

We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached.

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The best gift (p.3)

- teenagers find Jesus through a River outreach team

An answer to seven years of prayer (p.6)

- ministry in Moldova's most unreached area

editorial

This summer, out of over 70 people on our team, only a few remained in the office to meet deadlines and prepare for other events, while the majority of the team was involved in outreaches, leading tens of others who joined our Love Moldova summer outreaches. Those in the office gathered to pray for all the teams that were out there sharing the Good News. I felt such an anointment as we were doing this; I felt like being part of those teams even though I was not present there. More than that, I could really feel the prayers of so many more people around the world interceding for the outreaches that we were involved in here. After the teams came back, I shared with them how I could feel the Holy Spirit using all these prayers to guide and bless them while being on outreach. With tears in their eyes some of the participants shared how God had been so present in what they had done during the outreaches, opening doors for the Gospel that humanly looked impossible to be opened, leading them in such a way only an Almighty God could do.

As I look at 2 Thess. 3:1 "As for other matters, brothers and sisters, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you," alongside the testimonies that you will be reading in this edition of Moldova News, I can see nothing but God being at work and all of us having the privilege to be part of His wonderful ministry.

Please know that we at OM Moldova so much value your prayers for us! God is using us here, but no less is He using your prayers and support from wherever you are in this world.

As a team we've started a 40-day chain of prayer & fasting; more than anything we seek God's face in the ministry He called us to. Please join us in our prayer that the Lord will continue to guide and use our team to bring the gospel to the least reached here in Moldova and to the ends of the earth.

When we work, we work. When we pray, God works! (Hudson Taylor)



Eugen Ciumac
Field Leader
OM Moldova

Love Moldova 2017



20 years of "Love Moldova" - a lot has happened since we organised the first summer outreach in 1997!

Outreaches in 62 villages, 45 children's camps organised, about 4,000 children involved in programmes, almost 250 food parcels given to needy people - these are just a few statistics from this summer's outreaches, as 320 people went out into Moldovan villages, trekking, cycling or rafting to some of the least reached places of the country, sharing God's love as they ran camps, built playgrounds or visited the poor and neglected.

Yet more important than numbers is the work God did in every individual heart.



God prepares the way

"When they heard about our team, the two ladies immediately left everything to welcome us and organise food for our team." Vlad, who was part of the trekking team during the last outreach period in August, was impressed with the joy and readiness to serve that was shown by the only two believers in the village they had just come to. The team had only known two believers existed there and had managed to get a phone number; on arrival in the village they called to explain who they were - and within two minutes these ladies decided to be wholly available to help the team.

As the trekking team was walking from village to village, it was often a challenge to trust God would provide for their needs, as most of the villages they visited had no church and none or only a few believers, but they were overwhelmed by the readiness these believers showed to serve them and the joy their visit brought to them. "This is like a church" they said about the fellowship they enjoyed when they received the team into their homes - a fellowship they usually have to do without. It was a great encouragement for these scattered individual believers to have others come to share and worship with them and to help them reach out to their communities.

For Vlad, one of our Moldovan OM workers, the visit to this specific village brought another unexpected encouragement: Talking to these two ladies, he asked how they had come to faith and they shared that ten years ago a man had come and preached the gospel in their village. During the conversation Vlad discovered that this man had been his father! Ten years ago Vlad had left to Nepal for missions and at that time his father had done an outreach in this region of Moldova, which resulted in these two ladies coming to faith. For ten years they had faithfully kept going and now received this team with great joy and valuable help. For Vlad it was a huge encouragement and sign of God's faithfulness and constant work - even when it remained unseen - and of His hand working things out even over big distances of space and time.

In 2007, as Vlad had been faithful in following God's call to a far away nation, God at that very same time had used his father to prepare an outreach Vlad was going to join in his own country in the summer of 2017 - ten years later.



The girl's reply was simple but powerful: "You have given me Jesus in my heart!"

Some OMers on the team recognised 12-year-old Cristina from stopping at that village with the raft the previous year. Then she had been a smiling, beautiful young lady, but this time she seemed to be very sad. When the children's programme had finished and the team went to their camp to have lunch before setting out on their river-journey to the next village, Cristina followed them and was wandering about close to the group. Finding out she had not yet eaten anything that day, the team invited her to join them for their meal and there the girl started to share about her life: When she was six her mother died and not long after also her father passed away; after that she had been raised by her grandmother, but just two months before the team's visit, her grandmother had also died. Now she was mainly depending on herself, sometimes staying with some relatives, but they would not really take care of her, not even making sure she had something to eat. The team gave her a food parcel and also some other useful gifts, like a blanket, and shared more about God and how He can be a Father to her. Cristina couldn't hold back her tears and wouldn't stop crying, but by the end of the conversation she asked Jesus into her heart, the team hugged her and prayed for her and gave her a New Testament - and a smile returned to Cristina's face. All she had needed was a hug and some love and affection - and hope.

A few villages further down the river Catea, one of the Moldovan team members, could bring hope to another teenage girl. During the team's programme in one of the villages, Catea told the children how she had received Jesus into her life and that He completely changed her, brought her joy and enabled her to also bring joy to others. At the end of the programme a teenage girl called Ionela approached Catea, took her hand and asked, "How did you start bringing joy to others? I also want to do this!" Catea shared more about her life, including how before knowing Jesus, in arguments with her mother she had often threatened to commit suicide. At this Ionela opened up and started to pour out her heart, sharing that many times she felt unloved and often thought about ending her life. She told about her sick mother and that her father has to work abroad in order to be able to afford the medication her mother needs. "We talked about many things and I told her how much God loves her and how she can live with him," Catea said, "We prayed and hugged and I encouraged her to read the Bible. She told me she had never opened up to anyone like this, because she had never trusted anybody enough." Just before parting they hugged again and Catea would have liked to give Ionela something as a memory, but was sorry she didn't have any gift to offer - but when she told Ionela this, the girl's reply was simple but powerful: "You have given me Jesus in my heart!"



Praise God with us for the openness with which the gospel was received this summer! Please pray for Cristina, Ionela and other young people who embraced the Good News, but need to go on in their young faith with very little outside support.

The best gift

A River Adventure team reaches out to young people, helping them to find hope in Jesus.



Healed hearts

Bibles and prayer were the most appreciated gifts as teams visited the old, the poor and the abandoned.



"The lady we visited was deaf; she had dried blood on her hands and face and a soda bottle holding the liquid seeping from her body. Her house was in shambles and by far the worst condition we came across. During the visit it became clear that she was facing abuse from her son and others. My heart broke immediately." The team visiting Nina could only communicate with her by writing down what they wanted to say. This lady could read well and reply to them with her own voice, but told them she had lost her hearing during a seven-month hospital stay, while being treated for tuberculosis. Even now her health clearly didn't allow her to work or take proper care of the house, a circumstance greatly aggravated by her son's alcohol addiction and resulting violence. When the team told her they had brought her a food parcel and a Bible as gifts, she was overjoyed. "Nobody visits me," she said, "but you have come, even from a different country, and also brought a gift for me - a Bible, God's Word!" When she declared that she would start reading it right away, one of the team wanted to show her a passage - but Nina misunderstood the gesture. Clutching the Bible tightly to her chest she exclaimed, "No, don't take it away again! It is mine; you gave it to me as a gift!" When she was made to understand their purpose, however, she was very happy to read the suggested verses - and continued to ask every single team member in turn to show her another verse.

Clutching the Bible tightly to her chest she exclaimed, "No, don't take it away again! It is mine; you gave it to me as a gift!"

Often the teams did not find it easy to be confronted with the harsh living conditions of the people they visited and the help they brought seemed little compared to the need - yet again and again they remained amazed at the appreciation these people showed for the gifts of food, a Bible or prayer, and how much a simple visit meant to them. Many teams saw how their visits brought change: the lady who told them she wanted to die, but by the end of the visit accepted Jesus and declared she is no longer alone and now wants to live for Him; the man who was grumpy and seemed not at all interested, but as the team left was sitting there with a smile on his face, reading the Bible they had given him; the depressed lady with pain in her legs whom the team prayed for and the next day saw feeling better and full of joy. Some people hesitated to accept prayer, but only because their tradition had taught them they have to pay for it. "One lady told us she wanted to have Jesus in her heart and home, but did not have enough money to pay the priest to pray for the home," one participant explained - but when these people understood the team offered to pray for them without expecting payment and even shared that they can themselves come to God in prayer, they were very happy to accept this offer.

OM worker Andrei wrote about a visit he won't forget: "Our team was on the way to do practical work when Tamara, the local church worker accompanying us, asked us to visit an old man on the way. 'I feel he has not long to live' were her words. Before entering the house she told us how four years ago she had visited this man's wife on her deathbed and just before dying the lady had given her life to God. We started to talk to the old man and his daughter and when the conversation turned to the subject of death and our team shared about our assurance of salvation and our eternal future, old Costel expressed the desire to also have this same confidence. At the end of the visit we could pray a prayer of repentance with him and then left - but Tamara's words still resounded in my ears: 'I feel he has not long to live'. The next day we received the news that Costel had died that morning. It was sad, but at the same time we rejoiced, knowing what had happened the day before and how he had truly desired to be with Jesus. For us it had been an unplanned visit, but it had been perfectly arranged in God's plan."

"One lady told us she wanted to have Jesus in her home, but did not have enough money to pay the priest to pray for it."



God shapes lives

What motivates people to join a Love Moldova outreach? The desire to share the gospel with those who have never heard it, a longing to deepen their personal faith, searching for God's calling for their own life, seeking to experience a different culture, looking for an adventure, coming along because their friends or their youth group is going? Whatever may be the mix of reasons for every individual, it is beautiful to see how God uses all kinds of people and speaks into each life, meeting them wherever they are at in their walk with Him. In their own words, here is what some of this summer's participants shared about their experience with God during Love Moldova:

"I loved being in a situation where He could show me His heart for the people we came in contact with. My heart for the nations has been confirmed again."

"I saw the change the outreach brought to our hearts and it encouraged us to continue with God as number one in our life."

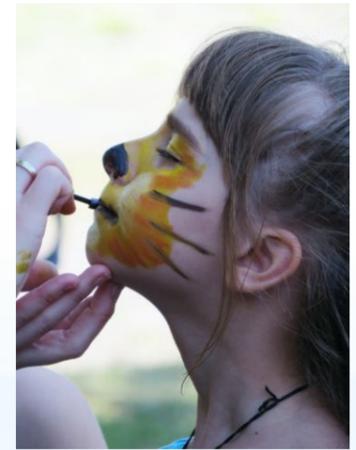
"I was challenged to work harder on Bible verses and Bible study - I know that only God's Word can comfort and help people."

"It was heartbreaking and I was really angry with God for letting so much injustice happen. But then I felt His presence, that He wanted to tell me He is here, He can see them and He hears their prayers. That's also why he sent us."

"I learned to go by faith - to know that not everything is within my control, but that my life is in God's hands and that I may rely on Him and not have to rely on my own thoughts."

"The trip was hard work but a lot of fun. ... OM took professional care of us while letting us assimilate and learn from the culture the best we could on a ten-day trip."

"It really made me appreciate how fortunate I am, not only in my situation and lifestyle, but also my health. I will go home with a different outlook and more appreciation for life."



"I wish our whole church could come!"

"I had to rely way more on Him than I do in my daily life at home."

"I learned to be more thankful for the things I have."

"I have learnt God is in the small details."

"It was great to see how happy the children were just because we gave them time and attention." - "When we arrived at one village I waived at a girl and she smiled. A short time later she told me her name and we chatted, then we just sat there and hugged. She said she lived with her uncle, as both her parents had died, and she hadn't been hugged since she was five years old - she is eleven now! She ran off and came back with six more girls who also wanted hugs. When it was time to leave, they all made a line for getting a goodbye hug."

"The lady in our host family told us of her life and struggles. Despite all she had been through, her faith was evident in the way she glorified God for everything she had. I realised how easy my life is, yet how much I take it for granted and fail to give glory to God for the good things in my life. I will now be able to see my life in a new perspective and will be seeking ways to give thanks to God."

"I came to Moldova to develop my relationship with God, and seeing how much faith some people in the villages had, even though they were in bad situations and had so little, really influenced and encouraged me to be so thankful to God. I've had the most amazing two weeks and it has influenced me so much that I am looking to join the MDT six-month mission course and am so excited to see what God has in store for me."

"Before I came, my faith and relationship with God was practically non-existent. I felt out of my comfort zone and was worried at how disconnected I felt. During a home visit, while I was talking to a wise elderly woman, I felt God's presence for the first time. I felt an unexplainable peace come over me and was humbled by this, as I had never experienced it before. Later that night I had to share from my life; I was very scared of this but when the time came I felt calm and at ease due to the acceptance and prayers of the OM team. About halfway through the outreach our youth leader helped me make my commitment to follow the Lord. If the team aren't sure whether they impacted anyone's life in the villages, I want them to know they have changed mine forever."

An answer to seven years of prayer

How will people hear the gospel who live in secluded villages that are difficult to travel to, where it is a challenge to get even to the neighbouring village, but there are no evangelical churches within 100 km? We are extremely thankful and excited that after years of praying for the least reached area of the country, doors are opening for ministry.

About seven years ago we started praying for the north-eastern region of Moldova, the least reached area of the country. Throughout these years we tried to get to these villages with outreach teams and relief projects whenever possible, but no doors seemed to open for a more permanent and focused ministry.

When this past March our field leader, Eugen, was on a visit to the northern part of the country, he happened to meet and enter into a conversation with the pastor from a church in Șoldănești - a town situated at the southern edge of this unreached region. To Eugen's amazement this pastor started to share about the vision he and his church have for reaching the little reached area to the north of them. Eugen calls it an eye-opening moment, seeing this pastor's vision coinciding perfectly with what we have been praying about for so long, and both men testify they clearly saw God's hand directing things and preparing His work in this region. At that moment the pastor had already started talking to a member of his church who considered moving to Cobîlea, a village in that region, while we as OM had dreamed about sending a Local Ministry Team (LMT) there, but desired to do this alongside a local church or believer, so that any new believers would become integrated in the Moldovan Church.

After a time of prayer, OM and this church confirmed our common vision and made plans for starting a partnering work in 2018. However, over the following period of time they felt that ministry needed to begin sooner, and so already from October onwards our new LMT will be living and working in Cobîlea. The first period of time the focus will be on getting to know the village and building relationships, but in time we hope to also gain access to schools (e.g. with English or music lessons), be involved with children and young people and see a ministry develop not only in Cobîlea but also throughout other villages in the area.

Our vision is to establish more and more of these kind of teams in the least reached areas of the country, working alongside local believers from those existing churches that are nearest to these regions, and thus to help create new vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached in Moldova.



The region of Șoldănești has 34 villages but only four small churches, with a total number of up to 100 believers in an area with 33.000 inhabitants.

Beyond expectation

At the beginning of summer, one of our trekking teams visited this region, starting in the very village of Cobîlea, where from October our new Local Ministry Team will be working from. The leader of the trekking team had previously been to that place and remembered being fiercely opposed by a local orthodox priest, who had threatened that "if you start a church here, I'll put it on fire". So the team was prepared for hostility, even for the possibility that they might have stones thrown at them, but when they arrived, they found people were open and welcoming (and that particular priest had died in spring). The mayor was very supportive and allowed the team to do children's programmes and home visits, directing them to needy homes and sending the local social assistant with them - who thus also heard the message the team brought, and even supported it, telling the visited families to listen to the message and confirming its truth. In the neighbouring villages Șipca and Lipceni the reception was similar, though these places have no local believers at all. As the team approached local authorities to introduce themselves and ask where they could set up their tents, in both villages they were given the court of the town hall as their camping site, with the local police guarding them at night.

After their introductory talk with the mayor in Lipceni, the team saw a boy on a bicycle and invited him to the programme later that afternoon, also telling him to bring his friends. "I will bring 30 children," was his reply. The team liked his enthusiasm, but did not take him quite seriously. Having had around 20 children in previous villages, the team expected up to 30 children, but anyways prepared for 40. As they went round the village to invite others, they did not see many children, but all they met already knew about the programme and when the time came, 70 children showed up - though the team had actually told only one single boy! And not only that, but many of their parents had come as well and everybody - children and adults - listened attentively as the team shared the gospel.



Walking into the unknown

Vasile (Vasea) has been part of the OM Moldova team since February 2012. Most of this time he was part of various Local Ministry Teams (LMTs), living and serving in small village communities in different regions of Moldova. Now he will be leading our new LMT in north-eastern Moldova, the least reached area of the country.

How did you come to be in missions?

I came to faith at age 17, coming from a family that was traditionally Orthodox but without true faith. In 2011 I attended OM's 'Challenge into Missions' course, where I realised how many people have no way of knowing God. I could not simply stay indifferent and as I spent time in prayer, I understood that God has a calling for me and that I want to serve Him.

What does your family think about what you are doing?

My father did not at all understand why I decided to not make money and pursue a career, but instead help and serve others. I think he considered me insane, but in the end he said that it's my own decision. Now my parents don't cause any problems for me, but neither do they support me.

Almost your entire time with OM has been spent serving in LMTs - what do you like about this ministry?

What I like most is the possibility to be in close contact with the local people, to talk and build relationships. I really like youth ministry - to spend time with them, disciple them and win young people for Christ. I also enjoy visiting people, helping them in practical ways and so be able to speak into their lives.

What has been challenging for you?

Every place had its own unique challenges. At first the biggest one was language, as I only knew Russian, but was serving in Romanian-speaking villages. Working in teams of different cultures and personalities brings a lot of challenges as well.

How have you yourself grown over these years?

I have grown in my walk with God - through seeing Him and experiencing His faithfulness - and in character. I've become more disciplined and have gained experience in ministry, e.g. in youth work or growing in confidence to initiate contact with people. I have also started to grow as a leader - but I am still very much in the process of growth.

How do you feel as you look ahead to this new LMT?

On one hand I am really excited, seeing a wide open door. People seem open and especially the mayor is happy to work with us. Her goodwill can also open up other possibilities like going into schools. On the other hand there are many things I don't know: It will be different from my previous experiences in that there is no local church in the village, or that I will be the leader from the start. I do not know how people will receive us, or what will be the attitude of the local orthodox church. There are challenges in the team, e.g. not having a common language everyone is confident in using. As a leader I can't just hide from challenges and I need a lot of wisdom to relate well to my team, to OM, our partnering church, people in the village etc.

How did you react when being asked to lead this LMT?

In a way I expected it, as I heard it spoken of by others as a fact before I was even asked by our leaders, but my main concern was to see how God was leading, and as I received confirmation from Him, I accepted this role. I am very much aware that it's a huge responsibility, but I want to grow in it and to be effective.

How do you find strength when you feel overwhelmed?

I find a quiet place to meditate and pray and read the Bible - God encourages me a lot through His Word. Sometimes I also need to talk things through with a person I trust.

Do you have a favourite Bible character?

Timothy: his faith and character and how he grew in ministry as Paul took him alongside and Timothy watched and learned. It is great to read the things Paul says about him. Another example is Daniel: his faithfulness to God and complete integrity: people looked for something to accuse him of, but couldn't find anything - a wise man, a man of prayer and not ashamed of his faith.

In your opinion, what qualities make a good leader?

Integrity and a good relationship with God; also being servant-hearted and able to communicate; the ability to see ahead, having a vision and sense of calling and a passion for the work.

What would you like to ask people to pray for?

I need wisdom in all the decisions I need to make and to grow as a leader and servant. Pray that I'll grow in my relationship with God and be led by His Spirit. Please also pray for the team I am responsible for, as we begin this new ministry.



Moldovan OM workers like Vasile need people to carry them in prayer and to support them financially. Would you consider contributing financially to help a national worker remain in ministry? Financial support should be sent to your local OM office, designated for "national workers, Moldova" or a specific person: "Vasile Popileasco, Moldova".



An invisible fight

Is it ok to sell your body if this helps your family to survive? Sadly this sort of question is a reality for the girls who attended our camp in July, as part of our ministry among children at a high risk of being exploited, abused and even trafficked. At this camp 110 girls aged 9-17 received social education and Bible teaching; joined in arts, crafts, games and competitions; enjoyed a swimming pool, trampolines and a zip line - and more basic things they also usually lack: their own clean bed to sleep in, a flushing toilet, a working shower and regular mealtimes - multiple times per day.

The camp gave them time to be free, just to be girls, to feel loved and to learn about a heavenly Father who loves them and can restore their broken lives. As the week progressed, relationships formed and trust was built, the girls began to open up. Stories unfolded that were just unbelievable and you could see a battle in the girls' hearts: God was clearly at work, yet the hold of darkness was powerfully felt as well. When the gospel message was presented on the last night, about half of the girls accepted Christ for the first time. Becky, the leader of this ministry, shared that during that time she had felt a great urge to go outside and pray. "I was the leader of the camp, responsible for the team, the programme - but I felt these few minutes of prayer had been my real job," she said afterwards and added, "We will have no success in the things we can see, if we do not fight in the areas we can't see."

The battle for the girls' hearts continues: God has planted seeds in them, yet as they have returned to their desperate situations you wonder what will become of them. What will happen to the 11-year-old, whose parents work abroad with no plans to return to Moldova, whose older brother has just left as well and who now faces a life where she is the caretaker of herself, her two-year-old brother and their home? What will happen to the 16-year-old dating a 25-year-old man who says he's going to help her find work abroad - more than likely turning into a case of human trafficking? What will happen to the girls who so desperately want to escape the violence and abuse at home that they would take any opportunity to leave? What will happen to the girls who have been told their only value is in their physical beauty and have learned to use that to get what they need or want?

Get involved:



Pray for our ministries
or



Give towards a project
or



Go - join a programme:

Love Moldova (2 weeks)
MDTe³ (5 months)
Global Action (2 years)

We're looking for people to join us mid- & long-term! Current needs include:

- a married couple to provide **Pastoral Care** for our team
- a **professional accountant** willing to serve long-term
- a **videographer** to help promote our vision and ministry

[Contact us for more information!](#)

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Love Moldova 2018



Love Moldova A: 10-23 June: Village, Construction, Trekking
Love Moldova B: 30 June - 13 July: Village, Construction, River, Camps (Girls/Boys)
Love Moldova C: 16-29 July: Village, Construction, River, Cycling, Mission by Faith
Love Moldova D: 5-18 Aug: Village, Construction, Trekking, River, Go4Adventure

Contact your local OM office for more information or to sign up!

