This issue of Belarus Photo Digest is about communal housing in Belarus.

Nearly 800,000 Belarusians were registered as being in need of better housing conditions at the end of 2013, according to Belstat. Sixteen percent of them are living in communal housing, and nearly half are young families.

Nasta and her four-year-old son Matvei live in dormitory-style housing in Maladechna, a city of 95 thousand – a one-hour drive from Minsk.

“I had to do everything myself. In the seventh month of pregnancy, I was putting up wallpaper, painting the ceiling and the floors,” Nasta remembers her first year in the dorm. “It is funny to think that in some places the old wallpaper was nailed to the wall.”

Government-owned corporation “Kommunalnik,” provides and operates communal housing in Maladechna. It offers two types of communal housing arrangements. One consists of small one-bedroom apartments, each with a private bathroom. The other is a dormitory, in which single rooms open into long hallways with shared bathrooms and kitchens.

Dwelling space in communal houses ranges between 14 and 20 square metres and costs $40-60 per month. For the sake of comparison, renting a room in a private apartment in Maladzechna costs $150-200 per month. For some, communal housing is a temporary solution. Others simply cannot afford to build or to buy an apartment and wind up living in communal
housing for decades.
About the photographer: Siarhei Leskiec is a freelance...
photographer whose work focuses on everyday life, folk traditions, and rituals in the Belarusian countryside. Originally from Maladzeczna region, he received a history degree from Belarusian State Pedagogical University.