“We will not leave the Ukrainian waterworks alone.”

As the world witnesses in disbelief the horrors of war in Ukraine, members of the Chamber of Commerce Polish Waterworks (IGWP) are mobilizing to support their Ukrainian neighbours under the banner, “We will not leave the Ukrainian waterworks alone.”

Many of us in Canada and the United States watch the nightly news and want to help but, apart from donating, feel lost and helpless as to how we could make a difference. The mission of Operators Without Borders (OuB) is firstly to assist water and wastewater utilities in developing countries recover and rebuild following disasters. While safety of our volunteers is of paramount importance and we would never deploy into dangerous situations, we are working with the IGWO, several Polish Water Utilities and our partners in WASH Global situated in Ukraine. We have had several meetings with our counterparts in Poland and Ukraine, and in the next few weeks OuB Chair Valerie Jenkinson will be traveling to Poland for meetings to carefully plan our response to help once it is safe to do so.

In the meantime, we have committed to delivering Incident Command System (ICS) training free of charge to members of Polish utilities. We want to ensure a system is in place and there is coordination and collaboration between all groups. ICS has been adopted in Canada and by FEMA in the US, as well as many other countries around the world. Already we have received many enquiries from volunteers willing to go and assist. Our goal is to prepare in order to be ready when the time comes.

To that end, we have two complementary initiatives:

1. We are establishing a Ukraine Volunteer Registry of individuals willing to deploy and help rebuild damaged water/wastewater infrastructure once it is safe to do so, whether in a few months or two years.

2. Fundraising, as we anticipate a large number of people who are eager to do something to help. Unlike many charities who may ask volunteers for donations, we pay all travel, accommodation and food expenses. We want to ensure that funds are available and we are ready to deploy when the time comes.

If you want to help:

If you are already a volunteer with OuB, contact us at info@operatorswithoutborders.org and ask to be put on the Registry.

If you are not a volunteer and wish to sign up or if you are not able to volunteer and wish to make a donation to fund those who can, go to our website:

We encourage you to not sit in front of your television and lament that you can’t do anything. You can and we guarantee it will be a tremendously rewarding experience helping those in need in our water community.
Other News from OWB

COVID 10 hindered our ability to deploy volunteers to disasters as we have previously done in Dominica and The Bahamas following Hurricanes Irma, Maria and Dorian. In the last two years we pivoted to our second mandate which is capacity building for water and wastewater utilities in developing countries. Below are a few of the services we have, or are in the process of, providing.

**Haiti initiative**

OWB is part of the Rotary International HANWASH initiative. The audacious goal of HANWASH is to provide potable water to all residents of Haiti by the year 2030. Rotary has an exemplary record on humanitarian projects and was widely successful in assisting worldwide in the eradication of smallpox through vaccination programmes. OWB’s role is capacity building. To date we have provided virtual workshops on Non-Revenue Water which is a critical component of the initiative as NRW has been running as high as 90% in some communes. Right now there are pilot projects in 7 communes, ranging from establishing a water supply and distribution network to repairing and improving the existing systems, installing meters, and fixing leakage. Apart from future technical training part of our mandate is to work towards sustainability. We are documenting and creating a bank of SOPs that can be used throughout the country as the project expands. Board member Madeleine Butschler heads up the SOP project as well as sitting on a number of the HANWASH Committees.

**Incident Command System (ICS) Training**

ICS is the disaster response system most commonly used in disaster response in North America and other parts of the world. Volunteer Greg Solecki, who is one of Canada’s leading disaster experts and an Incident Commander has to date trained nearly 300 participants from water and wastewater utilities in the Caribbean and a further 80 in South America in Level 100. We have recently received funding from the International Development Bank to deliver ICS training for Levels 200, 300 and 400 in Jamaica, Barbados and The Bahamas. We will also be delivering ICS training for Polish water utilities.

**Laboratory Training**

One of our most active volunteers arranged training for Lab Technicians working for DOWASCO, the Water Utility in Dominica. Their old lab was destroyed in the hurricane that hit the island in 2017 and the new lab was due to open but with inexperienced technicians Ian arranged and co-taught a 10 week training programme which included live video showing Canadian technicians from the Durham Region demonstrating correct procedures.

**Certification and Training**

Grateful thanks to Mike Gosselin, Mike Ippen and Mike Firlotte who all delivered virtual Exam Preparation training for Water Treatment, Water Distribution and Wastewater Treatment over a 12 week period. OWB is partnering with Water Professional International (Formerly ABC) and Global Wastewater International headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya to pilot test certification and training in Asia and Africa. The goal is to establish standards and reliable proficiency in operations. We will be delivering this initiative in conjunction with a wastewater project in Sabah, Malaysia and with Nakuru Urban Water and Sanitation Company in Kenya.

**SOPs**

Volunteer Marcel Misuraca has with the help of many on his Committee, including colleagues in the Caribbean put together around 200 SOPs that will be given away to utilities in developing countries. His Committee is presently reviewing and updating content and putting all SOPs into an OWB format. The Committee will also assist recipients to customize to their own utility.

This is just a small number of initiatives on which OWB is working. We welcome new Committee members, especially if you have experience as a trainer. We guarantee a really rewarding experience. Please contact us through info@operatorswithoutborders.org