**Olga and Dina’s Story – Ukraine**

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| ***Olga*** | ***Dina*** |

Olga and Dina are neighbours. They share the bonds of friendship that develop over many years of living next to each other. They currently live in an apartment block where they have both lived for forty years. When the war started, they stayed in their homes until the March 4, 2022, when they were forced to leave. Sitting outside their apartment, they told Mike from ReliefAid, ShelterBox’s partner in Ukraine, what happened.

“It was the most terrible night here. Grads\* were shooting from here and from there (either side). There were 8 grad vehicles nearby and some from the other side, we were in the basement. All the building was shaking terribly. When we came out from there the house was without all windows, nothing was left”, said Olga.

Dina added, “I was in my flat with my cat, my balcony is behind the corner looking that side [pointing towards her home]. When a tank shot nearby my cat rushed somewhere and I have never seen him since then. I have no idea where he is. I just remember how window glass was breaking all around, it was so scary.”

Volunteers evacuated them and the next day a missile strike landed in the middle of the building, destroying many of the apartments. Fortunately, Olga and Dina’s apartment were not directly hit, but they suffered a lot of collateral damage.

Olga and Dina returned to their homes on April 9. There was no power, gas or water and broken glass crunched under their feet. Water had to be carried up the stairs. With no windows intact, no heating and temperatures still dropping to zero overnight, the homes they returned to were chilling in every sense. But home is home and where they wanted to be. Fortunately some precious mementoes survived.

*\*Grads are how Ukrainians refer to multi rocket launch missile systems. It is also the word used for a hailstorm.*

A building that has been destroyed

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***Impact of missile strike on the apartment block where Olga and Dina live***

Olga and Dina’s homes need significant repairs to return them to their former comfort, but they are where they want to be. Thankfully ShelterBox’s shelter tool kits are providing the necessities to make their homes habitable again. Tools, tarpaulins, and materials can be used to cover windows and fix additional damage. They also stop the cold wind blowing through the apartments. Blankets provide extra layers of warmth.

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| *View from Dina’s window, glass litters the balcony and the area where she once hung her washing.* | *Dina’s photo of her granddaughter narrowly missed a piece of shrapnel which left a hole in the wall.* |

As Mike from ReliefAid explained to them how the solar lights worked, Olga pointed to Dina and said, “you put it in the sun every day to charge”. Dina replies, “maybe you need it more, one day I will use it, the next day you”. Olga smiled at her friend and said, “no, they will give me one too”.

Dina’s eyes shine in the light of solar light as they talked, and she walked to the window. Looking down she can see meals being cooked on an open fire. Help has arrived and they can start to rebuild. Her eyes scan the ground below looking for her cat, in the hope that he will also find his way home.

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