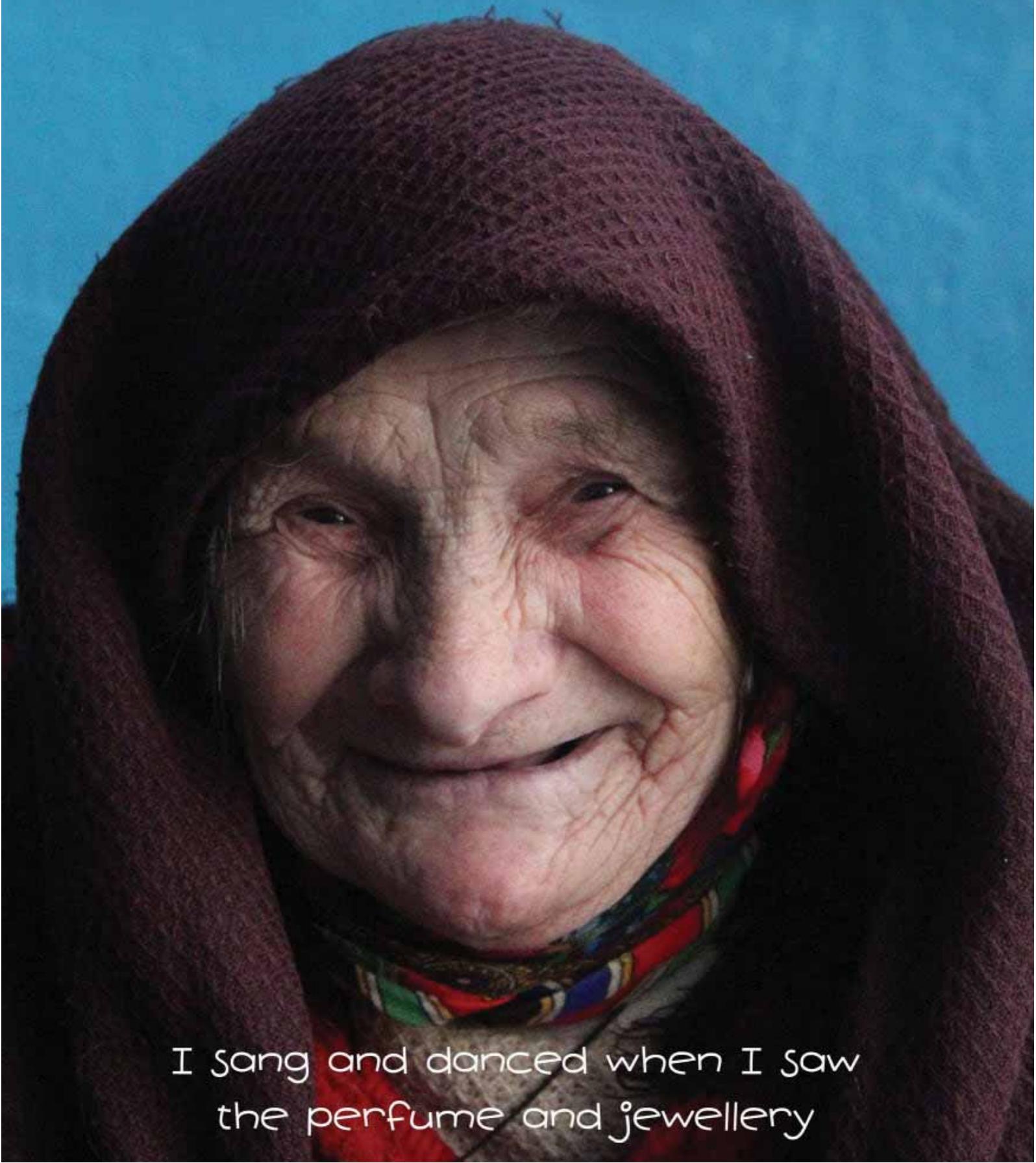


christian
response
to
eastern
europe



I sang and danced when I saw
the perfume and jewellery

It is astonishing to think our work started over twenty-one years ago. Much has happened in that time but the years have flown by. 2011 was a very busy year and 2012 looks to become even busier. Life for many is unbearably grim, far worse than life was under the Soviet regime but for the few, very few, life is better. There are many very sad tales we could tell and other stories of great joy and encouragement. We need to expand the family support scheme to help the most vulnerable. For many years now we have been linking English families with Moldovan ones and encourage direct communication with letters and family parcels.

The last few Newsletters have outlined the medical situation in Moldova and shown how desperate things are and how many doctors cannot be relied upon to give good, or even relevant treatment, but are always keen to charge! As this subject has been covered previously we will only touch on it now.

Covering all our activities in a newsletter is not possible but we hope you will gain some knowledge of the suffering still abundant in Moldova and learn more about our work and all we can do to help. We can all do something and thankfully, as a charity we have been blessed with good support in the past however, we need to expand our activities and need even more support. As we have no paid staff, nor offices to rent, we can use all money donated very effectively. Over the past twenty-one years we have achieved a great deal and are confident, given the financial support, we can do so much more.

Please remember this newsletter only details a small proportion of our activities. If you would like further information please contact us.

We hope you find this Newsletter informative and interesting. We are very grateful to Antalis McNaughton for their ongoing generosity in providing the paper for this and previous newsletters. This together with printing sponsorship allows us to have these produced without depleting our charitable funds. As we are a totally voluntary charity we believe this to be important.



In the spring we were struck by the huge increase in modern farm machinery. Huge tractors are doing the work formerly carried out by hundreds of people working with hand tools.



Over one hundred years ago in the UK, villages were occupied by families who earned their living from working on farms and estates. The introduction of traction engines, then tractors and other mechanisation changed this over a long period. People and society had the time to adapt, and now most people here who live in villages work in the towns and cities.

In Moldova this transition is so very quick, huge changes from one season to the next. In the vast rural regions this leaves thousands of families with no work, no income, no hope.



This is a tragedy, and is causing immense problems in an already troubled society. In rural areas the only work available was in the fields, and now this task has been taken by modern technology leaving these families in a truly desperate situation, far worse than before.

This development will give great financial profit for the few, and disaster for thousands; so many lives devastated. As mentioned in earlier newsletters over a quarter of the population are working abroad, mainly in Russia. There are hundreds of children left in the care of grandparents or neighbours. These economic orphans do not understand why their parents have left them.



Grannies are lovely but it is not the same as having a mum or dad at home.

On so many occasions we have mentioned how the children feel abandoned when their parents leave to work abroad. With the introduction of all this machinery, this situation is bound to deteriorate with even more children being left in the care of others. All they want is their mum and dad.

Attend any school and ask the children who have their parents at home to put their hand up and see how few there are. This misery is compounded by the sad fact that a considerable number of parents never return. Maybe some have died, whilst others just abandon their families for a new life in Russia.

Many who leave for work in Russia borrow money for the journey, but upon reaching their destination find there is no work or that they have to work for basic accommodation and some food, but receive no pay.

In January we met the Turcanu family. Dad, Sergiu journeyed the two thousand kilometres to work near St Petersburg in north western Russia. Upon his arrival he was locked up and made to work in slavery. It was winter time and Sergiu was frantic, concerned for himself and worried about his family in Moldova. How would his wife cope with no income looking after their children Michaela and Evelina?



You may remember in a previous newsletter we reported on the case of fifteen-year-old



Leana who was kidnapped when she was walking home. She was locked up and told she would be used for body parts. Her heart, kidneys, liver, eyes and other organs would be valuable.

It is a sad but understandable fact that if someone has a loved one who is in need of an organ transplant and been told this can be done privately without delay it is very tempting. Obviously paying to go privately to help your son, daughter, mother or father is worthwhile. Unfortunately when someone is told they can have a transplant if they go privately in another country they do not think where that heart, kidney, lung etc. came from.

Leana escaped but regularly re-lives her dreadful experience. When in confinement she was raped and as a result now has a son.

A great deal of our work involves strategies to try to keep families together. Our “Family Support Programme” is one way we can alleviate the necessity of parents having to work abroad. Despite all the problems we have in our country at the end of the day, we are blessed and privileged in being able to help those in Europe’s poorest country in the knowledge we can change lives, all of us can do this if we have the will.

It is all very well saying “It is their choice to seek work abroad. No one is forcing them.”, but what choice has a parent whose child needs food, clothing, or has

medical needs? With no prospect of work in Moldova what choice is there?



How can a child be fed or clothed with no work, no money?

With unemployment being so high and paid work being so poorly paid it is so very difficult to survive.

It is not surprising so many seek work abroad. The prospect of gaining employment is so very tempting to the young.

We intend to increase our educational activities to warn of the dangers of working abroad, especially for the young girls who are tempted by seemingly genuine offers of work.

One way we have been able to help is by sponsoring children through their education. This can be expensive but a great investment.

Nastya wrote to us when she was just eight years old. She lived with her grandparents. Granny was suffering from cancer and she had to care for her. Her grandfather was a drunk and brought his drunken friends home.



Nastya ten years ago

This was very frightening for an eight-year-old child.

We have a wonderful sponsor for Nastya and over the past ten years this has helped her tremendously. So much more than that, it has given a life to her. Without the backing she has had she would be uneducated and vulnerable.

The support she has enjoyed over the years has given her the confidence she needed, the education she would have missed and the friendship of her “English family” is of immeasurable value. Nastya



Nastya now aged 19

has grown into a delightful young lady and maintained her studies. Although work opportunities are not good we know she will succeed, all thanks to the family who have been helping her.

Nastya now lives in a single room in a

hostel. She works in a restaurant for three days a week, albeit she works eighteen hours a day. Her income is not sufficient, but with the help she gets from England this allows her to live in the flat and study when she is not working.

From a little girl in great need and in a hopeless situation we have been able to support her through the difficult times when she was so young and her grandmother was dying, encourage her and enable her to move to a hostel, see her through her education and see her blossom into the lovely young lady she has become. Nastya is just one example of how a little support really can help.

On a much lighter note, we were delighted with the response we had to our Christmas Shoebox Appeal.

Each year we have a Christmas Shoebox appeal and each year the quality of the contents improves bringing great joy to the thousands of children, (and some adults), who receive



them. The squeals of sheer excitement echoed round the tiny houses as the children opened their Christmas boxes, their faces glowing with smiles, and laughter filled the air.



The total atmosphere was transformed by a shoebox, a shoebox filled with a few simple things, toothbrush, toothpaste, soap etc and a toy or two. Most importantly it demonstrates to the children that there are people in England who care enough to help them. For a few wonderful minutes the house is filled with nothing but happiness.

All children love a present. For these children their Christmas Shoebox will be the only gift of the year. More senior

people also love to have something at Christmas. We take “Granny Boxes” to the old people’s asylum in Gribova. These always cause a great deal of excitement.



One lady upon seeing some perfume and jewellery in her shoebox staggered to her feet and started to sing and dance. All this reminded her momentarily of her youth. – She was so happy.

Several supporters asked for the details of specific children to prepare Christmas Shoeboxes for, whilst others joined with friends to make larger boxes for families.

If you wish to support our Christmas Shoebox appeal please be generous in the knowledge of the joy you will bring.

Each Christmas time we arrange parties for the children from poor families, unfortunately this means nearly all the



children in the area. Christmas is a great time for celebration but families do not have the money for a good Christmas lunch let alone gifts.

Rather than us bringing the party to them we ask the ladies in the village to cook and prepare the feast. We provide the money to buy all the food and drink.



The children enthusiastically put on the entertainment. It is “**their party**”. In this way they can see the enormous joy **they** have brought to **their children**.

We also have a Christmas Party at the Old People’s Asylum. It is wonderful to see the delight it brings. In this home for the elderly they feel somewhat abandoned, set aside out of the way. The residents are lovely with some wonderful stories to tell. They have lived through the most amazing times, grown up and worked through the Soviet era but now in the winter of their lives stuck in a home living in very basic conditions in Europe’s poorest country. Quite a contrast from the powerful Soviet Union. Just chatting to them and letting them recount their youth is so interesting. Their lives have encompassed so many things, just listening is fascinating.

In District Nurse Catherine Petherick's article in our November 2010 Newsletter she reported on the dreadful conditions in this Old People's Asylum in Gribova.

If you read her report you may remember the staff were dedicated and loving but cared for the elderly residents with minimal facilities, not even any running water. Water had to be fetched by staff from a well several hundred yards away.

We are delighted to report that through the kindness and generosity of a benefactor, the charity has now sunk a well just by the door of the asylum, and a pump has been fitted so they now have running water. What a huge difference this has made.



It is immensely satisfying to know we can achieve so much.

Pleasingly, in addition to this, and through the kindness of another supporter we have now added hot running water, a shower and toilet.



The old toilet with no running water

All this is something they would never even have dreamed about. Needless to say both staff and residents are over the moon and cannot believe the difference this has made to their lives.



Our thanks, and the sincere gratitude of all those in the asylum to those who helped make this possible.

It is always very humbling to see how people cope when they have so little. They have so much they could grumble about but never waste their time complaining.

One of the lady residents has been suffering from tooth ache for nearly two years. She needs to see a dentist but without money there is no opportunity.



Tooth Ache for Two Years

Another gentleman, suffers badly with his legs. The staff do all they can but he can hardly walk due to the pain.



There is so much suffering that could be easily alleviated, yet, without the distraction of any occupational therapy, television or any entertainment they stay in their beds, suffering quietly.

SCHOOLS

We support various schools in Moldova and only wish we could do more. Education is so very important.

The quality of the education is amazing, especially considering the meagre equipment and resources available.



It would be fair to describe the schools as old fashioned; a teacher at the front of the class and children sat in rows of desks, frequently broken desks and broken chairs. The “blackboards” are a depressing brown colour.

The directors, (the head teachers), of the schools are usually quite formidable, and scary. They have a high position and need to dress accordingly.

Each year the schools celebrate the “School’s Birthday”, a Founder’s day if you like. Both staff and children go to huge effort to make the day a success. They have displays of their art and work.



Usually there is a concert with singing and dancing. It is wonderful to see the boys dressed in smart, albeit old fashioned, suits and the girls in pretty dresses often with huge bows in their hair.



It is incredible to see what can be produced with so little, and to witness the ingenuity and all that can be achieved with such basic resources.

There are wonderful examples of things made from scraps of material, oddments of wool, pieces of paper, plastic bottles etc.

These are just a few of the wonderful things made by children,.

Generally speaking, schools, especially those in the villages, are short of everything.



This picture shows all the sports equipment at one school, some old mattresses and a few well used balls, most of which were misshapen. It was quite amusing to watch the children bounce balls that were not round. We have been happy that a few schools in England have given some of their used equipment, but we do need more.



A few bits of wood nailed carefully together can make a loom for the children to make rugs.

This loom may look a bit rough and ready, but it works and the children make beautiful things on it.



We are very grateful to Thomas Moore, our local School Outfitters for all the wonderful new school clothing they have given to us. We have also been given lots of counterfeit clothing which, rather than being destroyed, has been passed to us by Devon Trading Standards department at County Hall. We are also blessed with the support of some schools who have donated a considerable amount of surplus

school equipment, ranging from school desks to dinner plates, from exercise books to footballs. Everyone in the schools we have helped is enormously grateful.

Over the past twenty-one years we have sent many hundreds of tonnes of humanitarian aid to Romania and Moldova. The tens of thousands of items of clothing etc have been distributed to help the needy.

All this has been a great achievement but none of it would have been possible without the band of (mainly), ladies, who have tirelessly sorted through all the clothing to make certain everything we send is of the best quality and sorted properly.



We borrow warehouses rather than renting them, which means we can save on rent but also means the warehouses we have used over the years have not always been prestigious or comfortable. Our teams have persevered often working in very cold and uncomfortable conditions. The majority of those who help in our store have not had the opportunity to visit Moldova and witness first-hand the results of their efforts.

It is impossible to adequately thank them for all their diligence. It must frequently seem like a thankless task. If only they



could see the fruits of their labours, see the looks on people's faces, see the relief the aid gives.

Without this team we could not have achieved so much nor helped so many. Without them and without the support of those who have loaned the warehouses, thousands of families would not have been helped and would still be in a desperate situation.

The same thing could be said for all those who regularly support our work, whether by tirelessly knitting, regularly collecting and to all those who so generously support us financially. Money is always a difficult subject but the reality is we need to increase our income in these very tough times.



We have given several examples of families we help but these are only a small selection. There are so many it is difficult to decide whom to mention and whom to leave out.

Each family we mention is a real case but is one of many. Take Alena for example.



When we saw her on her birthday, it was her thirteenth. It was a Saturday, so Alena was not at school, but was working in the fields in the baking sun. Hot and dirty she excitedly came running when she saw us. She kept the fact it was her birthday quiet, but when asked about it she admitted it was. For her birthday she had no gifts whatsoever; no card, no cake, obviously no party but nevertheless was very happy it was her birthday.

We asked what she would like for a birthday gift. What would she like that would make her really happy? Her reply was, "Please will you help with the electricity bill? That would make me very happy". This was the dream of a young girl on her thirteenth birthday.



Fortunately we had some things for her. A dress, a birthday teddybear and a trip to the shop to buy some ice-cream, some may say gifts far more suited to a girl celebrating her thirteenth birthday. And yes, we were also able to help with the electricity bill.



Alena's sister Maria with the dress we left last time. Alena is often left to care for Maria and her brother Igor. It is a sad reality there are many children burdened by the worries of family debt and the realities of the struggle for survival.

Summer Camps

For many years we have arranged Summer Camps for children from poor families and orphanages. This may not seem essential to many, but these children lead such hard lives with little or no time for play. Our own children know the meaning of play, why should those in Moldova be deprived?



At Summer Camp the children have a full day of activities starting at 8.00am, but they are usually up and around well before then.

It is lovely to see children in a “holiday environment”, quite alien for most in Moldova. Some of the children arrive with only the clothes they stand up in. Therefore one of our first tasks is to make certain they have all they need.



In addition to all the fun and games we give them a Summer Camp Shoebox. These have been lovingly donated by individuals and schools. They have underwear, a Tee shirt, soap, toothbrush and paste, pencils, crayons and toys. In this way we can make certain all the children have something, regardless of their situation.

It is very easy to forget these children live very hard lives and have so many problems. Take Micheala as an example. We first met her in April and I recall thinking how do you tell a child whose mother is dying that everything will be all right? Frequently we encounter impossible and very emotional situations. She is just eleven years old. Her mother is seriously ill and without the medical help she needs she does not have long to live.

Micheala was understandably in tears as she told us about her mother. She has a younger brother Andrei and sister Andriana.



How different things would have been if they lived in the West and mum benefitted from our medical expertise. It is impossible to leave these experiences behind and the haunting memories seem everlasting.

We will maintain contact with Micheala and her family and make certain we are there to help and support them especially when the time comes. We will also endeavour to find an English family to sponsor them until the children are older.

It is always very humbling to see how hard the children work, at school, at home and in the fields. It is frequently embarrassing to shake the hand of a child and discover how hard the skin on their hands is compared to ours. The children do not moan or grumble at all the work.



Nine years old and doing the washing

For the girls doing the washing, cleaning, caring for younger siblings, looking after the chickens and other animals they may have as well as working in the fields is an everyday occurrence.



The boys will also care for their younger brothers and sisters but their duties at home are generally to collect and chop the wood, look after the animals and again to work in the fields.

This is the life in Moldova and one of the reasons we feel Summer Camp is important.

Helping so many children at one time in camp is wonderful but only lasts a short time each year, albeit the memories last a lifetime. Another way in which we can help children effectively is with the soup kitchen we operate.

The children have a lovely time at the Soup Kitchens, not only do they get good food regularly but also have some fun and games, singing and learning.



We refer to them as “Soup Kitchens” but we do not just give them soup. We give them the best food we can. They lead tough lives and live in hard conditions; they deserve and need the best we can give.

In addition to filling their tummies we have time for games, singing and generally have some fun. We can also see if we can help with some of their problems. They may be homeless or have drunken parents. They may have medical problems or unable to go to school. There is so much we do do, so much more we can do.



The Centre in Gura Bicului is largely finished and in addition to the social facilities and employment opportunities offered, we have started some commercial activities to earn money to fund some of our charitable work. Given some time we anticipate the Centre will not only become self-funding but make a profit we can use to help some of our other projects.

We have already catered for several weddings and parties and the feedback has been very positive. Once we have the bakery fully operational things should improve yet further. We are attracting people from as far away as Chisinau and these areas have money for such activities. People in Moldova are very keen to have a good wedding celebration.



The children are wonderful and it is a pleasure, a real treat to visit them and join in with their activities. The only problem is that the children have no respect for age and love to have all visitors joining in and running about; even those of more senior years!

The soup kitchens may be a very effective way to help so many needy children and we must not fail them but we need to maintain the funding until we can earn sufficient from the community centre in Gura Bicului.



It is such a huge contrast seeing the room prepared for a wedding with such wonderful food, and it seems ambiguous when you compare this with the work we have a passion for, helping the poor and needy. But we can employ people on good terms giving them an income for their family. Rather than being supported they are earning their own living.

We will continue to build the commercial side but will not divert from the prime objective of using the Centre to benefit the poor.

What have we done?

We have done so much over the past twenty-one years. Importantly, when we refer to “we”, we do not refer to the management of cr2ee but to all our supporters who have donated, knitted, collected and sorted the hundreds of tonnes of humanitarian aid and the many who have supported our work financially.

Trying to evaluate the benefit of our family support programme is very difficult but any appraisal would only include superlatives. Those fortunate to go to Moldova and visit the families will know the immense difference made, sometime the difference between survival or failure; failure could mean a life on the streets or living in the woods. Knowing they have the support is so very comforting for them.

The Soup Kitchens allow us to feed many children in a cost effective way and to help with other problems the children may have. Importantly they can also relax and have a bit of fun.

The Centre in Gura Bicului is an amazing facility allowing us to employ people on good terms, generate income to fund social projects, start a further Soup Kitchen, have educational facilities, a medical assessment centre. We can arrange seminars aimed at the medical profession as well as educational programmes for both adults and children. There is so much more we can do.

On the medical side we have provided essential medical help to save lives, obtained prosthetic limbs to retain independence.

We have helped little Vova who needed a life-saving heart operation and many others with less life threatening ailments.

What can we do now?

The answer is easy – do more! There are so many to help. We have been very successful and already changed so many lives. We need your help and hope for continued support.



**cr2ee,
3 Lumley Close,
Kenton,
Exeter. EX6 8HT**

Tel. 01626 891945

email:- mail@cr2ee.org.uk

www.cr2ee.org.uk

Charity number 1062623