat is the emergence of mass starvation: more than 15 million people in the country are suffering from food crises or disasters. Contributing to the processes of climate change is the lack of a centralized energy supply in most Congolese areas, forcing many to use inefficient, obsolete generators, which significantly pollute the environment. Removing them and providing sustainable energy will help locals stay in their homeland in the long run. The with the previous support of the Hungarian government for the development and expansion of the ophthalmic mission of the Brother Richard's Foundation for Congolese Patients increased the energy demand of the clinic. To ensure the mission of the Hungarian ophthalmologist in the Congo, in several areas the size of Hungary, the Hungary Helps Program supported the construction of a solar energy system, which also serves the sustainable operation of the institution and protects the environment.

Senegal

As in other parts of West Africa, climate change is expected to lead to increasingly extreme weather and a more severe drought in the Sahel. The fact that the central energy supply is not provided in many areas in the region also contributes to the pollution.

Hungary supports the solar development of the electrical network of the Saint Jean de Dieu hospital in Senegal. This will provide about 70 percent of the hospital's energy needs from solar power over the next 25 years.

Mali

Two-thirds of Mali's territory is desert, the northern part is in the Sahara, and almost a quarter of the population does not have access to clean drinking water. Droughts, armed conflicts, and a lack of public security in the country have now created a serious humanitarian situation.

Within the framework of the Hungary Helps Program, Hungary supports the complex infrastructural development of the Winners' School in Bamako, the capital of Mali. The school will be powered by a solar panel system, and a water intake and handwash station will be set up for children to create a livable and healthy environment..



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Ecuador

Ecuador is particularly vulnerable to various natural disasters, most often shaken by earthquakes as it lies in a seismically active zone called the Ring of Fire in the Pacific Ocean. The most serious, 7.8 magnitude earthquake in the last 60 years occurred in 2016, destroying much of the infrastructure in several provinces and causing extraordinary damage to water supply systems, among other things. This earthquake has also highlighted the lack of resilience of the country's infrastructure, especially in rural areas.

Under the Hungary Helps Program, a water cleaning device was donated to the village of San Andrés de Canoa in Ecuador, which did not have such a device at all, which means no efficient drinking water supply system has been built in the last 20 years. Water came from pipelines from water storage tanks located about 20 kilometers from the village, but this led to a significant water loss. The amount of water actually arriving was far from sufficient to meet the needs of the population, and was only available every third day. The water cleaning equipment put into operation with Hungarian support will be able to provide 200,000 liters of clean water per day, and 15 liters of drinking water per capita, which is sufficient to cover the needs of the local population.

2021.04.22.

GOVERNMENT'S HUNGARY HELPS PROGRAM ASSISTS MAURITANIA



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The government's Hungary Helps Program is offering help in Mauritania, the prime minister's office said in a statement on Tuesday.

Deputy Prime Minister Zsolt Semjén and Tristan Azbej, the state secretary in charge of helping persecuted Christians and the implementation of the program, have paid a visit to Mauritania for talks with state leaders and the Catholic bishop on humanitarian cooperation and the ways to prevent migration to Europe and promote inter-religious coexistence, the statement said.

The delegation attended an event at a church-run home for children with severe disabilities, supported by the Hungary Helps Program, and discussed the experiences gained from agricultural projects assisted by Hungary under the arrangements of the Great Green Wall project.

Mauritania is one of the least developed countries in Africa where people are especially hit by economic and security challenges and the increasing effects of terrorism and climate change.

Over the recent period more than a hundred thousand migrants set off from Mauritania each year, increasing the migratory pressure on Europe. The support provided by the Hungary Helps Program in Mauritania is in line with the Hungarian government's principle according to which instead of bringing people in trouble to Europe, help should be taken to where it is needed, the statement said.

2022.23.03..

HUNGARY AGAINST SANCTIONING RELIGIOUS LEADERS



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Hungary rejects sanctions against religious leaders, the state secretary for aiding persecuted Christians told public television on Sunday, commenting on the European Union's plan to sanction Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Tristan Azbej, who also heads the Hungary Helps Program, said that whereas Hungary condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine and supported various sanctions, Hungary supported brokering peace and "sees counterproductive, nonsensical sanctions as harmful". The Russian Orthodox Church has some 160 million members and 40,000 priests worldwide, Azbej noted, adding that the EU's "crazy" proposal would ban the patriarch from entering the bloc, isolating religious people from their spiritual leader.

The Syrian orthodox patriarch, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Hungarian eparchy of the Russian Orthodox Church, among others, have turned to Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, "the last voice of Christianity and common sense in the EU", regarding the European Commission's proposal, which he said would create a dangerous precedent of "keeping other churches in check, and subjecting them to politically motivated sanctions". Hungary sees religious freedom as "sacred and inviolable", and will not support sanctioning religious leaders, he said. Meanwhile, Hungary has provided aid worth 2 billion forints (EUR 5.2) to Ukraine, he said.

Daily News Hungary
2022.05.13.

GOVT SENDS MEDICAL AID WORTH HUF 210 MILLION TO UKRAINE



HUNGARY HELPS



The government is sending medical aid worth 210 million forints (EUR 570,000) under the arrangements of the Hungary Helps humanitarian scheme to Transcarpathia, a state secretary of the human resources ministry said on Tuesday.

Bence Rétvári said at the national hospital directorate's warehouse in Pilisvörösvár near Budapest that the aid shipment to leave for Ukraine on Wednesday morning includes 30 pallets of drugs, medical equipment, infusion pumps, first aid boxes and bandages. During the time of war, hospitals find it difficult to get new supplies, which makes the Hungarian aid especially important, he said.

Tristan Azbej, state secretary in charge of helping persecuted Christians and the implementation of the Hungary Helps scheme, said that in addition to 2 billion forints support provided so far by the government, 500 million forints worth of aid will be sent to Transcarpathia and Ukraine. The medical aid to be sent on Wednesday represents a part of this and the rest will be paid in the form of support for charity schemes in Transcarpathia and Ukraine, he added.

MTI – Hungary Today
2022.13.05.

THE BUDAPEST REPORT ON CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION 2021 IS ALSO AVAILABLE ONLINE - HUNGARY HELPS



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This year, the 'Budapest Report on Christian Persecution' volume has been published for the fifth time. It has been created to provide a forum for academic work on Christian persecution, personal testimonies and experiences as well as reports on the activities of charity organisations. The Budapest Report has been published by the State Secretariat for Aid of Persecuted Christians and for the Hungary Helps Program and the University of Public Service.

The authors of the volume are prominent representatives of the academic field and the public sphere both from Hungary and from abroad: policy-makers, researchers, analysts, human rights advocates and representatives of think-tank organisations. The studies present the reality of Christian persecution in different regions of the world from the perspectives of security policy, history, basic human rights, public law, etc. The volume also serves as an example that the issue of Christian persecution can be addressed academically. The communities that are being described have a long history and rich culture. This fact alone makes it possible to present them with a scientific approach when referring to their suffering and persecution.

The studies in the volume are organized along three main themes. In addition to the introduction of violent acts against Christian communities, the volume is dealing with the phenomenon in a general, more theoretical context also and its international legal aspects. Besides, the role of state and church organizations in resolving the issue is a separate subject as well.



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Not only do we have to promote the preservation of Christian values and Christianity itself within Europe but we should also strive to help our Christian brothers and sisters who are suffering persecution on other continents. This volume, published for the fifth time year after year, is a symbol of commitment. It is a symbol that, throughout the past five years, standing up for persecuted Christian communities has remained a crucial commitment.

The book is available both in Hungarian and in English through [this link](#).

2022.06.01.

THE NEW HUNGARY HELPS LAW IS IN FORCE



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On 1 January 2024, the new law on the Hungary Helps Program, voted by Parliament, entered into force. The new law aims to create a uniform and transparent regulatory framework for Hungary's international humanitarian aid and development policy. The objective of the law is to increase efficiency and strengthen the principles of Hungary's solidarity.

The new Act will coordinate Hungary's policy instruments that can contribute to the protection of human lives, mitigate crises and help communities in crisis areas to stay in place. The measure aims to ensure a more systematic and effective intervention in humanitarian disasters and crises, and to improve the process, transparency and coordination of assistance. With the new legislation, Hungary aims to strengthen its position in the field of international assistance, while stressing the primary importance of protecting human lives and solidarity.

2024.01.10.

A SCHOOL OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF JORDAN IN KARAK WAS DEVELOPED WITH GREEK-HUNGARIAN FUNDING.



We are pleased to report on another important international collaboration, made possible with the support of our program, aimed at providing long-term support for Christian communities living in Jordan. The infrastructure development of the school operated by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Jordan in the city of Karak has been completed, and the inauguration ceremony was held in recent days.

Karak is located in the central, increasingly desertified region of Jordan, from which many people are migrating, primarily towards the capital. Supporting local educational institutions is of key importance, as they serve as a vital source of stability for both the Christian and local Muslim communities.

As part of a Greek-Hungarian cooperation launched in 2020, we supported the Levantine Christians and jointly contributed to the development project of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Jordan.

In the second phase of the cooperation, the Church's new educational institution in Karak received funding for expansion and development. This enabled the installation of solar panels, the procurement of educational tools, and the improvement of classrooms and the library. The developments carried out over the past few years have already brought significant change to the institution, including a notable increase in enrolment. Among the school's future plans is the construction of a high school section.



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The closing ceremony of the project was held last weekend, with the participation of Archbishop Christophorus Atallah, Hungarian Ambassador Attila Káli, Greek Ambassador Irene Riga, and Péter Kovács, director general of the Hungary Helps Agency.

“The support provided to the school in Karak is a clear example of the transformative power of joint effort and commitment. While we celebrate the achievements, it is important to reaffirm our dedication to providing quality education and a safe, inspiring environment for all,” emphasized Péter Kovács in his welcome address.

2024.03.28.

HUNGARY HELPS AGENCY USES SOCIAL DESIGN AS A TOOL TO TACKLE GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE - ON CREARTRESILI



CREATResili is a project co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme, which starts on the 1st of January 2024 with a Hungarian-Kosovar-Albanian consortium led by the Hungary Helps Agency. The main goal of the 22-month-long project is to create a program where creativity promotes the resilience of vulnerable communities and social awareness.

By using the tools of social design, CREATResili primarily supports women living in Kosovo who are exposed to gender-based violence. These marginalized women do not have a strong social network, nor are they able to rebuild their lives, as they have to deal with unresolved traumas and a lack of livelihood opportunities. In order to address this sensitive issue, the consortium members of the CREATResili are eager to develop an international model by organizing workshops where professionals lend a hand to women, who have experienced abuse, to create and sell creative, self-expressive design products. The women participating in this project will be able to gain income and get the opportunity to break out of abusive relationships.

Through the creation and presentation of these products, they can tell and process their personal stories, and give visibility to the problem of gender-based violence to the international public. In a wider geographical sense, the project could have a significant positive impact on women's empowerment in the Western Balkans region.



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CREATResili builds on cross-sectoral collaboration as it brings together a governmental humanitarian and development agency (Hungary Helps Agency, Hungary), an artistic hub (Pro Progressione, Hungary), an NGO working with women who have experienced abuse (Jahjaga Foundation, Kosovo) and an e-commerce company (Gjirafa, Albania). Furthermore, the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME) joins the consortium as an associated partner, with its professional network and comprehensive knowledge in the field of social design.



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2024.04.04.

INTERVIEW, PART 1. WITH PÉTER KOVÁCS, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HUNGARY HELPS AGENCY



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Interview with Péter Kovács, the General Manager of the Hungary Helps Agency

What has been the biggest achievement of the last 4 years?

Péter Kovács: When I took over the leadership of the Agency four years ago, the HHA was still a small organization with a somewhat immature mandate. Although the Hungary Helps Program has been providing grants since 2017, the Agency itself had only about six months of organizational history. It was established to manage grants, gather donations, and – where possible – attract EU funding. Our commitment and openness was obvious, but the regulatory environment and processes were less developed, leaving room for the establishment of operational processes and the clarification of concepts. This was a significant opportunity, and I consider the process itself an achievement: together, we have managed to transform a promising idea into a cohesive national aid program and an organization capable of coordinating immediate humanitarian assistance after disasters, while also contributing to long-term international development objectives. We have identified the tools at our disposal and the types of colleagues who can thrive with us. With the establishment of a professional agency, aid policy has become more effective and transparent.

What qualities and skills lead to success?

Péter Kovács: When expanding our team, we consider various factors. The new colleague must possess the necessary expertise, although it's important to note that what we do isn't typically taught in schools; it comes with experience. The complexity of our work is reflected in the fact that our colleagues work as project managers rather than grants managers. Appropriate language and communication skills are also a priority, as we operate at the frontiers of diplomacy. Commitment is paramount. Understanding and steadfast dedication to the cause being served, even during challenging times, are crucial.



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What does the role of a project manager entail?

Péter Kovács: It encompasses much more than merely the title. The projects we support often unfold in vastly different cultural contexts, such as the Middle East, Africa, or the Western Balkans. Here, the concept of project management significantly differs from European standards. Thus, we play a crucial role in ensuring that Hungarian taxpayers' money is managed responsibly while also assisting beneficiaries throughout the entire process. An important principle is to refrain from imposing our ideas and instead collaborate with beneficiaries, respecting their expertise in their respective environments. Simultaneously, we incorporate the Hungarian perspective, making it a collaborative effort. As a result of our cooperation, we've assisted over 2 million people globally in staying in or returning to their homelands. The pursuit of understanding is among our core values. When initiating work within a community, we strive to comprehend their operations and challenges thoroughly. Often, we conduct preliminary assessments of communities before commencing the grant program, allowing us to refine our understanding based on our experiences, moving beyond textbook knowledge or brief grant applications. This approach aids in decision-making and ensures that beneficiaries derive maximum benefits.

Returning to the topic of personal commitment, what inspired you to assume this position?

Péter Kovács: The Program serves a noble purpose with which I, as a Christian man, resonate deeply. Additionally, I believe it's crucial that the Program aligns with the diplomatic objectives of the country's foreign policy and enhances our nation's reputation. Moreover, I'm motivated by the fact that through the Program, Hungary is gaining visibility and forging friendships and alliances in regions where others are often hesitant to engage. Furthermore, as an innovator who thrives on initiating change, I found ample opportunity to do so at the Agency.

After four years, does it still retain its charm?

Péter Kovács: I find myself entering the office each day with renewed motivation and dedication, and I see the same spirit reflected in my colleagues. Moreover, every year, every month brings something new. Reflecting on the past year, we launched the Sahel mission, secured our first EU grant with the CREATResili project, and prepared for the opening of our office in Amman, Jordan. Additionally, the outcomes of 2023 will herald significant changes and opportunities in 2024. In December 2023, a law was enacted that promises substantial changes in our operations.

In the subsequent part of the interview (February 22, 2024), we will delve into the practical implications of the upcoming law change, effective January 1, 2024 and discuss future plans. Stay tuned for more!

2024.02.15.

INTERVIEW, PART 2. WITH PÉTER KOVÁCS, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF HUNGARY HELPS AGENCY



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Last week, we talked about how the law coming into force on January 1, 2024, will bring significant changes to the Agency's operations. What does this change mean for your day-to-day work?

Péter Kovács: The new law enables us to transition from grant managers to implementers, enhancing our ability to respond to challenges with greater efficiency and speed. Previously, we used to transfer funds to a third party, such as a Hungarian or international NGO, who would implement the programs. Although we have always worked with organizations in whom we had full trust and thus these partnerships have always been successful, in office in Budapest, we often felt pretty disconnected from project activities. Now that we may become implementers, we can take on responsibility and control, which in some cases can have many advantages.

In what scenarios might these advantages be evident?

Péter Kovács: With our legal status and expanded infrastructure, along with access to diplomatic channels, we are better positioned to be effective and support NGOs working on-the-ground. For instance, as a public organization, we can navigate bureaucratic hurdles more smoothly in e.g.: African locations where NGOs, despite their local expertise, may face licensing complexities. Additionally, our enhanced status grants us improved access to high-risk areas, increased opportunities to secure external funding, and greater potential for collaboration with similar agencies, thereby amplifying our impact. Determining when to leverage these advantages requires project-specific judgment, but the opportunities are abundant.

Hungary will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union from July 1 to December 31, 2024. What opportunities does this present for the Agency?

Péter Kovács: During the presidency, policy meetings are chaired by the incumbent country.



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This also applies, for example, to the Committee on Development (CODEV), so that Hungarian priorities will be given greater emphasis. As the implementer for international development, the Agency will play a crucial role in advancing these priorities. Essentially, we will serve as catalysts, driving initiatives forward and fostering collaboration. The presidency also offers a significant platform to raise awareness of the nascent development agenda and thus attract potential partners..

How do you envision the Agency in 5-10 or even 20 years?

Péter Kovács: This entails considerations of financial, operational, and personnel aspects. Financially, our goal is to continue augmenting international funding and forge deeper cooperation with like-minded agencies. We aim to leverage Hungarian expertise, connections, and commitment alongside partners with greater resource potential. We also believe that it is important that the activities of the Hungary Helps Program are managed coherently. Mere disaster relief isn't sufficient; the next step is to help rebuilding and development. And when the disaster situation is over, and there are homes to live in, schools to go to, or hospitals, etc., we must also try to lift the community economically. Staying in one's homeland requires more than just keeping someone's life safe. You also need to see how you are going to support your family, educate your children, sustain your business. There are different phases of assistance, and the key is not to fragment your resources. When a region or a community goes from a very bad situation to a prosperous situation with our help, then we can truly say that we have been successful.

That sounds as a monumental task for such a small agency.

Péter Kovács: Here, we can reflect on the human aspect of the previous question. I often think of Mother Teresa, whose human qualities and attitude are exemplary, but only a few people know that she was also an extremely strong-willed and determined person. She excelled as a professional organizer and manager, effectively building up her network, which continues to operate successfully around the world even without her presence. We aspire to emulate her, combining our professional organizing skills with the compassionate assistance for which Mother Teresa and her sisters were renowned – aiding those in need where we encounter suffering. Earlier, I mentioned the importance of seeking understanding to make rational decisions. Empathy is equally crucial, especially since we primarily assist communities affected by tragedy. One of our recent experiences involves collaborating with the Diocese of Makurdi in Nigeria, specifically in a part of Benue State inhabited by the Tiv tribe. Here half of the community is Muslim, while the other half is Christian, and typically these groups coexist peacefully. However, the recent surge of political Islamism, mainly due to the infiltration of Boko Haram, has resulted in dire consequences, including the massacre of Christian villages. The number of internally displaced people has now soared to hundreds of thousands, enduring horrendous conditions and unspeakable atrocities. It's vital to provide assistance methodically to ensure proper accountability. Yet, if we fail to empathize with people who have lost everything, with half of their families slain, and who rely on our support to feed themselves each day, then we cannot fulfil our mission.

2024.02.22.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW WEBSITE!



HUNGARY HELPS



We are excited to announce that the Hungary Helps website has been completely revamped! Our new design offers a more detailed and vibrant presentation of our activities and programs, ensuring that the latest news and information are easily accessible to both our domestic and international audiences.

The Hungary Helps Program is dedicated to providing humanitarian aid, supporting international development, and assisting people in need worldwide. On our website, you can find comprehensive details about our efforts in crisis-affected areas, our support for Christian communities, and our contributions to global development goals. With a fresh design and a user-friendly interface, we are confident that visitors will easily find the content they are looking for, whether it's breaking news or information on grant opportunities.

Explore our new features, read our latest updates, and learn more about how you can get involved with the Hungary Helps Program.

2024.07.01.

HUNGARY HELPS AGENCY: BUILDING RESILIENCE IN FRAGILE ENVIRONMENTS



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The Hungary Helps Agency is proud to share the highlights from the recent Joint Meeting of CODEV-PI and COHAFA Working Parties held in Budapest between 18-19 June 2024. Our Director General, Péter Kovács, presented our comprehensive approach to humanitarian and international development efforts, emphasizing our commitment to building resilience in fragile environments.

Who We Are & How We Work

The Hungary Helps Program is the cornerstone of Hungary's humanitarian and international development initiatives. As the implementing body, the Hungary Helps Agency manages grants and directly executes projects under this framework. We are an accredited Member State Specialized Agency at DG ECHO and are nearing the completion of our pillar assessment audit. Our mission is to provide support in fragile environments where resilience building is crucial. Examples include our ongoing projects in Chad and Syria, where we address the needs arising from protracted crises. These crises often become forgotten, yet the suffering continues, and our presence ensures that aid reaches those who need it most.

Collaborations and Rapid Response

Our work involves a variety of partners, selected based on the project and country-specific needs. Whenever possible, we choose local actors or organizations with substantial experience in the target region. In situations requiring immediate response, such as natural disasters, we coordinate efforts and provide financial support for rescue missions. For instance, during last year's earthquake in Turkey and Syria, we dispatched six rescue teams consisting of 169 staff members and 31 dogs. Hungary was the first EU country to provide medical support to Syria, showcasing our ability to respond swiftly and effectively in times of crisis.



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The Role of Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs)

Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) are essential partners in our work due to their inherent values of solidarity and societal impact. Their motivation to create positive change aligns with our mission, and they often serve as critical channels for aid, especially in regions with restrictive sanctions. In Syria, where international development activities face significant hurdles, FBOs allow us to support the local population without engaging with the regime. This approach ensures that our aid reaches the people most in need while adhering to international regulations.

Working in Fragile Environments: Our Why and How

Fragile environments present unique challenges, from failed states to regions where minority groups face persecution. Our interventions range from humanitarian aid to international development, tailored to the specific context of each region. We address the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus, understanding that stability is the foundation of peacebuilding. Recognizing this, we have expanded our legislative framework to include three pillars: Humanitarian Intervention, International Development Cooperation, and Stability Building. This holistic approach enables us to adapt our support to the evolving needs of fragile environments.

Our Global Reach

Our operations extend to various parts of the world facing instability and protracted crises. Beyond Chad and Syria, we have impactful projects in numerous regions. Our esteemed partner, Hungarian Interchurch Aid, complements our efforts with their work in Iraq, Ethiopia, and Afghanistan, among other countries.



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Conclusion

The Hungary Helps Agency is dedicated to making a significant and lasting impact in fragile and politically constrained environments. Through strategic partnerships, swift responses, and a comprehensive approach, we continue to build resilience and support those in need.

Stay connected with us to learn more about our projects and how you can get involved in our mission to bring hope and stability to the world's most vulnerable communities.

2024.07.19.

CREATRESILI SUMMER UNIVERSITY KICKS OFF



HUNGARY HELPS



On August 26, 2024, CREATResili project’s Summer University, titled Social Design Summer University, officially commenced with a ceremony. This initiative aims to empower participants with social design tools to support abused and marginalized women in Kosovo.

The twelve selected participants were welcomed by representatives from Hungary Helps Agency, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design (MOME), the Jahjaga Foundation, Gjirafa e-commerce company, and the Pro Progressione artistic hub. Péter Kovács, Director General of the Hungary Helps Agency, also delivered his remarks to the group, stating:

“In today’s world, where we face countless challenges, the power of art is crucial in driving positive social change.”

Hungary Helps Agency leads the consortium of CREATResili project, which is funded by the Creative Europe program. The initiative seeks to leverage creativity to support the resilience of vulnerable and fragile communities, particularly women who have experienced abuse. Throughout the week, participants will dive deep into the methodologies and practical applications of social design. The program’s objective is to equip them with the skills to independently initiate projects and develop innovative solutions to address pressing social issues. The summer university will culminate in presentations and evaluations. Three outstanding participants will be selected for an opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills in Kosovo this fall, providing direct assistance to abused women. This project is of vital importance, ensuring long-term sustainable development for both the participants and the communities they support. It stands as a testament to the power of social design—not only as a creative process but also as a potent tool for fostering meaningful social transformation.



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2024.08.25

CREATRESILI SOCIAL DESIGN SUMMER UNIVERSITY WRAPPED UP SUCCESSFULLY



HUNGARY HELPS



The Social Design Summer University concluded with great success, marking a significant milestone in the CREATResili project. Soon, three talented young creatives will apply their skills to support abused women in Kosovo. The CREATResili project's summer university, titled Social Design Summer University, wrapped up with thrilling outcomes. A huge round of applause goes out to all participants and organizers, but special congratulations are due to the three winners: Borbála Moravcsik, Miriam Sékou Coulibaly and Annamaria Kmetyo, who earned the opportunity to participate in a prestigious residency program.

Throughout the week, participants engaged in a variety of inspiring and challenging activities that tested their creativity and offered new perspectives.

In addition to lectures on social design and social enterprises, they collaborated in interactive workshops, refining their ideas together. These creative tasks provided everyone with the chance to showcase their abilities, and the exchange of diverse viewpoints created an inspiring atmosphere.

The highlight of the program was the closing day on August 30, when participants presented the projects they developed during the week. The jury faced a tough decision, as every idea was impressive. However, after much deliberation, the concepts by Borbála Moravcsik, Miriam Sékou Coulibaly and Annamaria Kmetyo stood out as the strongest. As a result, they won the opportunity to apply their knowledge in Kosovo, directly supporting abused women.

Following the announcement of the winners and the closing ceremony, participants and partners shared their experiences and future plans in a relaxed discussion. Once again, heartfelt congratulations to all participants! The experiences and connections made during this week are sure to have a lasting impact, and we eagerly await the unfolding of these ideas during the residency program.



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The CREATResili project, supported by the Creative Europe Program and led by the Hungary Helps Agency, aims to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups, particularly abused women, through the power of creativity. CREATResili demonstrates that social design is more than a creative process – it is a powerful tool for driving social change



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2024.08.30.

GLOBAL EFFORTS TO PROTECT WOMEN OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES



HUNGARY HELPS



Global Efforts to Protect Women of Religious Minorities Highlighted at Online Event Marking International Day for Victims of Religious Violence

On August 22, 2024, - Online event to observe the International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief. This annual event, established by UN General Assembly Resolution 73/296 in 2019, aims to raise awareness about religious discrimination and violence, with this year's focus on atrocities against women.

The event featured panel discussions with international representatives dedicated to religious freedom. Notable speakers included Ryan Brown, President of Open Doors US; Simin Fahandej from the Bahá'í International Community's Geneva office; Parwiz Karimi, President of Hazara Community UK; Lopa Banerjee, Head of the Civil Society Division at UN Women; and Elisa Chavez, Human Rights Officer at Stefanus Alliance International. During the event, Dr. Zsuzsanna Horváth, Hungary's Permanent Representative to the UN, highlighted Hungary's dedication to safeguarding the rights of women from religious minorities, both within their own communities and in relation to the broader society. She highlighted the Hungary Helps Program, which supports vulnerable communities by addressing the specific needs of women and girls. These initiatives focus on healthcare, protection from violence, and economic empowerment, particularly in crisis situations.

Hungary Helps projects play a crucial role in improving the living conditions and security of women in regions like Africa and the Middle East. For example, in Mali, a women's center supports victims of rape, female genital mutilation, and child marriage. In Erbil, Iraq, a safe home provides support for Yazidi women and their children recovering from the trauma of ISIS terror. A notable initiative is the CREATResili project in Kosovo, launched in 2024, which empowers marginalized women through training. Co-funded by the Creative Europe program, this project helps women in Kosovo become self-reliant and resilient, reflecting a broader commitment to fostering environments where women can thrive and contribute to a just and prosperous society.

2024.09.05.

"FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE IS THE KEY TO WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND PROTECTION" - ALBA CIKAQI, JAHJAGA FOUNDATION ON CREATRESILI



HUNGARY HELPS



In 2024, we launched our first European Union project, CREATResili, co-funded by the Creative Europe program and implemented by a Hungarian-Kosovar-Albanian consortium. This project focuses on supporting abused women in Kosovo through social design tools. It exemplifies cross-sector collaboration, with key partners including Pro Progressione (an arts hub), the Jahjaga Foundation from Kosovo (an NGO), and Gjirafa Albania (e-commerce). Additionally, the Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design provides expertise in social design, ensuring the project's success. Below is an interview with Alba Cikaqi, project assistant for the CREATResili Project at the Jahjaga Foundation, discussing the challenges faced by women in Kosovo and her hopes for the project.

The CREATResili project is an important initiative. Can you share why this project resonates with the Jahjaga Foundation's mission and how it addresses the situation of women in Kosovo?

A.C.: The CREATResili project aligns closely with our foundation's mission of empowering women. Despite progress, significant challenges remain for women in Kosovo. Three key areas are particularly concerning: low employment rates, limited property ownership, and financial dependency. Only 20% of women are employed, and just 17% own property, making them financially reliant on their families or partners.

While we've advanced beyond the constraints faced by previous generations—like those of my grandmother—we still have a long way to go. Although gender equality is embedded in our constitution and the Istanbul Convention has been enforceable since 2020, there's a gap between legal rights and lived realities, particularly in employment. More than half of university students are women, but this doesn't translate into job opportunities. CREATResili aims to change that by equipping women with the skills to turn their passions into viable sources of income.



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Despite these legal protections, why do women struggle to find jobs in Kosovo, especially with such high numbers attending university?

A.C.: Traditional gender norms play a large role. Women are still expected to take on most of the caregiving responsibilities, which limits their ability to work, especially in rural areas where childcare services are scarce. Moreover, the disparity in parental leave exacerbates this issue. Women receive six months of maternity leave, during which employers shoulder significant financial burdens, while men get only 10 days. This imbalance discourages employers from hiring women due to the perceived financial risks.

It seems financial dependence makes women even more vulnerable within family structures. Is domestic violence another issue you're confronting?

A.C.: Sadly, yes. In 2023 alone, police reported four femicides and over 2,000 cases of domestic violence. Many women remain hesitant to report abuse, partly because our criminal justice system still doesn't take these crimes seriously enough. For instance, in a recent femicide case, the perpetrator faced only minor fines for repeated offenses before ultimately killing his wife. The system's leniency fails to offer real protection.

What steps is the Jahjaga Foundation taking to combat these challenges?

A.C.: Our foundation focuses on empowering marginalized communities, particularly women from minority groups and survivors of domestic violence. Achieving financial independence is central to our work because financially independent women are less vulnerable to abuse. Through initiatives like CREATResili, we offer workshops and training that help women develop new skills and gain confidence, making them more self-sufficient. This not only helps them but strengthens our society as a whole.

What are your hopes for the future of CREATResili?

A.C.: I hope the program surpasses all expectations. I want the women involved to enjoy the experience and grow—not just in their skills but in their confidence and independence. Kosovo is a young country, open to new experiences and partnerships. We are always eager to learn and collaborate. I'm confident that this project will benefit not only the women involved but also all the partners who come together to support it.



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2024.10.04.

“WE ARE GRATEFUL TO THE HUNGARIAN PEOPLE” – SUCCESSFUL HUMANITARIAN MISSION IN BEIRUT



HUNGARY HELPS



On November 9, 2024, the Hungary Helps Program successfully carried out another humanitarian mission in Beirut, the capital of Lebanon. During our visit, we delivered essential medicines, medical supplies, and non-perishable food to support local communities. The shipment was made possible not only through government assistance but also through donations from the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta. Our church partners received the aid and our personal presence with profound gratitude, emphasizing its importance during the ongoing crisis.

During the trip, we met with our Lebanese church partners to gain firsthand insights into the local humanitarian situation and express the solidarity of the Hungarian people. Attending the meetings were Bishop Justinos Safar of the Syriac Orthodox Church, Bishop Krikor Badichah of the Armenian Catholic Church, and representatives of the Order of Malta's Lebanese delegation. They highlighted the immense strain of providing for over one million internally displaced persons as a result of war and conflict.

“It was important for me to meet our church partners personally during our mission in Beirut to hear directly about the severity of the situation and to convey the solidarity of the Hungarian nation,” emphasized State Secretary Tristan Azbej, who led the delegation. He added that the meetings carried significant risk for the participants, given that just days prior, rocket strikes had destroyed buildings near the airport. Delegation members also heard explosions shortly after landing.

Church leaders expressed that Hungary's support is a tremendous help in addressing daily challenges. It was particularly moving to learn that they have opened their churches to shelter not only Christians but also Muslim individuals in need, ensuring they do not have to sleep on the streets.



HUNGARY HELPS



“The Hungarian government’s position is clear: the bloody terrorist attacks against Israel that sparked this conflict must not escalate into a broader war involving multiple nations. However, the reality we witnessed is that de-escalation remains a distant hope,” added State Secretary Tristan Azbej.

Through the Hungary Helps Program, our goal is to deliver aid directly to those in need and support local communities in remaining on their homeland. This mission to Beirut once again demonstrates that Hungary backs vulnerable communities not just with words, but with tangible actions. Our Lebanese partners unanimously asked us to convey their gratitude to the Hungarian people: “We are grateful to the Hungarian people,” they emphasized, underlining how the aid shipments and the presence of Hungary’s solidarity significantly contribute to keeping hope alive in their crisis-stricken nation.

A heartfelt thank you to the Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta, the Ministry of Defence, and the Hungarian Defence Forces for ensuring the success and safety of this mission!

Photo: HM Zrínyi Nonprofit Ltd. - Róbert Érdi

2024.11.19.

HUNGARY HELPS PROUDLY SUPPORTS CHAD'S FIRST PACEMAKER IMPLANTATIONS



HUNGARY HELPS



As part of the Hungary Helps Program, we proudly supported a groundbreaking healthcare mission in Chad, where the Budapest St. Francis Hospital's medical volunteer team carried out the country's first-ever pacemaker implantations. This milestone procedure marked a new chapter in Chad's healthcare system, involving local doctors and specialists in the process.

Over the past two months, Hungarian healthcare volunteers spent more than 140 workdays in Chad, providing medical care to refugees, performing hospital tasks, and conducting educational programs. These activities were carried out in collaboration with Chad's Ministry of Health, focusing on critical areas that require immediate intervention. The support provided through the Hungary Helps Program was essential in starting the process of making pacemaker implantation available locally, contributing to the reduction of mortality rates related to heart diseases.

One of the most significant achievements of this mission was the successful execution of the country's first pacemaker implantations in the capital, N'Djamena. After consultations with local cardiologists, six patients were selected for the procedures. The surgeries were performed by Prof. Dr. István Hartyánszky, head of the Department of Cardiac Surgery at Semmelweis University, along with Dr. Emil Toldy-Schedel, electrophysiologist at the Budai Irgalmasrendi Hospital and CEO of Budapest Saint Francis Hospital. The necessary equipment was provided by Biotronic Hungária Kft. During the procedures, Hungarian doctors worked alongside local colleagues to share their professional expertise. The long-term goal of this program is for local physicians to acquire the skills needed for pacemaker implantation and programming, ensuring that in the future, these life-saving interventions can be performed within Chad. To achieve this, more than ten local cardiologists participated in EKG and pacemaker programming training.



HUNGARY HELPS



In addition to the pacemaker surgeries, the team also performed follow-up checks on eight patients who had previously received pacemakers at a different hospital. In three cases, electrode position correction was required, as no follow-up had been done since the initial implantation. Moreover, twenty-four in-hospital patients and numerous outpatient clients, including refugee pregnant women, received cardiovascular screenings. Beyond pacemaker implantation, the Hungarian healthcare team carried out other essential interventions and held educational programs, contributing to the expansion of local medical knowledge and capabilities. The Ministry of Health of Chad aims to make pacemaker implantation available locally, eliminating the need for patients to travel abroad (to countries like Morocco, Turkey, or South Africa). This program not only provided immediate life-saving treatments but also laid the foundation for the long-term self-sufficiency of the local healthcare system in this field.

The Hungary Helps Program is proud to have supported this historic mission, which has not only saved lives through the expertise and dedication of Hungarian doctors but also created the conditions for sustainable healthcare development in Chad. We would like to express our gratitude to the Budapest St. Francis Hospital's rapid-response healthcare team and Biotronic Hungária Kft. for providing the necessary equipment. We also thank all those who contributed to this pioneering project, demonstrating that Hungary offers not only words but tangible support.

2024.12.17.

HUNGARIAN AID PACKAGES BRING RELIEF TO CHADIAN FLOOD VICTIMS



HUNGARY HELPS



The Hungary Helps Program has donated several hundred non-food relief packages to the Chadian Ministry of Social Action, Solidarity, and Humanitarian Affairs to support those affected by the 2024 floods in Chad. The donation was handed over to the Secretary-General of the Ministry by the operational head and local staff of the Hungary Helps Agency. The packages included women's hygiene products, essential household items, hygiene kits, school supplies, as well as lamps and solar panels, providing assistance to individuals who lost their homes or were temporarily displaced due to the recent floods. The aid aims to help restore basic living conditions for those affected. Distribution of the packages will be carried out under the coordination of the Ministry, with particular attention to ensuring that the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children, receive the support.

This donation is another outstanding example of the dedicated collaboration between the Hungary Helps Program and the Government of the Republic of Chad, focusing on the swift, effective, and direct support of those in need. The Secretary-General of the Ministry emphasized:

“The donation has arrived at the most opportune time for our compatriots affected by the recent floods, who need help to return to their homes.”

Mahamat Abdelkerim Bagari underlined that the relief items will be distributed quickly and equitably to those most in need. The Hungarian humanitarian aid strengthens the Chadian government's efforts to provide a rapid and effective response to the affected population. On behalf of the entire ministry staff, the Secretary-General warmly thanked Hungary Helps for its generosity, saying,

“Together, we can overcome today's challenges and build a better future for everyone.”

2024.12.18.

STATE SECRETARY TRISTAN AZBEJ ON SOLIDARITY MISSION IN LEBANON



HUNGARY HELPS



Hungary is stepping up its role in supporting Middle Eastern Christians, as Tristan Azbej, State Secretary for the Aid of Persecuted Christians and the Hungary Helps Program, delivered a 3.5-ton humanitarian aid shipment to Lebanon and met with the Maronite Patriarch Bechara Boutros al-Rai to discuss collaboration for regional stability.

State Secretary Tristan Azbej, who leads Hungary's efforts in aiding persecuted Christians and oversees the Hungary Helps Program, has highlighted the nation's growing commitment to stabilizing the Middle East and supporting Christian communities through humanitarian efforts.

During a solidarity visit to Beirut, Azbej met with Bechara Boutros al-Rai, the Maronite Patriarch of Lebanon, who serves as a unifying figure amid the country's multifaceted crises. The visit underscored Hungary's commitment through the Hungary Helps Program, which collaborated with organizations such as the Hungarian Maltese Charity Service, the Baptist Aid Organization, and Richter Pharmaceutical Company. Together, they delivered a 3.5-ton humanitarian aid shipment comprising food, medicines, generators, camp beds, and blankets aimed at alleviating hardships faced by Christian communities in Lebanon.

Patriarch Rai praised Hungary as a rare Western ally that continues to support Middle Eastern Christians, contrasting this with the perceived abandonment by other Western nations. He called on Hungary to mediate between its Christian-based Western partners and Lebanese stakeholders, envisioning a partnership that could bring historic hope for Lebanon's reconstruction.

Azbej reaffirmed Hungary's dedication to Lebanon's stability and the protection of Syrian Christians. The Patriarch also announced plans to visit Hungary next year to deepen this collaboration. This mission reflects Hungary's broader vision of offering direct assistance to persecuted Christian communities and fostering dialogue for long-term regional stability.

About Hungary
2024.12.20.