

Baptists globally continue assistance to refugees

October 1, 2015

FALLS CHURCH, Va.—[Baptist World Aid](#), the relief and development arm of the Baptist World Alliance, distributed more than \$65,000 in emergency refugee support in Europe in September.

Baptists in Serbia and Croatia joined Baptists in Germany, Hungary, Sweden and other European nations in providing aid to refugees pouring into these countries. More than 648,000 people sought asylum in Europe between January and August.



Serbian Baptists set up a station where refugees may get provisions. (Photo courtesy of Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia) Serbian Baptists provided refugee assistance throughout the past three years, Dane Vidovic, general secretary of the Union of Baptist Churches in Serbia, noted. However, the situation has intensified over the past several months as the influx of refugees escalated.

“The situation became desperate, and we have intensified our involvement,” Vidovic said.

Most refugees passing through Serbia are from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Asian, Near East and African countries, Vidovic said. Serbian church members have volunteered, and congregations are distributing food, water and other needs, he said.

In Croatia, about 30,000 refugees have entered the country, said Zeljko Mraz, general secretary of the Baptist Union of Croatia. The Croatian government built a refugee camp for up to 4,000 people and granted the Baptist union permission to offer support to refugees inside the camp, Mraz said. In addition, 14 volunteers from Croatian Baptists' school nursing program are working with the Red Cross, he added.

"We want to be Christ's witnesses to our countrymen and foreigners passing through our country," Mraz said.

The 2015 European migrant crisis arose as increasing numbers of refugees and migrants traveled to the European Union nations across the Mediterranean Sea or Southeast Europe. Most refugees are from the Middle East—particularly Syria, Yemen, and Iraq—and Africa—especially Eritrea, Somalia and Sudan.



Syrian refugees in Turkey. (Photo: European Commission) Baptists in the Middle East are

extending assistance to refugees and other displaced people in their region. The BWA provided significant relief in the region over the past several years.

“The needs both in Syria and in Lebanon are staggering, and the situation gets more complex by the day,” said Alia Abboud, director of development and partner relations for the Baptist-affiliated Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development.

Lebanese Baptists offer monthly help to more than 2,000 Syrian families and 400 Iraqi families in Lebanon, nearly 6,000 families in Syria and more than 140 families inside Iraq. Support includes food distribution and health care, as well as vocational training and education for 300 Syrian refugee children and specialized workshops for women.

“Again and again, we are witnessing God’s hand at work both within our partner churches in Lebanon and in Syria and through them,” Abboud said.