

INTRODUCTION

Homo Faber, from the Latin, means 'man the maker,' a worker who is occupied with repairing things every day. That man is not an artist but sometimes a visionary, and certainly a strategist.

20 years ago, the name for our organisation was given by Jacek Kuroń. In his book *Rzeczpospolita dla moich wnuków* (A Republic for my Grandchildren), this famous opposition figure pointed out that *homo faber* is someone who, acting from the bottom up, changes reality.

For 20 years of our operation in Lublin, we have supported people whose human rights and freedoms have not been respected. We have tried to make advocacy for systemic changes come in parallel with aid. We have not forgotten to give a voice to those who do not have one.

On 24 February, together with other organisations and the Lublin City Hall, we established a cross-sector humanitarian aid system. Thanks to those efforts, a city with a population of 300,000 has easily accommodated more than 1,200,000 female and male refugees from Ukraine¹.

From the very beginning, it has been clear to us that only strong organisations and efficient institutions are able to work effectively and in the long term on a crisis.

Today, after 22 months of war in Ukraine, despite the great fatigue of the helpers, new crises and problems, and political changes, our team faces new challenges in full readiness and openness.

During these 22 months, apart from the ongoing assistance to female and male refugees arriving in the city, we have been working towards systemic solutions. And so, in March this year, we launched the Baobab community centre – a place for integration and relationship building, with the following key services: legal assistance, psychological support, an information desk, language teaching, and craft workshops. More than 2,500 people visit us every month. It is a place for everyone: female and male refugees and migrants, but also for the host community: Poles. It is clear to us that social inclusivity must take place with the participation of all actors.

¹ A. Dąbrowska, *90 Days of Assistance. Lublin Social Committee to Aid Ukraine. Report*, Lublin 2022, source: <https://hf.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/raport-eng.pdf>

We are presenting you the Annual Report on the activities of the Homo Faber Association in 2023, concerning the support system directed primarily at war female and male refugees from Ukraine. But that is not all – you will also find mentions of other activities we conducted, which complete the picture of our work for the local community of Lublin, both new and old residents of the city.

In recent months, in social organisations, we used to say that the reality we live in is somehow a permanent crisis. There are not only migratory movements triggered by wars, political instability in a given country or region, or political populism that contribute to it, but also climate catastrophe, pandemics. The lessons of good organisation of civil society, of local communities, can and should be the basis for reorganising crisis management and lead to the implementation of solutions that were not so obvious before. New challenges require new ideas for action.

We hope that our report will provide not only a worthy summary of our work but also an inspiration for people looking for solutions they could implement in their cities and towns – governors, civil servants, activists, academics....

Anna Dąbrowska,
President of the Homo Faber Association

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LUBLIN SOCIAL COMMITTEE TO HELP UKRAINE

On the morning of 24 February, just after the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, a grassroots aid system began to emerge in Lublin, coordinated with the Lublin City Hall and networked with civil society organisations.

The Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine – as a cross-sectoral team – launched its activities just after 10 a.m.; at 12:00 p.m., the first wide-ranging meeting was held to identify key areas of action: information, humanitarian aid, volunteering... Guidelines were established and coordinators were appointed. At 17:00, a meeting was held with the first volunteers, and at 19:00, during a solidarity rally in front of the city hall, the assembly was widely invited to cooperate in the initiative.

The range of activities was expanded on the following day – a 24-hour helpline (at its peak, 10 people answered calls at the same time), a help desk offering accommodation in private flats, an information desk, emergency assistance at railway stations, transport from the border to the city, a base of translators and interpreters, interpretation at the Zosin/Horodło border crossing, assistance with accommodation, and, with the launch of the public accommodation facilities – coordinators and volunteers for interpreting assistance.

The Committee was composed of: the Homo Faber Association, the Institute for the Rule of Law Foundation, the Foundation of Spiritual Culture 'Pogranicza,' the Foundation for the Development of Central and Eastern Europe, scouting organisations: the Polish Scouting Association and the Plast Ukrainian Scouting Organisation, as well as, which is extremely important for the success of the entire initiative, selected employees from the following departments of the Lublin City Hall: the Social Participation Office, the Culture Department, the Strategy and Entrepreneurship Department, the Office – Centre for International Cooperation, the Office for Integrated Territorial Investments.

The headquarters of the Committee were set up in the Centre for Culture, a municipal institution that, as activities grew, has given more space to the Committee, providing equipment and technical assistance and sharing knowledge, but also taking care of the welfare and safety of the entire Committee team.

Quite quickly, the Committee's volunteers began to receive support from local residents – Lublin restaurateurs brought warm food and private individuals dropped off cakes and snacks, often giving the team their words of support. And sometimes even staying with it.

With the beginning of March, representatives of international humanitarian organisations began to arrive in the basement of the Centre for Culture (where the Committee's headquarters were located). Several hundred meetings were held with dozens of them. It was as a result of these that an action plan was developed quite quickly,

with possible scenarios outlined for the next months. Thanks to the working agenda, the first contracts were concluded to support exactly those activities that the Committee considered key. It is worth noting that both the credibility assessment and the specific grant agreements were concluded with the organisations that formed the Committee. The Committee itself, as an informal structure, had no legal personality. Its work and finances were coordinated by the Homo Faber Association.

The beginning of March 2022 saw also visits of the media from all over the world. The work of the Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine has been mentioned on CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, Sky News, CBS News, and TVN24, to name a few.

The Committee's activity has got coverage in The Guardian, The Times, Der Spiegel, The New York Times, Berliner Zeitung, Dagens Nyheter, and others.

On 11 March, in the presence of the media, the Homo Faber Association, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Mayor of Lublin signed a cooperation agreement. A key point concerned the establishment of an integration centre. In the days that followed, it was decided that the target location of the centre would be the former bank building at 39 b Krakowskie Przedmieście Street.

In mid-April, representatives of the Homo Faber Association spoke at a public hearing 'Situation of women refugees from Ukraine' organised by the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE). The hearing addressed the safety of women, girls, and children and the prevention of human exploitation and trafficking.

The idea behind the Committee's work from the very beginning was to diagnose current, realistic challenges, map local resources, and respond to current (huge at the time) needs. Close cooperation between cross-sectoral partners allowed for efficient delegation of tasks, but also the search for non-obvious solutions. In addition to its expertise and specific staff delegated to work in the Committee, each partner also contributed its networks of both Polish and international contacts. Thanks to synergies, tasks were delegated much more efficiently and problems that extended also beyond Lublin were solved.

With the opening of Baobab and the situation becoming stable, the Committee ceased to exist and further cross-sectoral cooperation proceeds in the Civic Dialogue Committee for the Integration of Female and Male Migrants in Lublin.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

2022

18 FEBRUARY 2022

- A special meeting of the Civic Dialogue Committee for the Municipal Integration Support System for Immigrants and Female and Male Migrants (abbreviated as the CDC for Integration) regarding the preparation of Lublin to accommodate female and male refugees from Ukraine. The following persons were present: representatives of the Ukrainian Embassy in Poland, the Governor of Lubelskie Province, the Mayor of the City of Lublin, as well as the Head of the Department of Resident Security and Crisis Management, the General Director of the Executive Board of the Polish Red Cross, and the representatives of the organisations of the Ukrainian minority in Poland and the organisations working for migration and refugee in the city of Lublin. A list of resources and, on its basis, also the shortfalls needed to launch an aid system in case of war in Ukraine was being compiled.
- In preparing for possible humanitarian work, Homo Faber drew on its experience in operating on the Polish-Belarusian border. In August 2021, together with friendly NGOs and informal groups as well as residents and citizens of the Podlasie Province, the Border Group was set up – a social movement established to provide humanitarian aid and legal and medical assistance to female and male refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, and elsewhere.

24 FEBRUARY 2022

- Attack by Russian forces in Ukraine. Outbreak of war.

- Establishment of the Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine.
- Solidarity demonstration in front of the city hall. Announcement of the establishment of the Committee. Broad invitation to get involved in its work.

25 FEBRUARY 2022

- A 24/7 helpline for female and male refugees from Ukraine was being set up at the headquarters of the Lublin Metropolitan Tourism Organisation. Phones were answered around the clock by volunteers. Information was provided in Ukrainian, Russian, English, and Polish. A knowledge base of support services offered in Lublin is being created.

11 MARCH 2022

- The Homo Faber Association, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Lublin City Council concluded a cooperation agreement. The agreement became part of the long-term measures planned in the city, a key point of which is the establishment of an integration centre. The former bank building at 39 b Krakowskie Przedmieście Street was designated as the centre's final location.

12 MARCH 2022

- The Sejm of the Republic of Poland enacted the Law on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine².

24 MARCH 2022

- The Committee published the first data covering one month of aid:
 - 9,888 meals were served to refugees and volunteers by Lublin restaurants.
 - 7,148 hours of duty at accommodation facilities and 348 hours at the Centre for Culture were provided by volunteers of the Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine.
 - 1,270 people found safe temporary accommodation.
 - 12,000 calls were answered by the volunteers of the helpline available around the clock and in five languages.

² Ustawa o pomocy obywatelom Ukrainy w związku z konfliktem zbrojnym na terytorium tego państwa, Dz.U. 2022 poz. 583, source: <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/download.xsp/WDU20220000583/T/D20220583L.pdf> (access: 17.11.2023).

- 1,500 pieces of legal advice were provided by lawyers and legal advisors from Lublin.
- 398 drivers expressed their willingness to help through our transport form.
- 230 children benefited from leisure time animation in Lublin night shelters.
- 72 trucks of humanitarian aid left for Ukraine.
- 30 trucks and 6 buses of in-kind aid (food, medical resources, equipment) were organised by the transport department.
- 10 seriously ill children from Ukraine were transported to hospitals.

MARCH 2022

- Homo Faber launched a food programme for refugee families accommodated out of public sites. Once a week, each family benefiting from the programme received a 20 kg box of fresh vegetables, fruit, dairy products, and eggs – everything you need to cook a good soup!
- A team of seven persons was engaged in the implementation of the programme. Orders were fulfilled by local farmers and local businesses. The whole project was funded by a grant from Oxfam Foundation.
- Ultimately, the programme was to be implemented for 16 months, during that time HF delivered 16,670 parcels, which amounts to 333.4 tonnes of food.

25 APRIL 2022

- The Union of Polish Metropolises published a report *Urban Hospitality: Great Growth, Challenges, and Opportunities. Report on Ukrainian Refugees in Major Polish Cities* by Marcin Wojdat and Paweł Cywiński. It revealed that, as of 1 April 2022, 68,396 refugees from Ukraine stayed in Lublin, and that 'Ukrainians currently made up 17% of Lublin's population of 406,982.³

APRIL 2022

- The Homo Faber Association launched a scholarship programme – a fund for students of art and sports schools who are unable to continue their studies due to the war and fleeing their country of origin. The programme is addressed to children, youth, adults, and the elderly.
- The programme was created thanks to funds raised during an auction of artists' works organised by the Gdansk activist community and the Arbus Association as part of the 'Art Without Borders' campaign for female and male

³ M. Wojdat, P. Cywiński: *Urban Hospitality: Great Growth, Challenges and Opportunities – Report on Refugees from Ukraine in the Largest Polish Cities*, source: <https://metropolie.pl/artykul/urban-hospitality-unprecedented-growth-challenges-and-opportunities-report-on-ukrainian-refugees-in-major-polish-cities>

refugees arriving from the Polish-Belarusian border. Following the outbreak of war in Ukraine on 24 February, it was decided that the funds would be used to support female and male refugees, regardless of the country they had to flee. By November 2022, the Homo Faber Association managed to provide support to more than 200 recipients.

29 JUNE 2022

- The Committee published a report titled *90 Days of Aid* by Anna Dąbrowska⁴. Apart from detailed figures, the publication presents the history of more than 10 years of cross-sectoral cooperation in Lublin in an attempt to explain why the Committee could be established and operate effectively.

1 JULY 2022

- Launch of the Community Centre – a place providing comprehensive assistance to female and male refugees in Lublin. The site was being developed in collaboration with the Committee's permanent coalition partners: the Homo Faber Association, the Institute for the Rule of Law Foundation, and the City of Lublin, with substantive and financial assistance from the UNHCR and the DRC. The temporary headquarters of the Community Centre were located in a spacious venue in the city centre (the Astoria building at Aleje Racławickie).

10 AUGUST 2022

- The CDC used the holiday time to take stock of resources ahead of the coming winter. An online survey was conducted to explore both the resources and the needs of organisations and informal groups working for refugees in the city.

SEPTEMBER 2022

- As part of the project 'Invisible Residents' – advocacy for female and male migrants in Lublin, Homo Faber started to hold regular meetings with foreigners living in Lublin. A Consultative Group was being established – a team of people from Ukraine, Zimbabwe, Syria, India, Turkey, Iran, and Russia who are active in migrant communities. The aim of the group was to prepare recommendations for public institutions in dealing with foreigners.

⁴ Op.cit.: A. Dąbrowska, *90 Days of Assistance...*

4 OCTOBER 2022

- The Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine received the Janina Paradowska and Jerzy Zimowski Award 'for its exemplary system of helping war refugees and recalling the meaning of the concept of solidarity.' In Krakow, the award was collected by a delegation of women, which remarked that 'the vast majority of persons working in the Committee were girls and women...'

7 OCTOBER 2022

- The *Dziennik Wschodni* daily published a supplement *Dziennik Bardzo Wschodni*, a special Ukrainian-Belarusian insert prepared by journalists from Ukraine and Belarus.

17 OCTOBER 2022

- The Migration Consortium, of which Homo Faber is a member, published the 'Open letter to international donors and organisations that want to help Ukrainian refugees in Poland,'⁵ a letter to international donors who have come to Poland in connection with the war in Ukraine. The letter was signed by nearly 90 organisations from Poland. It was also an act of solidarity with a letter from Ukrainian organisations.

18 OCTOBER 2022

- Homo Faber published *Draft for Local Integration Policies*⁶ by Anna Dąbrowska. This document is twofold in nature. On the one hand, it is an auxiliary backbone, a structure to facilitate the process for planning local solutions. On the other hand, it is an instruction addressing the next steps.
- On the same day, the Draft was discussed at the Local Trends – European Local Government Forum conference in Poznań.

10 NOVEMBER 2022

- Spilno Lublin, a space for children and youth from Poland and Ukraine, was created in Lublin. Its activities were coordinated by a cooperative of 4 local organi-

⁵ The letter <https://hf.org.pl/publikacje/open-letter-to-international-donors-and-organizations-that-want-to-help-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland/>

⁶ A. Dąbrowska in cooperation with the Migration Consortium, *Draft for Local Integration Policies*, Lublin 2022, source: <https://hf.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/szkic-do-lokalnych-polityk-integracyjnych-1.pdf>

sations: the 5Medium Foundation, the Sempre a Frente Foundation, the BONA FIDES Association, and Homo Faber.

14 DECEMBER 2022

- The Sejm adopted an amendment to the Law on assistance to citizens of Ukraine in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine of March 2022. Among other things, it stipulates the introduction from 1 March 2023 of the requirement to partially cover the costs of the use of collective accommodation facilities. Under this amendment, female and male refugees would be expected to pay these fees themselves.

17-18 DECEMBER 2022

- The first convention of the participants of the Homo Faber Intercultural School of Leaders was being held. Over the next nine months, participants – people with migrant and refugee experience – would prepare their first social projects.

2023

2 JANUARY 2023

- All aid activities were moved to the target location – the building at 39 b Krakowskie Przedmieście Street. 'Baobab: Place, Meetings, Neighbourhood' launched its activity as a multi-purpose space to support the integration processes of new and old residents of Lublin.

FEBRUARY 2023

- The Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration prepared draft amendments to the Act on assistance to Ukrainian citizens in connection with the armed conflict on the territory of Ukraine. The amendment provides for, among other things, the introduction of a charge for the use of collective accommodation facilities and the repeal of the possibility of applying for a temporary stay permit.
- The Migration Consortium published a statement denouncing the proposed amendment⁷.

⁷ Statement of the Migration Consortium: <https://konsorcjum.org.pl/zmi-w-ustawie-o-pomocy-obywatelom-ukrainy-w-zwiazku-z-konfliktem-zbrojnym-na-terytorium-tego-panstwa/>

22 FEBRUARY 2023

- The Migration Consortium published a report *Polish School of Assistance*⁸, in which it analyses the social self-organisation of aid to refugees from Ukraine at the local level.
- It mentions the Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine as a good practice.

28 FEBRUARY 2023

- The ceremonial opening of Baobab. Among the invited guests, there were Mayor of Lublin Krzysztof Żuk, the UNHCR Representative in Poland Kevin Allen, the DRC Country Director Ana Povrzenic, CEO & Chief Sustainability Officer at IKEA Poland Marina Dubakina.
- On 1-2 March, the Opening Festival was being held – a series of meetings and workshops for the local community.

14 JUNE 2023

- Homo Faber launched the second edition of the Intercultural School of Leaders. A group of 14 women with experience of migration was selected out of more than 40 applications. In the following months, they would be trained under the guidance of experts in social diagnosis, monitoring, social actions, and testing solutions, in order to implement their social initiatives at the end of the year.

JUNE 2023

- Homo Faber and the Ukrainian House in Przemyśl organised two two-day seminars for their teams to get to know each other's organisations, summarise the activities undertaken since February 2022, and plan joint initiatives.

1 JULY 2023

- The Volunteering in Lublin project was launched. Coordinated by the Sempre a Frente Foundation, in partnership with Homo Faber, it aimed to develop Volunteering Standards – a model solution for including and involving new people in volunteering activities. The experience of working with volunteering on the Polish-Belarusian border, in Lublin, and the region in connection with the war

⁸ *Polish School of Assistance. Reception and Integration of Refugees from Ukraine in Poland*, S. Jarosz, W. Klaus, Warsaw 2023, source: <https://konsorcjum.org.pl/en/report-the-polish-school-of-assistance/>

in Ukraine was particularly important in this process, showing the need to have a clear strategy and tools for all organisations in the city to use independently.

1 JULY 2023

- Celebration of the end of Polish language courses. The courses were conducted from March 2022 to June 2023 at the elementary level. In total, between February 2022 and June 2023, Homo Faber organised 29 language groups, for children, youth, and adults, with almost 370 participants.

31 AUGUST 2023

- Inauguration of the second edition of the Flying University of Human Rights, an educational initiative organised by the European Solidarity Centre in Gdansk in partnership with Homo Faber. The inaugural lecture was given by Professor Michał Bilewicz.
- The FUHR is a 6-month educational programme that puts human rights at the centre, teaching people to recognise them and react when they are violated. In doing so, it draws on broad knowledge, whether in the area of law, education, new technologies, ecology, migration, or international human rights systems.

1 SEPTEMBER 2023

- Homo Faber launched the Welcome to Lublin programme. It offers new residents some activities to help them get to know the city – walks around Lublin, workshops, presentations, table meetings, and crisis support. All services were planned in several languages. Baobab also launched an Anti-Discrimination Hub, which offers free support for people experiencing hate speech, discrimination, and violence.

17 OCTOBER 2023

- Working meetings of the Civic Dialogue Committee focusing on the challenges of municipal integration policy were launched. Cross-sectoral work was divided into four thematic groups: education, leisure, basic needs (housing, labour market, health care, social assistance), and crisis management. The aim was to prepare a framework document for the city.

11 NOVEMBER 2023

- On Polish Independence Day, Baobab hosted a meeting 'at the table.' The theme was bread from different parts of the world. The action was a search for a new formula for celebration, including people without a Polish background.



ANNUAL SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

AREAS OF ASSISTANCE AND FIGURES

1. FRONT DESK

Providing reliable, verified information in languages that our customers understand is a task that has been carried out from the very beginning of the setting up of assistance services in Lublin. The front desk, located first in the Centre for Culture, since July in the Astoria building (at Al. Raławickie 2), and now in the Baobab building, operates five days a week.

An important part of its activity is the mapping of current services operating in the city and the effective referral of matters to them. Our knowledge base is updated on a regular basis. Today, it is used not only by individual customers but also by employees of various institutions operating in the city.

Another important element is educational support for children and young people, focused on finding places in primary and secondary general and vocational schools in Lublin and helping parents understand the Polish education system.

Since autumn 2022, part of the desk's tasks has been to accompany the Homo Faber team in its visits to collective accommodation facilities in the region (we also happen to go to the Podlasie and Rzeszów regions).

It is worth mentioning that the helpline, which was established on 25 February 2022, is currently coordinated by the City Hall and that the people answering calls, although working at Baobab, are employees of the City Hall. We share not only space but also a knowledge base. Employees of both entities also participate in joint upskilling courses organised by Homo Faber.



front desk served
10,000
persons

FIGURES

- in 2023, the front desk served 10,000 persons;

MOST FREQUENT CASES:

- accommodation,
- the legalisation of stay,
- legal assistance,
- in-kind and financial aid,
- access to health care,
- access to education,
- work,
- psychological support,
- Polish language courses,
- assistance in dealing with official matters

Taras Kuzma, Front Desk:

What makes up for the strength and uniqueness of our Front Desk, is its flexibility, adaptability, and readiness for new challenges. Following humanitarian principles, we strive to ensure that our assistance is effectively and appropriately tailored to the needs of those affected by the crisis. Usually, this approach is explained by dynamic adaptation to changing conditions. Empowerment, helping become independent, and facilitation in obtaining humanitarian aid are the key ideas of the Front Desk.

What is more, with people turning to us again, we feel that they see us as a trusted, non-bureaucratic place where they will be listened to, where they will be offered a variety of options, leaving them with the privilege of choosing for themselves.

2. INTERCULTURAL ASSISTANCE

The intercultural assistance was founded as a response to the needs connected with all the difficulties caused by the Polish healthcare system, lack of understanding of its functioning and bureaucracy. This is especially true for the chronically ill. It is very difficult to change the attending physician after years of treatment and trust a new one without being sure of being understood during a 15-minute visit in a foreign language.

When assisting patients, we help them make an appointment with a specialist, get to the location (we suggest how to use public transport), and, if necessary, interpret during the appointment. We do not impose solutions, but support the efforts and decisions of our customers. After the appointment, we summarise it and explain how to make a possible next appointment. We aim to make the supported person feel confident. And become independent as soon as possible.

FIGURES

- 900 assists in clinics, hospitals, and offices
- 1,100 phone assists (interpreting, assistance with registration, providing information on the Polish health care system).

**900 assists
in clinics, hospitals,
and offices**

**1,100
phone assists**

VICTORIA BEREŹNIAK, ASSIST COORDINATOR:

Many people come to Poland in search of safety and shelter. One key area that needs attention is access to healthcare. Problems they may encounter:

1. People fleeing Ukraine often have difficulties in understanding the Polish healthcare system. Uncertainty relates to the availability of medical services and the lack of information on medical procedures and facilities. Many refugees do not know which doctor to go to and what the rules are for using medical services in Poland.
2. The language barrier is a significant barrier to accessing health care. Information materials and consents for procedures in Ukrainian and English are only available in some medical facilities in Lublin. Short appointment time (15 minutes on average) makes it difficult to carefully review a patient's medical history.
3. Obtaining and translating medical records from Ukraine to Poland is challenging. The cost and time-consuming nature of this process can hinder continuity of care. Or the necessity to repeat the diagnosis in Poland, which can also lead to delays in treatment.
4. People fleeing Ukraine are often traumatised by the war, which in turn can lead to problems with physical and mental health. Access to specialised psychological help is hampered by the language barrier and the lack of specialised staff.
5. Waiting time to see a specialist – between one month and one year. Sometimes it is just before the practitioner's doors that they find they have to wait another 2-6 hours. Insufficient number of specialists in some areas, especially child specialists.

6. Those fleeing Ukraine may face difficulties in accessing essential medicines, all the more so if they are specific to their previous treatment or unavailable in Poland.
7. Older people require special health care, which presents additional challenges. The elderly find it more difficult to adjust to the new environment, there is a risk that they will never become independent and at some point will be left alone with their problems.

3. CRISIS INTERVENTION

We have been developing our intervention activities since the beginning of the crisis. Between March and July 2022, we ran the Homo Faber 24-hour Crisis Intervention Hostel (15 hotel rooms), which provided care and shelter for people in crisis after they have exhausted the possibility of obtaining help offered by public, local, and state institutions, and specialised NGOs.

In particular, the Hostel support was available to:

1. pregnant and single women;
2. pregnant women with a family;
3. women with newborns up to 2 months of age / postpartum women;
4. women with children with disabilities whose level of disability allows us to care for them;
5. women without a Ukrainian passport, with a non-Ukrainian identity;
6. mentally/physically traumatised women spotted by volunteers/ HF coordinators in public accommodation sites;
7. women after experiencing physical violence/rape – indicated by persons from the helpline, front desk, accommodation site, HF desk coordinator, or persons from another organisation working with refugees;
8. mothers of children who struggle with the trauma of war.

At the same time, we have started to carry out prevention and support activities in situations of gender-based violence (GBV), including activities for LGBTQA people.

Baobab offers also intervention support. Our female intervenors are on duty 24/7 at a dedicated phone number and provide assistance at, among others, collective accommodation facilities. Our approach is focused on the person experiencing violence, respecting their decisions and reinforcing their agency.

Homo Faber has also implemented an intervention policy, social support, and trained people working as assistants.

It is worth noting that a form of appreciation of our expertise is that our intervenors are invited as experts to meetings and training sessions in this field by other organisations.

MILENA KLOCZKOWSKA, LAWYER, HOMO FABER INTERVENOR:

In terms of crisis intervention, the most important thing is to safeguard the victim of violence. Every action of an intervenor must be prudent and be for the benefit and well-being of the victim.

For an intervention to be effective, the following procedure must be observed:

1. A violent situation is reported or observed (by our staff).
2. Information (as detailed as possible) about the incident is immediately provided to the intervention team – it decides whether it is necessary to call the services immediately (if so, the employee reports the situation concurrently to the relevant services).
3. The victim is isolated from the perpetrator in a safe place.
4. The intervention team arrives on the scene and begins to carry out its activities (usually the intervenors are there before the services so they carry out operations to secure the victim as well as collect relevant evidence for further proceedings).
5. Upon arrival of the services, the intervention team checks whether the victim wishes to receive psychological support and decides which psychological support service must be called to support the victim (usually, the Crisis Intervention Centre, possibly other organisations, especially in the case of children or where the CIC is unavailable due to other interventions).
6. The intervention team conducts interviews with the team of workers and neighbours if they agree, and attempts to check and write down anything that may serve as evidence important to the case.
7. The intervention team does not confront the perpetrator.
8. The task of the intervention team is to protect the victim, in particular, while waiting for the services to arrive.
9. Once the services arrive, the intervention team accompanies their operations to provide for the correctness of the operations and, at the same time, to take care of the interest and safety of the victim.
10. Persons from the intervention team usually act as witnesses in proceedings or report a suspected crime.

The intervention team consists of people who have a clearly outlined procedure to follow when carrying out their operations.

Institutions involved: the Crisis Intervention Centre, the Police, the Municipal Family Support Centre, and the Municipal Guard.



41
interventions

FIGURES:

- 41 interventions

4. PSYCHOLOGICAL ADVICE

Since the outbreak of the war, the Committee has carried out psychological support activities and crisis intervention in urgent situations and provided information on available forms of psychological assistance in Lublin. Psychological support tasks were tripartite in nature: firstly, they were directed at female and male refugees (implemented mainly by the Crisis Intervention Centre). Secondly, at the volunteers and the Committee's staff (this was overseen by a team working directly with the Committee). Thirdly, training support was provided to female psychologists providing counselling as part of the Committee's work.

The Committee's team, the employed female psychologists, and also the volunteers have received a range of training and coaching on issues such as PTSD, crisis intervention procedures, psychological first aid, the procedure in case of anxiety attacks, and other areas directly related to the experience of war. We have provided (and continue to do so) educated psychologists with professional training, mentoring, or any other form of support that is necessary to carry out one-to-one interventions and group work with female and male refugees and also volunteers.

In June 2022, Ukrainian-speaking female psychologists were hired at Homo Faber.

Currently, our team is composed of three people, two female child psychologists, and one working with teenagers and adults. Over time, a female speech therapist also joined the team.

Since then, the team has received more than 50 hours of training, supervision, consultation, and certified workshops to improve competencies.

Once a week, as part of off-site visits, the psychological team provides support at collective accommodation facilities in the region.

When it comes to working with children, the most common problems are difficult relationships with parents (caused by change of residence, fear of the future, educational difficulties), adaptation difficulties/behaviour at school, behavioural problems (social norms), difficulties in understanding and expressing their emotions (especially anger), self-esteem problems, problems in the area of fine motor development, difficulty concentrating (neurological hyperactivity), post-traumatic state (fear of loud noises, closed rooms), lack of social skills, social maladjustment, displays of aggression and manipulation.

Recently, there have been more and more cases of bullying and peer violence at school. In such cases, we try to both support the children experiencing violence and offer our support to the school in order to comprehensively confront peer violence. We provide training and consultations for teaching staff.

The support for adults is in vast majority used by women. Among the most common problems, there are post-traumatic state, difficulties with family relationships, emotional burnout, signs of depression, aggression, and apathy.

Our work is provided through individual and group sessions with both young people and adults.



2,494
consultations

Božena Kajdan and Anastasia Savchenko, child psychologists:

The aim of psychological support for war-experienced people is to restore emotional equilibrium, a sense of influence over their lives, return to previous ways of functioning or help them create new ones, provide support/sense of safety, help them cope with their own emotions and feelings, and release tension and stress.

Over the year, a great number of people with a variety of problems, who all had difficult emotional experiences, benefited from psychological support. It affected their functioning so far, generated new difficulties or reinforced those that had already emerged before the outbreak of war. Thanks to the psychologist's systematic work with a child, the parent's support and the children's willingness to work, we see positive changes in the children's behaviour, mechanisms for coping with emotions and resolving various difficulties, their functioning in the environment has improved, they have established new relationships, adapted in the new environment and strengthened family relationships. Because we put our emotions, thoughts, and resources into every consultation, the greatest satisfaction for us as psychologists is seeing the results of our work. We are very pleased when parents come and say they have noticed progress. Also when dealing with third parties (e.g. in contact with educational facilities),

it is pleasant to receive feedback on changes in the behaviour of the children under our care.

We are happy to hear the children tell us about their achievements. What's also nice is that we don't lose contact with the children even after the collaboration has ended (they come by to talk to us in their free time).

FIGURES:

- 2,494 consultations, of which
 - 1,755 consultations, including long-term consultations for children with Asperger's syndrome and on the autism spectrum, one-off, phone consultations, consultations during off-site visits
 - 739 consultations for adults
 - 960 speech therapy consultations

5. LEGAL ADVISORY

At Baobab, legal advice is provided on a regular basis by lawyers from the Institute for the Rule of Law Foundation, our partner organisation. They provide female and male refugees and migrants in Lublin with free legal advice in several languages in the following areas:

- the legalisation of stay in Poland,
- social benefits,
- labour market and labour law,
- writing, filing, and helping with formal, medical, and legal documentation,
- tax law,
- accommodation issues,
- current laws and regulations on refugee and migrant issues,
- discrimination in the labour market.

FIGURES:

- 520 individuals benefited from the legal advice provided at Baobab
- more than 2,000 pieces of legal advice were given as part of the duty service: 4 days per week, 5 hours each.

Moreover, the Foundation's lawyers participate in weekly off-site visits together with Homo Faber staff and employees, during which they provide free legal advice to foreigners living in smaller towns and villages in the Lubelskie Province. Such measures help to eliminate geographical barriers and ensure equal access to essential legal services for all people, especially those with limited access to assistance.

2,000
pieces
of legal
advice

**Julian Hofman,
lawyer of the Institute
for the Rule of Law Foundation:**

It is quite difficult for foreigners staying in Poland, especially for those staying here somehow involuntarily (due to the war in Ukraine), to find their way into the new legal reality. They encounter a lot of problems and ambiguities in everyday life that they are not able to deal with themselves. More often than not, Polish laws are quite complicated and intricate even for citizens of the Republic of Poland, and foreigners – who, in addition to that, do not speak Polish at all or whose language skills are at a basic level – are not able to find answers to their questions on their own. Hence, the legal advice provided by the lawyers of the Institute for the Rule of Law is so important because not only do they have extensive knowledge and vast experience in this area, but they are also able to serve customers in Polish, Ukrainian, Russian, or English, which removes language barriers and does not require the support of a third party, such as an interpreter.

6. FOOD PACKAGES

The food programme, launched in March 2022, was the longest-operating grassroots programme of its kind in the city. It was directed at those refugee families who lived out of collective accommodation facilities. Each week, each family received a 20-kg box of fresh fruit, vegetables, and dairy products – everything needed to cook a good soup!, as summarised by Piotr Szamryk, one of the programme coordinators. The packages were in addition to the food that people could get from the public distribution (dry goods). Food was purchased from local suppliers and distributed weekly to refugee homes by a team of several people.

Over the 16 months to the end of June 2023, we delivered 16,670 parcels, which amounts to 333.4 tonnes of food.

On average, 1,847 people, including 96 people with disabilities, received parcels each month.

We also provided fruit to 2 children’s day centres every month.

The packages went to families not only in Lublin but also in the communes of Piaski, Niemce, Świdnik, Konopnica, and others.

Three times throughout the programme, data was collected from refugee families – they assessed the quality of our activities and their needs. Monitoring of these types of programmes is particularly important so that the beneficiaries have the chance to make their observations and comments without fear of losing their aid.

Preparing an exit strategy was also an important moment – the exit plan consisted of individual letters to families accompanied by a list of places providing support and an invitation to Baobab. The programme was also evaluated in detail with the team.

Certainly, the strengths of the programme were:

- Assistance to specific persons
- Meeting basic needs;
- Continuous, systemic support;
- Valuable, good-quality products;

Direct, regular contact with refugees, observation of their situation, additional forms of support, and contact with people from beyond public accommodation facilities (they are more invisible).



333
tonnes
of food

FIGURES:

- 333 tonnes of food

7. WORKING AT COLLECTIVE ACCOMMODATION FACILITIES

It was an obvious decision for the city authorities to set up collective accommodation facilities in Lublin. At its peak, 12 facilities were operating. The Committee's volunteer translators and interpreters (later employed by Homo Faber) worked in 10 facilities to support the work of social services, municipal guards, etc. Over time, people have been leaving them, e.g. finding a place in private homes or leaving the city.

As time passed by, volunteering has evolved into regular work. In addition to a coordinator from the Lublin Municipal Family Support Centre, each facility also had a coordinator from HF. The tasks of the HF team include the continuous monitoring of the situation of female and male refugees, coordination of aid, assistance, career counselling, information support, cooperation with local government bodies (including the Provincial Office, the Police, the Municipal Family Support Centre, the Crisis Management Centre) and NGOs, diagnosis of crisis situations, provision of protection in health- or life-threatening situations.

What's more, quite quickly we launched also activities aimed directly at children and taking place in common spaces at the facilities. Our main task is to support kids with their homework and organise free time for those of them who take online-only classes within the Ukrainian education system.

At the same time, we are constantly improving the competence of the team so that their knowledge and skills follow the needs of the residents of the facilities.

We are trying to initiate a process incorporating the perspective and voice of the refugees themselves to create regulations for the facilities in order to eliminate misunderstandings, unclear rules, and unfair treatment. Unfortunately, the project has stuck at the level of bureaucracy. Nevertheless, we try to amplify the voices of the people living in the facilities. This year, we have started the process of appointing representatives of the facilities to enable these people to start participating in discussions that directly affect them as soon as possible.

Today, at the end of 2023, there are still four facilities operating in Lublin, and we are still present in three of them. What we are extremely concerned about is the still existing facility in a gymnasium.

Kamila Pawluk, HF social worker:

There are people staying in collective accommodation facilities, with a vast majority of them having no place to return to.

It was not only their homes that were destroyed in bombings, but also the entire infrastructure that provided them with jobs and their children with education.

Single mothers, older people who have no one to care for them, young people who need support in entering adulthood, people with learned helplessness – these are the people we try to support with our daily work.

Thanks to our presence, we are able to respond to alarming signals and situations of increased risk, such as manifestations of discrimination and various other forms of violence.

8. SCHOLARSHIPS

The scholarship programme was launched in November 2022. Its main idea has been to enable people who found themselves in Lublin due to the war in Ukraine to continue their creative and professional development and to develop their passions (music, sports, dance, theatre, visual arts, handicrafts), regardless of their age. The programme is directed at children, youth, adults, and the elderly.

The largest group benefiting from the programme is children and youth. Support is provided to people living in Lublin and the surrounding municipalities and communes.

The funds are dedicated primarily to support the personal development of a scholarship holder, e.g. to pay for artistic or sporting activities, vocational courses, necessary equipment, outfits, etc.

Among the scholarship holders, there are winners of national and international music and art competitions, winners of sports competitions in various disciplines, professional singers and dancers, and professional confectioners.

In 2022, more than 200 beneficiaries from 15 regions of Ukraine took advantage of the support. The programme covered the costs of 1,375 hours of classes; 11 female and male refugees were recruited to teach.

In 2023, we have supported 130 scholarship holders.

Programme partner institutions:

- Tadeusz Szeligowski 1st and 2nd Degree Music School in Lublin
- Pod Akacją Youth Cultural Centre
- Bronowice District Cultural Centre (Maki Culture Workshops and Tatory Culture Workshops)
- Wanda Kaniorowa Folk Song and Dance Ensemble 'Lublin'
- Takamine Polska
- Grupa Zibi S.A.
- Henryk Wieniawski Musical Society in Lublin
- Centre for Culture in Lublin
- Workshops of Culture in Lublin
- Sztukmistrze Foundation



Maria Mishchuk, programme coordinator:

The Development Scholarship Programme gives people the chance to pursue their passions. It provides not only financial support but emotional support, hope and faith. The scholarships help them settle in a new place and continue doing what they love to do, showing that they are welcome and supported.



9. LANGUAGE COURSES

Without language there is no integration – we have been saying this at Homo Faber for years. That is why, quite quickly, we have enabled female and male refugees to attend courses to improve their ability to speak, write, and read Polish.

Baobab also runs two Conversation Clubs, for beginners and advanced students, with around 30 participants. The focus of the programme is to encourage them to speak Polish. They read and discuss texts by contemporary Polish women writers.

We also proceed with English classes for teenagers. They are led by nursing students from Zimbabwe.

It was also important to increase our team's command of Ukrainian. In 2022, 25 people took part in the course.

We are currently continuing English language classes for the Homo Faber team.

FIGURES

- October 2022 – June 2023
 - 29 Polish language groups attended by approximately 370 people, the classes are dedicated to speakers of Slavic languages, with one group for English speakers.
 - October 2023
 - We formed 6 groups (4 for Slavic-speaking persons and 2 for English-speaking persons), 4 groups at basic level A1, two groups at intermediate level (A2+/B1)
- Approximately 90 people are currently taking part in the courses.

29
Polish
language
groups

Anna Mikiciuk,
course coordinator:

Our Polish language courses are designed to teach communication skills in the first place. Using appropriate teaching resources and creating a safe and friendly atmosphere, we try to break down a block in speaking Polish.

Apart from traditional classroom activities, we organise various outings, e.g. to the theatre, a botanical garden, or an open-air village museum. Thanks to that, the course participants have an opportunity to, firstly, learn the practical use of the language, secondly, get to know new places in Lublin and get used to the new environment, and, thirdly, to integrate within the group.

10. LIBRARY

Access to children's, youth, and adult fiction has very quickly become a priority in the Committee's work. As early as in April 2022, the books collection began to be compiled and started to grow quite rapidly. In June, the collection comprised as many as 4,000 books! They ended up in municipal libraries in Lublin, day centres, schools, hospitals, or reception points in the province, and some of them became the starter for a multilingual library, which now operates in Baobab and contains 2,500 books in Ukrainian, Belarusian, Russian, English, Hebrew, and other languages. The multicultural library has entered into partnership with other private libraries compiling books in Ukrainian in Warsaw, Gdansk, Katowice, and Krakow.

Affiliated to the library, there is a chess club, which currently gathers 10 kids.

Board game tournaments are organised on a regular basis.

An important activity of the library is meetings with authors of books on multiculturalism, borderlands, human rights, etc. One meeting per month is devoted to Polish literature and is held in English.

FIGURES:

- 15,000 books received
- 10,000 books distributed
- 2,500 books at Baobab
- 473 library cards
- since February 2023, the library has been used 2,280 times
- the library offers books in 24 languages

15,000
books
received

473
library cards

Yaryna Posuniak, library coordinator:

One of the basic human rights is access to education. Being a refugee, it is very hard to get books in one's mother tongue. Whether it is the lack on the market or the high price, it prevents people from buying books. The multicultural library is a way to define the diversity of a society. The multiplicity of languages and genres of literature reflects how diverse we are.

Books are a way to relax, learn, grow, and more. The library is a space to meet and discuss, to seek answers, and to be together.

By creating the library, I know that I am contributing to the well-being of other people. The most beautiful thing about it is to see a smile and emotion when someone sees a book in their language.

What literature is on the shelves in libraries indicates how ready we are to embrace otherness.



11. LIGHT WORKSHOP

The light workshop operating at Baobab is a space for craft activities. We sew, embroider, arrange flowers, and prepare delicious dishes in the baobab kitchen. We learn under the guidance of top specialists but also share our own skills. Yet the most important thing in all this work is to meet people from different cultures and countries, speaking many languages. After a few hours of activities together, they can leave as new friends.

An essential element of the workshop's activity is the involvement of people with migrant and refugee experience as tutors – we perceive this as support for their becoming independent and entering the Polish labour market.

FIGURES:

- 100 craft workshops

100
craft
workshops

Ewelina Kruszyńska, workshop coordinator:

We mainly do utilitarian things, we do not do art. Workshop participants learn practical skills that can provide the foundation for further work in a particular field. For this reason, most workshops are combined into longer cycles. We take great care of good quality workshop materials so that the items made are useful, aesthetically pleasing, and made according to the art.

12. HEAVY WORKSHOP

How to involve boys and men in activities? The idea of organising a heavy workshop – a space to tinker, repair, and create our own objects – was prompted by our experience of working with refugees from Chechnya from 2012 to 2014. At the time, when asked what they dream of, the men indicate a carpentry tool shed. By planning Baobab, we were finally able to fulfil this dream.

The workshop hosts themed workshops on carpentry, restoration of old furniture, and many more.

In the summer, we also launched an electrical engineering section, where we, for instance, create neon signs, learn 3D printing or operating drones. Of course, the workshop is open to everybody.



FIGURES:

- 22 workshops
- nearly 200 people have used the workshop.

22
workshops

200
people
have used
the workshop

Paweł Nowak, workshop coordinator:

Participants in the workshop's open hours usually repair or construct furniture, everyday objects, and small electronics. The meetings provide an opportunity to learn new practical skills, exchange experiences, and share personal interests.



13. COMPUTER LAB

In June 2023, with the support of the UNHCR, also a computer lab was launched at Baobab. Initially, it was primarily intended to serve children who, while in Lublin, were continuing distance learning within the Ukrainian education system. Quite quickly, it also became a venue for afternoon and evening courses to improve the knowledge of those entering the Polish labour market.

Recent activities have included:

- computer literacy classes for children
- graphics software classes for children
- warehouse and sales systems operation
- fiscal equipment operation
- 3D modelling software classes
- the basics of programming for children

The courses attracted persons from Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus.

The computer lab has also open hours for people who do not have access to a computer. During that time, you can use a laptop for educational purposes or to get things done online.

Sonia Fedziukovich, lab coordinator:

Safely introducing children to the world of computers within the computer lab is important because, in the first place, it enables them to develop digital skills that are important in today's society. Secondly, it gives access to valuable educational resources. In order to do this effectively, it is necessary to advise children of online risks and how to avoid them, to identify safe websites, games, and applications suitable for the child's age, and to teach them how to search and check information on the internet safely.

14. PLAYGROUND

The playground is an open space for children, easily accessible and safe. This is where parents running errands in Baobab can leave their children. In addition, the playground organises thematic workshops to develop manual skills, reading and writing, as well as cooperation skills with other children from Poland, Ukraine, Belarus, and other countries.

Baobab has also a daycare centre for children aged above seven. It is run by the Ukrainian Scout Organisation Plast, our partner. Here, under the supervision of trained staff, you can leave your child for 3 hours.



FIGURES:

- 3,400 visits from children aged 4-17.
- 150 thematic workshops.

3,400
children

Maryna Kushnirenko, playground animator:

I believe that the key to our work is to conduct such activities that integrate children from different countries. We also try to organise joint activities involving mothers and their children every Friday. The playground provides an opportunity to learn about the stories of the mothers themselves. We try to link them with each other – right next to the playground, there are tables with chairs, and we animate these meetings there. Thanks to our work, a support group of Belarusian mothers has been established.

Ira Filas, playground animator:

When organising children's activities, I am focused on enabling children to do as much as possible with their own hands and also on conveying knowledge about the world around us, nature, fauna, and flora. For instance, we have recently built a volcano that was erupting. Of course, I know that there are children who badly need to run themselves ragged. And it's possible at Baobab too – a tag game for those who can't sit out. Indirectly, we also work with parents, convincing them that ultimately it should be the children to decide whether they want to work with us.

150
workshops

15. IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF SERVICES AND KNOWLEDGE AND FEEDBACK

The Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS)⁹ enlist those standards that relate to the adequacy of the provided assistance to the needs, those related to communication, participation, and feedback from the beneficiaries, and those related to the self-improvement and teaching of the teams providing assistance.

Fully aware of how unequal the situation is for the party having the aid compared to the people benefiting from it, we have not only implemented humanitarian aid standards by training the entire team, from volunteers to the organisation's board, but we have also put in place feedback and complaint mechanisms so that people who feel they are experiencing unequal treatment have the opportunity to report it in a quick, simple, and safe way.

At the same time, we also strive to take care of the people in our team – that is why we have created the Code of Conduct¹⁰ binding upon all the people employed and cooperating at Homo Faber. An important part of the Code is a whistleblowing system for reporting irregularities, abuse, and violence, and complaints received through it are dealt with by an organisation that is independent of us.

The association also has a mediator on board, who resolves team disagreements and mediates disputes on a daily basis.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

Evaluation of the quality of our services is carried out periodically both online – here we use the international TalkToLoop platform – and in the form of paper, anonymous questionnaires available in several languages. In addition, we collect information on the functioning of the Baobab itself.

We perceive feedback also as a source of knowledge about changing needs.

It is worth mentioning, for example, that we have evolved the food programme three times during its course:

- initially, by gathering feedback on the service quality, needs, and expectations by phone,
- after 10 months, we carried out an in-depth inquiry, not only of the service itself but also of the situation of the families covered by the programme: accommodation, financial situation, family members with special needs (people with disabilities, chronically ill, etc.), needs other than nutritional, etc.
- summarising the programme after 15 months.

We also organise focus group discussions with migrants and refugees.

In the early spring of 2023, Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) with residents were conducted in five collective accommodation facilities. The questionnaire was composed of two parts: the first included questions that were to diagnose access to information, assess the activity of state institutions and the Homo Faber front desk, while the second included questions to determine the integration of refugees into the host society,

⁹ More: <https://hf.org.pl/o-nas/standardy-humanitarne/>

¹⁰ The Code of Conduct: <https://hf.org.pl/zasady-i-normy-pracy-zepsolu-code-of-conduct/>

in this to diagnose potential conflicts based on nationality. The last question referred to future plans.

60 people took part in the interview.

Based on the interviews, the survey team also prepared recommendations on social and humanitarian support provided by local government bodies and international organisations, support for female and male refugees in the labour market, urban public transport, people with chronic diseases, integration policies, and childcare.

In early autumn, we evaluated the activities conducted at Baobab: Polish classes, conversation clubs, light and heavy workshops, psychological advisory for children, youth, and adults, the operation of intercultural assistance, and major joint events.

The survey was questionnaire-based and quite detailed, with each set of questions (open and closed) addressing a specific action. More than 300 questionnaires were collected. What we found from them is that the beneficiaries were satisfied with our activities but, more importantly, they were willing to consult with us on the quality of services and shared with us their suggestions for events or services. Answering open-ended questions is extremely important to us since it enables two-way communication. We use those answers during evaluation and can introduce changes.

TRAINING

The team's knowledge, skills, and competencies are upgraded by means of expert, industry-related training and workshops involving the entire team. They concern, for example, communication, human rights, prevention of human trafficking, basic humanitarian standards, protection of personal data, etc.

We also strive to fund the personal development of the team members. Over the past year, we paid for, to name a few, postgraduate studies on migration, an off-site English language course, an accounting course, etc. We are eager to delegate the team to trainings and workshops organised by others.

What is more, Homo Faber also organises summer seminars. The one in 2023 was held in the Podlasie region, in cooperation with the No to Ci Pomogę Foundation, and concerned the humanitarian crisis on the Polish-Belarusian border.

The team also takes part in study visits to other cities. Over the past year, we visited Wrocław, Gdańsk, and Krakow, meeting people from both public institutions and NGOs and discussing support systems for new residents, including migrants and refugees.

STANDARDS

As the organisation grew and further areas of assistance were incorporated into our field of work, it became necessary to prepare and implement work standards.

- The Core Humanitarian Standards¹¹, or the nine commitments, that we observe in our humanitarian work;
- The Code of Conduct¹²;

¹¹ The Core Humanitarian Standards: <https://hf.org.pl/o-nas/standardy-humanitarne/>

¹² The Code of Conduct: <https://hf.org.pl/zasady-i-normy-pracy-zepsolu-code-of-conduct/>

- The Child Protection Policy¹³, prepared in collaboration with the Dajemy Dzieciom Siłę Foundation, which contains principles and guidelines designed to: establish principles for a safe staff-child relationship; identify procedures for intervention in the event of suspected child abuse; identify ways of vetting staff; regulate the mechanism used by children and their parents/legal guardians to make complaints.
- The Privacy Policy¹⁴, in the application of Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2016/679 of 27 April 2016.
- The Financial Policy.

Furthermore, since 2006 a Public Information Bulletin has been available on our website, where we publish, among other things, our annual substantive and financial reports.

Wiktoria Dudek, MEAL:

All these activities are complementary and form a complete picture of our activities. The Humanitarian Standards are the filter through which we look at our work. We can make the diagnosis, consult ideas, and introduce changes effectively without harming either party.

¹³ The Child Protection Policy: <https://hf.org.pl/polityka-ochrony-dzieci-2/>

¹⁴ The Privacy Policy: <https://hf.org.pl/polityka-prywatnosci/>

ESCAPE FORWARD, OR SYSTEMIC ACTIONS:

Since we first explored the perception of the city as well as the expectations and needs of migrants living in Lublin in 2008, through the monitoring of public institutions in terms of serving foreigners, the programmes under Welcome to Lublin, participation in municipal discussions, the establishment of the Information Desk for Foreigners in the Residents Service Office, finally the establishment of the Civic Dialogue Committee in 2021 and the Lublin Social Committee to Help Ukraine on 24 February 2022, we have stuck to our overarching goal, which has been to initiate and support systemic changes at the local level and the resilience of public institutions in the face of increased migration. It is clear to us that only strong organisations and efficient institutions are able to operate effectively and in the long term on change and the emerging crisis.

The founders of the Committee have effectively 'used' those years of working together, not always easy cooperation, trust, and mutual understanding to coordinate assistance that is 'ad hoc, adequate to the needs, and of good quality, but they have also planned the creation of a centre that in the long term would provide services to female and male refugees and female and male migrants and support the Polish host community in the integration process.¹⁵

BAOBAB

Baobab, without yet using the name, appeared as an item in the tripartite cooperation agreement concluded between Lublin Mayor Dr Krzysztof Żuk, Secretary General of the DRC (Danish Refugee Council) Charlotte Slente, and CEO of Homo Faber Anna Dąbrowska on 11 March 2022. Just before the Baobab opened, the two parties – the City Hall and Homo Faber – had signed a declaration of cooperation, which in section 1 reads: 'The Municipality declares its cooperation with the Coalition [of organisations for integration – note by AD] with respect to its integration activities pursued in the building at 39b Krakowskie Przedmieście Street (the so-called baobab) [...].' Section 2, in turn, lists the areas of support to be implemented under the agreement, including, among other things, the following: information desk service, psychological support for children, youth, and adults, free Polish language lessons, legal assistance, employment support, women's support, development scholarships, a volunteer network, a multicultural library, activity space for other formal and informal groups.



¹⁵ Op.cit.: A. Dąbrowska, *90 Days of Assistance...*, source: <https://hf.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/raport-pl.pdf>

In January 2023, the team entered the building at Krakowskie Przedmieście in Lublin, renovated by the City Hall in collaboration with Strabag Polska and furnished with furniture from IKEA Polska. In March, the official opening of the building was held.

Baobab is also a great machine for gathering information about the challenges, difficulties, and problems that refugees bring in every day. The role of the staff is also to be a whistleblower, mediator, and negotiator.

**Piotr Skrzypczak,
co-founder of Baobab,
board member of Homo Faber:**

Lublin has become a destination for migration. Thousands of people from many parts of the world want to live here. They arrive and... it turns out that they have no acquaintances, no friends, no place of their own. Baobab is both space and people who can help take the first and second step in getting to know the city and its people. It is like that famous tree – a shelter, a protection.

Baobab is stable and ingrained in the social fabric. It brings together old and new residents. It translates cultural codes, translates, explains.

It is also an obvious space where, in the event of potential migration challenges, aid will be developed and coordinated.

MUNICIPAL INTEGRATION POLICY

In parallel with the foundation of Baobab, works on a municipal integration policy started – a framework document that would comprehensively identify those areas of the city's activities that need to be changed because of migration.

The works are coordinated by a cross-sectoral team of the Civic Dialogue Committee for the Integration of Female and Male Migrants in Lublin. And the starting point is the *Draft for Local Integration Policies*¹⁶ prepared in 2022 by Homo Faber CEO Anna Dąbrowska with the cooperation of experts from the Migration Consortium.

Works on the document proceed in two ways: on the one hand, through expert seminars for City Hall officials and, on the other, through several-hour-long, thematic working group meetings.

¹⁶ Op. cit.: A. Dąbrowska, *Draft for Local Integration Policies...*, source: <https://hf.org.pl/publikacje/sz-kic-do-lokalnych-polityk-integracyjnych/>

All of the four scheduled thematic working group meetings were held in autumn 2023:

1. Education – a meeting dedicated to the formal education of children and young people and the upskilling of adults. The meeting was attended by representatives of social organisations and individual departments of the Lublin City Hall, higher education facilities.
2. Free time – a meeting on culture and sport as inclusive spaces to promote integration. The meeting was attended by representatives of social organisations and municipal cultural institutions, libraries, cultural centres, and sports associations and unions.
3. Basic needs – a meeting related to the labour market, housing, health care, and social assistance. It was attended by representatives of the Lublin City Hall, institutions, including the Municipal Family Support Centre, and social organisations.
4. Crisis intervention and safety – a meeting attended by, among others, representatives of the Municipal Police Headquarters in Lublin.

The process takes into account social diversity – the meetings are attended by representatives of different backgrounds, including migrants. The next stages include extensive public consultation. The policy document is scheduled to be presented to and adopted by the City Council in 2024.

**Anna Dąbrowska,
president of Homo Faber
and co-chair of the CDC:**

Social inclusion does not happen in a vacuum. It takes place in a specific space where specific people live. The tasks to be performed for refugees are as important as those for the host society. This must take place in parallel.

This is also about creating a sense of being at home, participating in making decisions that affect them – female and male migrants, enabling them to actively participate in local communities.

From our perspective, the participation of refugees in the life of the city and the local community is of key importance. Behind this, there is a series of activities that strengthen citizenship, a sense of agency, responsibility for the place where one lives, taking matters into one's own hands, active participation.

VOLUNTEERING IN LUBLIN

Voluntary Work of Lublin is a project that aims to create and implement a coherent and long-lasting volunteering system/structure in Lublin, with a particular focus on activities related to the European Youth Capital 2023, and will include, among other things: developing a volunteering system, mapping the volunteering groups already operating in the city, providing them with training and support, and implementing the system within the framework of the European Youth Capital in Lublin. The Sempre a Frente Foundation is the leader of the project and the Homo Faber Association is a partner.

Under the project, the Volunteering Standards, among other things, have been elaborated. They provide a model solution for including and engaging new people in volunteering activities. The document contains all the key steps necessary to become active in different areas of community life, i.e. culture, sport, and aid activities. What is more, for 18 months, we train and work on a wide range of issues related to volunteering, aid, or social work – all free of charge and for anyone interested.

The project is primarily directed at young people as part of the so-called youth volunteering, as defined in the competition documentation, but it also assumes wide accessibility for people – residents of Lublin, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, degree of disability, or nationality, with particular attention to the needs of minorities and the situation of female and male refugees residing in Lublin.

Marta Sienkiewicz, board member of Homo Faber:

From 2020, through the challenges of the pandemic, then the dramatic refugee situation on the Polish-Belarusian border, to the sudden outbreak of war in February 2024, we have learned that without volunteers, many things in aid work would not be possible. We have also seen that volunteering needs to be professionalised, needs to be taken care of at a deeper level, needs measures to prevent burnout and provide for the development of those who decide to work for free under extremely difficult conditions.

Voluntary Work of Lublin is a good example of cooperation between NGOs and the City Hall to create the first in Lublin, generally available standards for the organisation of volunteering. All this effort is to ensure that both parties – organisers and volunteers – feel safe and that volunteering itself serves development and learning.

OTHER ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF FEMALE AND MALE MIGRANTS AND REFUGEES:

THE INTERCULTURAL SCHOOL OF LEADERS

The Intercultural School of Leaders is a response to the need to empower leaders from migrant communities in Lublin. As part of the first edition of the project, 12 people with migrant experience (6 Ukrainian refugee women, 4 migrant women, and 2 Ukrainian migrant men) participated in a series of trainings to develop leadership competencies and skills for working with communities, diagnosing their needs, engaging, building partnerships, and conducting advocacy activities.

The Intercultural School of Leaders covers 60 training hours. The framework programme for the training cycle includes the following topics:

- Social integration
- Social capital
- Sectors of social life
- Working with the project method
- Analysing social needs, diagnosis
- Goal setting
- Planning activities
- Creative ways of selecting methods for social actions
- Promoting an organisation's activities
- Finances in an organisation
- Project management and crisis management
- Group process
- Conflict management
- Social participation
- Evaluation
- Basic knowledge of local government

The training brought fruit of own initiatives of the School participants implemented in spring 2023. Among them, there was support for young mothers, conversation meetings for Polish learners, meetings for refugees and migrants related to work, events for refugee youth – searching for their own style, walks in the footsteps of famous inhabitants of Lublin of Ukrainian origin, and many others – all met with great interest from people from both the migrant and host communities. Some of them have been continued after the end of our project activities.

In June 2023, the second edition of the School was launched. From more than 40 applications, a group of 14 women with refugee and migrant experience was selected to learn and eventually prepare their own initiatives implemented this autumn. Among them, there was a podcast on sex education, handicraft classes for senior women, a major training for policemen and policewomen on intercultural communication, tutoring for children and youth with migrant experience, workshops for female and male



**Kristina Jonauskaite,
School coordinator:**

The Intercultural School of Leaders helps people with migrant and refugee experience to believe in their own strengths, gain knowledge about social action, and, the most important thing, prepare and implement their own initiatives step by step. The School's projects involve people from both migrant and Polish communities. In the course of their training and the implementation of their ideas, participants establish important relationships with each other and contacts with Lublin organisations and institutions, which will be necessary for social activity. It is an extremely uplifting and empowering experience.

migrants on their psychological well-being, ecological workshops in a mixed nationality group, information duty service for people from Belarus, workshops for children and parents to prevent bullying in schools, integration trips for children in mixed groups.

LEGAL AID IN CENTRES FOR FOREIGNERS

Homo Faber's activities are not limited to refugees from Ukraine. We have visited the Guarded Center for Foreigners and the Detention Centre for Foreigners in Przemysł and the Centre for Foreigners in Horbów every month since 2020, accompanied by Russian and Arabic interpreters.

As part of our monthly visits to the facilities, we provide legal advice on the refugee procedure as well as detention. There we meet people from such countries as Iraq, Chechnya, Sudan, Yemen, Belarus, Russia, Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and many others.

**Milena Kloczkowska,
lawyer, board member of Homo Faber:**

The provision of legal aid at the centres is crucial as this is an extremely neglected area. Those with 'no-citizen' status are forgotten. Unfortunately, most of them do not have the money for professional legal representation, as everything they had was spent on travel or taken from them by smugglers.

Lack of a lawyer, lack of understanding of procedures leads to depression, a sense of hopelessness, and sometimes rebellions. For it is incomprehensible to people fleeing cruelty why they are locked up in prison-like closed centres. After all, they are not criminals but victims of big policies leading to wars and instability.

Lacking assistance, people spend up to 18 months in the centre. In locked rooms, in a place where there is only a walkway of a few metres and even such walking has to be done at specific times. In a place where, although it is called a facility, you are not allowed to have cans and must procedurally discard them in the presence of the guards so that you cannot use them to harm yourself.

We provide legal aid in open centres, too. We also try to respond to the needs of those placed there, by organising, from time to time, small collections and providing material aid. With our visits, we also try to bring them the everyday life experienced by every citizen, so that those placed there remember that they are just like us.