

Moldova News

winter 2016

Helping place Mission at the heart of the Church and the Church at the heart of the community

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Good News for all
- from gypsy children to town councils

(Bus4Life outreach - p.4)



editorial

Nothing in this world is more beautiful than to see how wonderfully the Lord works and transforms lives, redeeming people and bringing hope. As you read this edition, I invite you to really feel the amazing way God is working in this world, including Moldova. I know there is much to pray for as well, and we really appreciate your prayers for all the needs, but I would like to especially thank God for the wonderful way He has worked in the lives of those included in these stories.

You will read about Dana's mother; the situation she was in - and alongside her, her children, who had to suffer because of her addiction - but when God shows up, He makes something so beautiful from the ashes. A life restored - and alongside it also the other four.

Regarding Ion's story, I remember him attending one of our football camps as a teenager, years ago. Listening to his story, I was amazed to see the impact that our sports ministry had in his life. My joy is much greater now, looking back and seeing how the Lord guided Ion, so that he joined OM Moldova and is sharing his faith with the people of Moldova, but even more than that, knowing that Ion is using his abilities to share the Gospel until the ends of the earth, while being on Logos Hope now.

This is what I am talking about: Because we pray together, God works, lives are transformed and we are encouraged to keep ministering here in Moldova because God is doing amazing things.

Counting on your prayers,



Eugen Ciumac
Field Leader
OM Moldova



Through the mouths of puppets

Entering one kindergarten we find the group of pre-schoolers sitting on a carpet on the floor, waiting with innocent faces and big expectant eyes, ready to laugh and be amazed at the simplest things.

Another day, another village: 60 children are assembled in a school hall, all neat and tidy and dressed in their very best clothes, because later that day they will have a Christmas performance for all the parents. Many of these parents are already present as well - and almost as curious as the children about what they are going to experience.

One more change of scene: Around 20 children, some of them already reaching adolescence, are gathered at one of our Day Centres. Their parents are addicted to alcohol and drugs, their main example is the street and their ambition for their own lives sounds like this: "Drink, take drugs, be bad and stay behind bars - then you'll have authority, be strong and get respect."

It is hard to imagine that one single tool could reach all of these very different groups - but all of them attentively watched and listened, as just before Christmas we toured Day Centres, schools and kindergartens with our newest puppet show. Even the children of the above mentioned Day Centre were surprisingly quiet and got actively involved in the programme. The local pastor said he observed a much better behaviour from them than at our last visit there, reminding us that though we might only see they are not yet what we would wish, there is change. We pray that in time their values and ambitions will be transformed as well, and most importantly, that they will come to believe and accept the message of God's love and salvation which has been presented to them - a transforming message that all of these children need and one that is available to all, regardless of circumstance or age, whether timid four-year-old or tough teenager.

"Drink, take drugs, be bad and stay behind bars - then you'll have authority, be strong and get respect."



A power stronger than addiction

No food, no education, no love, no future - this is the reality for hundreds of children who attend our Day Centres all over the country. Though causes can be complex, a vast majority suffer neglect, violence and poverty as a consequence of alcoholism in their families. Our Day Centres offer them hope despite their home situations - but at times we can extend hope even to their parents: hope that they, too, can change; that even in their lives God can work miracles. This is the story of one such miracle.

Dana and her siblings attend the Day Centre in Caplani. In summer an outreach team visited their home together with Viorel, the local pastor and Day Centre leader. When they arrived, they found a police officer and the local social worker in the yard and Tania, the alcohol-addicted mother of the children, slouched on the threshold of the house. Just a quick look through the window revealed that neither the house nor her four children received any care or attention. Galina, one of our OM relief workers who was part of that team, recalls feeling angry with the pathetic figure sitting there, careless of the suffering she was causing her children. But although it seemed a hopeless case, the visitors decided to pray for this situation.

Following this incident, the authorities moved the children to a state home and took away Tania's parental rights. However, shortly after, Tania was roused from her stupor. She turned up at the local church and asked for prayer because she did not want to drink any more. At that point she had already stayed dry for two weeks, but felt vulnerable because neighbours and even her father kept bringing alcohol and inviting her to drink, so she sought the support of the local believers and their God - the God her children talked about at the Day Centre and the God who had worked a similar miracle in its leader: The story of Viorel, who himself had been a notorious alcoholic and criminal before God completely turned his life around, is well-known throughout the village.

Tania started regularly attending church and came to faith. She stopped drinking, recovered physically and refurbished her house. Viorel gave Tania paid work in his greenhouses as often as he could, knowing her need for an income as well as an occupation. The change in her life was obvious; the mayor and social worker saw it as well and began to talk about getting back Tania's rights to her children.

Around that time a medical test showed a spot on Dana's lungs, she was transferred to a hospital in Chişinău and had to stay for two months. It was a difficult time for the girl, who felt lonely and scared, and for Tania who had no possibility to visit regularly. Being unable to look after her daughter, Tania appealed to Galina, who visited Dana in hospital. When the girl saw Galina, tears streamed down her face - she was so grateful for simply seeing a familiar and kind face. When finally Dana got permission to leave the hospital, she wanted to go home to her mother, but the children's home in charge of her and her siblings did not agree to any of them being allowed back and under their pressure, the mayor also withdrew his support. When Tania kept coming to Viorel, crying in desperation, Viorel called Galina to appeal for prayer. The local church prayed, the OM team prayed - and just a few days later the mayor himself approached Tania. Going to Chişinău for a seminar, he offered to take Tania with him so she could get Dana and bring her home. Shortly after, the other children were allowed to return and Tania officially regained her parental rights. Challenges remain as Tania's father, who owns the house they live in, still drinks, but Tania - and all those who prayed - have been encouraged that God hears prayer and can change even the most wretched people and hopeless situations.



Children receiving help with their school work at one of our Day Centres



Good News for all

"The children climbed into the bouncy castle and then just stood and looked; they didn't know what to do." As the Bus4Life stayed in the village of Sacca, our team found that the local children had never even seen a bouncy castle or trampoline and needed to be shown what to do with them. But being able to bring these children a completely new experience of joy was not the only amazing fact about their stay in that village: Here they were in a place that had no evangelical church and where no OM teams had visited before, being the centre of attention at an event for which the whole village was present and having been personally invited by the mayor.

When the bus had been at the local church of the nearby village of Recea a week earlier, the mayor responsible for the village of Sacca had been visiting. She had been so impressed that she had asked the team to bring the bus to the annual village festival in Sacca the following weekend. As the team joined in the festive activities, they soon made friends with the children but also talked to many adults while serving them tea and coffee inside the bus. Though the visit was only short, the team felt they had been able to lay a foundation for further cooperation, creating an open door for the church in Recea to get involved in this village and the possibility of more outreach teams visiting in the future.

Another stop brought the Bus4Life to a gypsy village that had already been visited by the bus on a previous tour, so the children knew what to expect and could hardly wait. They had been invited to a programme at two o'clock, but when the bus drew near the village at around 11am, the team found a group of about 10 children already waiting and waving excitedly as soon as the bus came into sight. *"Is it two o'clock now?"* they asked as soon as the team got off. On further enquiry they admitted they had skipped school that day and had actually been waiting there impatiently since early morning. When after lunch finally the bouncy castle and trampoline were set up, the children made the most of this free offer of fun. Again and again, whenever they had to get off, they went right back to the end of the queue - or often not to the end, trying to sneak in nearer the front. They were not easy to keep in order, but their joy and excitement were exuberant - it was obviously a very special event for them, a highlight they will not soon forget. As they remember their joy, we trust they will also think of the message they heard. This lively group of children turned surprisingly quiet as they listened to the explanation of the puppet show they had just watched, understanding the seriousness of sin and the amazing offer of forgiveness - that somebody else had paid for their wrongdoing.

But not only children took the message to heart. In yet another village it was again the mayor who responded. He had asked the team for help and afterwards invited them into his office for some further talk. After a while he suddenly interrupted them and said *"What you have just told me, you must also tell the other officials working here!"* After this he called together all the members of the town council that were in the building and the team shared testimonies and talked to them about faith and salvation.



"What you have just told me, you must also tell the other officials working here!"



Pray for those who were open to the message, that they will continue seeking God, and for the local churches that follow up on the work of the Bus4Life.



Hungry for God's Word

"I have never read the Bible, but I would very much like to!" These were the words of Dorin, who was visiting the Bus4Life. One of the OM team members on the bus decided to pay for a Bible so Dorin could have it as a gift, while another one explained more about the Bible to him, showing him how to find things and giving advice about where to start reading.

The literature on the bus is especially helpful for the village churches we work with, offering them resources to grow spiritually that are usually not available to them, but the books also attract the interest of those who are not believers - and among them, the Bible is by far the most requested book! Also the children are very interested and often sit in the bus reading Children's Bibles while waiting for a programme to start.



Hearts changing in a hard place



When members of our Local Ministry Team (LMT) arrived at the small house where the believers of the village of Lozova meet, they were awaited at the gate by an excited girl with shining eyes. Ten-year-old Alina proudly showed her brand-new winter clothes and was especially excited about her ear-warmers. Alina and her mother had been staying in this house since the mother decided they had to move away from Alina's father, who drank every day and repeatedly beat the girl and her mother. When recently the LMT had the

possibility to buy warm clothes for children, Alina was included in the list. It was a great joy for the girl, but her surprise was huge when, on hearing this, her father told her he wanted to contribute as well. Two weeks later he announced that he had collected some money and that it was time to go shopping. Alina's mother could hardly believe it - so far her husband had not made any effort to look after Alina and had generally not kept his promises. This time was different: They got on a bus to the nearest town and went shopping together as a family, providing Alina not only with the necessary clothes to get through winter, but also with a beautiful and precious memory.

It is a small sign of hearts changing in a difficult place. The LMT is involved in church planting initiatives in several villages in the area and probably the toughest is Lozova. A handful of people meet regularly for church services, but they face big opposition. They bought a piece of land to build a church, but building permission has repeatedly been refused. Most adults in the village are suspicious and prejudiced. But there are also open doors: Since September the LMT has been running a teenagers' club in Lozova and the young people are participating with enthusiasm. At Christmas these teenagers helped to lead a special programme in which they acted out the Christmas story before a message was shared. The programme was held twice on the same day and the small room was packed both times; more than 50 adults and 50 children came.

People in the village can see changes in their children, they watch how the believers bring help to the needy - currently the winter projects not only provide clothes for children like Alina, but also firewood or food parcels - and as the LMT and church members deliver this help, they take time for those they visit; listening to people's stories, struggles and questions; sharing from the Bible and praying for every family. In this way, though the general environment is still hostile, step by step their witness is reducing prejudices and building trust.



Even in places where adults are harder to reach, our Local Ministry Team finds acceptance when they are seen to be investing in the children.



options 2016
 Love Moldova A: 13-26 June
 Cycling, Construction, Horse & Cart
 Trekking, Village outreach
 Love Moldova B: 01-14 July
 Construction, Trekking, River, Arts camp
 Vulnerable girls camp, Village outreach
 Love Moldova C: 18-31 July
 Cycling, Construction, Horse & Cart
 River Adventure, Village outreach
 Love Moldova D: 07-20 August
 Trekking, Construction, Village outreach
 River, Football camp with at-risk boys



Thinking about what to do next summer?
 Why not join one of our **Love Moldova** outreaches - let God challenge and grow your faith, share His love with the people of Moldova, enjoy fellowship and learn from other believers!
 Give two weeks for something that really matters!
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BPTXrU8Z3M4&feature=youtu.be>

Please also consider our new **Missions Discipleship Training - MDTe³**, a joint programme of OM Moldova and OM Romania. In this six-month course (starting in January 2017) participants will be mentored and disciplined and develop a better understanding of missions, combined with practical hands-on experience. Join us yourself or help us get the word out to those who might be interested!



Modelling change, inspiring hope

"In an environment where politics and economy are characterised by corruption, they become examples of integrity and honour."

Through our business trainings, Moldovans are not only enabled to provide for their families, they also become agents of change and advocates of Kingdom values in their communities.

A student has the vision to start a business but needs training; an accountant wants to extend her opportunities; a construction worker with health problems looks for a different way to earn money; someone simply wants to contribute to the budget of family members who are going through a difficult situation - these are some of the reasons that brought the participants to a recent start-up training held by our 'Business for Transformation' (B4T) ministry. Among these participants were Denis and Ana, parents of two daughters, who live in a village in central Moldova. In 2014 they benefitted from a food parcel project and the connected visits of the local pastor resulted in Ana coming to faith. Soon after, her husband also turned to God. After this, Denis found himself a job, but since payment was very low, providing for their family remained a struggle. This is what brought them to the business course. Besides benefitting from the information taught and the practical exercises, they were also helped to draw up a personal business plan for growing and selling chickens, hoping that within two years they will have an incubator to hatch eggs and will work with 2000 chickens - some destined for sale while keeping others for producing and selling eggs. As a family they are still growing to know God and understand His character and values - and for them their new business is part of this process: a chance to experience God's provision and faithfulness, combined with the challenge to run it honestly.

It is a challenge shared by all those who have started businesses through B4T - and at the same time a huge witness to their communities: In an environment where politics and economy are characterised by corruption, they become examples of integrity and honour. And while the masses leave the country to seek work abroad, they choose to stay with their families, generate their own income and sometimes also provide work for others in the community. Thus while people have little expectation of support coming from the national leadership, yet here, on a local basis, simple men and women make a difference, modelling change and inspiring hope.



Trading football field for mission field

Ion Manoli (21) joined OM in autumn 2014. He helps lead outreach teams and is responsible for the Bus4Life. At the end of January he joined a ten-week programme on OM's ship 'Logos Hope'.

Please could you share about your journey to faith?

I grew up in an orthodox family, but in practice there was no talk of God there. Around age 13, I heard that a football team would be started in the village, so I joined. It was a team of OM's Next Generation ministry, but I didn't know anything about it then. It was simply interesting and I was enthusiastic about playing football; I was also impressed by the trainer. After the first few training sessions we had to learn verses, starting with John 3:16. I wasn't interested in Bible verses; I only wanted to play football, but being told that if I didn't learn the verse, I wouldn't be allowed to play, I submitted - and this verse has played an important role in my life. Our trainer also invited us to church. Attending Sunday school I didn't feel comfortable, because the smaller children knew a lot more than I did, but when I started going to the youth meetings, I enjoyed it very much. God was working in me, my friends told me my behaviour changed - but I was afraid to openly commit to God; I feared that my friends would laugh at me. One day watching a drama about heaven and hell, I understood in my heart what I truly wanted and this time I followed the call.

What kind of ministry is strongest on your heart?

I started to do football trainings and when I joined OM, I really wanted to do sports ministry. I was involved in several of their events, but because of the needs in the team, I was assigned to the training department. There the way the 'Challenge into Missions' (CiM) course was run really impressed me: seeing the participants not just as receivers but preparing them to go themselves. Helping lead this programme, I learned a lot and now I am more excited about this kind of ministry - motivating and equipping other young believers. Through OM's prayer evenings I developed a vision for world mission. This is what I am now working towards and trying to equip myself for.

How has your own view of missions changed?

I used to think that mission was something for people who don't have anything to do and who have a lot of money, which they don't know what to do with. Basically I thought only rich people can do missions. Joining OM I started to see things differently; with time I understood that these people have a vision and calling, a deep passion and love for people who are lost. It's this desire that leads to accepting challenges like raising finances - taking the initiative myself to find the money I need.

Having led many outreaches, what do you think is the benefit for local churches - what does OM contribute that the Moldovan Church couldn't or wouldn't do alone?

An outreach team can remind the church of their calling - the need to do evangelism, work with children, bring relief. The local church gets involved with the team and this often leads them to ask "What are we doing? This team comes to do what we should be doing ourselves." They are encouraged to continue the work when the team leaves. Besides outreach teams, OM is a huge blessing through the different projects that bring relief, because these enable the church to get access to the hearts of those who are hungry. And through all this, people find God: I have seen many people come to faith - young people just as much as elderly. I very much appreciate that OM is putting itself under the churches; in their entire ministry it is always the local church that is emphasised, not OM itself.

What are encouragements and challenges in your work?

One of the biggest encouragements for me is seeing the smiles on children's faces! Also knowing that the work is not in vain - seeing growth, development, people coming to faith. I appreciate our prayer evenings, through which God speaks to me a lot, and mature relationships with friends in OM. The biggest challenge is my financial support, especially knowing how to communicate this need to others.

What do you expect for your time on the Logos Hope?

I want God to speak to me regarding His plan for me for the next years and for my life, and maybe to show me a specific country. I expect to be better equipped for world missions and want to learn more how to communicate with others about God. But I am flexible: I'll joyfully do whatever I can - even if I have to clean toilets for two months.

How would you like us to pray for you?

A big need is my financial support which needs to grow. Also pray that my vision will become much clearer and pray for health, which is necessary to be able to really get involved.

Is there anything else you would like to tell us?

Listen to what is in your heart and then take action towards your vision! If you have a vision, you can reach it, but you need to take initiative. After coming to faith I really wanted to get involved in my church, but couldn't, so I prayed a lot for it and sought possibilities where I could learn. This is how I came to take part in CiM - and all that followed from that.



Give: Our biggest financial challenge is raising support for our national workers. If you would like to contribute, donate to your local OM office, specifying country and recipient's name (e.g. "Ion Manoli, Moldova") or generally "National workers, Moldova".



"We feel loved here!"

Sunshine, hearts, a rainbow in bright colours - on the paintings lined along the wall to dry, there were motives and colours you might expect and have seen in any children's paintings. However, this was just one half of the story: most of these paintings were divided in two and the other half was predominantly painted in black: a table with a bottle of Vodka, a sad or angry face, or simply just one big black blur. This was during our most recent conference for the vulnerable teenage girls from our Day Centres, where the main theme was 1 John 3:1 "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" (NIV). In a creative session they were given a canvas and paint and were encouraged to express how they feel about their earthly, human fathers and about God, their true Father. They also received a 'letter from God', made from a list of statements the Bible declares about all human beings and more specifically showing how God sees His children. As they split into small discussion groups, they could show their paintings and share their thoughts and feelings. Many of the paintings revealed a lot of darkness and pain in their relationships with their human

fathers, but it was also beautiful to see the light and colour, joy and love they associated with God - and to observe the earnest attention with which they studied the letter. It was obvious they all found some statements that were speaking deeply to them. "I was really thinking if maybe I was a mistake" one of them said after a long and thoughtful look at the paper that stated the opposite. Others were touched by reading that God is actually thinking of them, or comforted by His promise of one day wiping away all tears forever.

However, they also shared how difficult it is to believe and live these things - which here seem so clear and true - once they are back home, where they not only get laughed at by classmates if they talk about a personal faith in God, but where they live in circumstances that seem to deny their worth, where they are disregarded and looked down upon, where they face severe neglect and often also abuse. "We feel loved here" was one response when at the end we asked them what they had liked. We pray that even in their daily challenging situations they will find caring people and feel the unchanging and loving presence of God.

It was interesting but sad to see that the girls could easily describe what a bad father is, but didn't have much to say about what a good father might be like.



 **Pray for our first conference for boys in April - boys from similar backgrounds, at risk to be either exploited or become those who will exploit others!**

Get involved:



Pray for our ministries
or



Give towards a project
or



Go - join a programme:

Love Moldova (2 weeks)
Challenge into Missions (10 weeks)
MDTe³ (6 months)
Global Action (2 years)

*We need people to join us long-term!
Current needs include:*

- **Web Designer** and/or **Photo-/Videographer**
- **Training Facilitator** for coordinating our discipleship & evangelism programmes
- **Local Ministry Team** workers: live in a village community & work with local children, youth or elderly

[Contact us for more information!](#)

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