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18th Report about our ministry amongst abandoned children in Romania

The association " Samariteanul Milos" (The Good Samaritan) in Ghimbav/Weidenbach near Brasov/Kronstadt in Rumänien/Siebenbürgen provides homes for three families in two houses, with 17 children at the moment, some of whom come from the streets, and some of who were abandoned by their parents.

Dear friends and supporters of our work,

"Yes, I'd like to cut back a bit. But once you've started, it's not that easy to stop!" This is how a man from Bavaria explained his work with gypsies in Romania. I had to laugh, because this also applies to our work here.

Our association was founded and the land was bought 13 years ago, and one year later, the first children arrived with us. How much has happened since then! There have been difficult times, sad times, wonderful times and encouraging times. But the overwhelming feeling throughout has been one of gratefulness. Gratefulness for God's faithfulness, for your support through prayer, suggestions, work, visits and financial donations. We have never taken it for granted that God would bless us through you.

The most important points in brief – a review of the past year:

At the start of the year, we had 19 children in two houses.

The children have, on the whole, developed well. The five teenage children, who had gone off the rails a little, partly due to our absence because of Gotthold's illness and death, have begun to make good progress again. Anyone who deals with children of this age knows the problems that can arise. Most of the children are still suffering because of their difficult past, but they don't talk to us about it. All of them are still going to school, from special school through to high school.

45 children from Block 14 in Codlea continue to come every day for tuition from a retired teacher employed by us. They receive a sandwich and yoghurt as an incentive.

Families with social difficulties, with 30 children in total, along with others in need, receive food packets and other support every week.

In Dumbravitsa, the literacy programme for gypsy children has been taken over by the schools authority. We only continue to support the particularly needy families.

As in previous years, young people came to do some of the practical work here for us in the scope of the Protestant Programme for School Work in the Rhineland.

Katharina Hess and Daniel Deneu, volunteers with the "Peace Service", returned to Germany in August after their helpful year of ministry here. To replace them, Thomas Kirch has arrived with us. He can work in lots of different areas, and is much appreciated by everyone here, as were his two predecessors.

In October, we received a Certificate of Honour from the youth welfare office in Brasov to mark our 10th anniversary, recognising the successful cooperation we have with them. This specifically mentions our employees and sponsors. I am delighted to pass on this thanks to you.

We had many visits from Germany, which did us a lot of good. Unfortunately, I could not devote myself to our visitors as I would have liked to because of the demands of the work here.

On the general situation in Romania:

The consequences of drought and floods have not yet been overcome. Many small and agricultural businesses are now prevented from selling their products freely, because they do not meet the EU requirements. The cost of living has risen faster than salaries. Electricity and gas prices are now at the same level as in Germany. Many people are frustrated and desperate. Those who are able to emigrate abroad and send money back home do just that.

The ADZ (Allgemeine Deutsche Zeitung, a German newspaper) estimates that, alongside many others, the parents of approximately 40,000 children work abroad and leave their children with relatives or at home alone. In the last two years, 18,000 babies have been left at birth clinics. Most of the mothers were younger than 22, and unemployed.

Most of the population are unable to keep up with prices. Some of those affected are normal families, but most are families with lots of children, the elderly, infirm and the outcasts of Romania, the gypsies.

Where do your donations go?

More than half the money we receive is spent on the children's home: salaries, extra labour costs, food, clothing, electricity, gas, water, education and so on. As of January 1st, we no longer receive rebates on VAT. The extension of the roof storey is now almost finished. The fitted furniture for this came mostly second-hand from Germany. The money which is not needed is initially saved. We incur further costs for homework help and school meals for the children from Block 14 in Codlea. Half of the food costs are covered by the Dutch organisation EZRA and a German sponsor. Last but not least, we continue to support individuals in need and families in, amongst other places, Dumbravitsa.

Our Children

On the personnel front: the mothers of our three groups each have two employees and work in shifts. Alois Bogdan and Relu, caretaker and joiner, are working on the expansion of our attic in the woodwork room and take on small external jobs. Geta Radu is our accountant, Dan Bolen works part time as a psychologist and Cristina is working as the secretary until Mihaela comes back from maternity leave.

Emma's Family:

Emma and Dan live with their own children Timo, Ruben and Matias and their four adopted children - Jonuts (18), Banu (18), Radu (17), and Roxana (16) – together in the Casa Noua at the other end of the village. The children have developed well, thanks to Emma's consistent leadership, but are not yet able to support themselves. Jonuts is always happy and is still going to vocational college. He spends some time working for a Dutch firm in the next village. Banu, on the other hand, worries a lot. He enjoys doing his cooking and confectionery course and shows the others how to set and arrange the table and serve food nicely. Radu has got himself back on

track, goes to high school and works hard. Roxana is learning how to be a hairdresser and plays to almost a professional level in a basketball team. She is constantly being selected for elimination games at the moment.

Sanda's Family:

With ten children, five of which are going through their adolescent years, her group was probably the hardest. The 20 year old Corina recently moved back in with her mother, 19 year old Mihai back to his father. We are continuing to support them financially for three months, and then they have to fend for themselves. The relationship we have with them is still close, as it is with the older children in Emma's group. They come to visit us every week. Traian and Alex (both 18) remain with us, although Alex will probably leave at the end of the year, because he just does not fit in, and plays truant from school. David is doing well at the moment. The girls, Mioara (17), Monica (15), Enikö (14) and Ana-Maria (11) are making good progress. They are open and we can talk about everything with them.

Noemi's Family:

The family with the five Jocz children has become ever more stable under Noemi's good leadership. Cristina (11) and Reli (7) are the best in their class. Stefan (9) is an inquisitive boy, full of joie de vivre. The twins Ildiko and Andrei (10) are hyperactive and are being treated medically. Both have difficulties at school. The siblings health has greatly improved, and they have developed a huge appetite.

This year, there were not the usual holiday programmes for the young people, firstly because of the costs, and secondly, because we wanted to encourage them to work for a different firm. They had to learn the way of the world outside the confines of the home – and indeed, they all learnt something. Most of them could continue to work where they spent the holidays, earning money for their own bank account. Most of them worked on building sites. Corina ironed for eight hours a day at a chemical cleaners.

We are very thankful that all the mothers have good and loyal employees, who are on the same wavelength as them.

Further Projects

Family and Social Help:

We help with basic food provisions and clothes, which Emma distributes to those in need every Tuesday. In addition, we also help with money, which is donated to specific families by personal sponsors. In two cases, we were also able to help with furniture and bed linen. When necessary, we help with costs for prescription medicines and (in consultation with the doctor) doctor's fees. In rare cases, where great injustice has been perpetrated, we engage a lawyer. We keep tabs on the situation via the local town halls.

The School Project in Codlea:

This year, we were given a smaller classroom in the school. Mrs Balu is in Italy for three months, where she can earn more money. Mrs Rusulets is working in her place. Whereas 45 children came previously, 60 came last week, which was simply too many for her. We have to set a limit at the 45 children from Block 14. The school is hard and still operates according to the old system. The extra help is therefore very welcome. The children like to come, because they appreciate the

peaceful and friendly atmosphere. In comparison to this, everything at home happens in one room: the parents and up to eight children live, cook, eat, sleep, wash, talk and argue with one another, the television is on from morning to evening. One extreme example is Larisa P., a quiet, inconspicuous child who lives with her mother, her fourth stepfather and six siblings in one room. The situation is dangerous. One of her stepfathers left the family with Larisa's 19 year old sister. Larisa is, despite everything, a good pupil and, with Mrs Balu's help, has a real chance of completing school.

Dumbravitsa:

German children used to sing the song „Lustig ist das Zigeunerleben ...“ (“The gypsy life is fun...“). But it is clear that it is no fun at all, when one sees the serious and old children's faces on their trip to the convent.

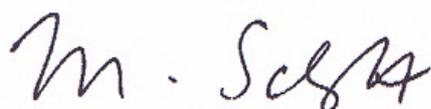
The school authority took over the literacy course for the gypsy children and employed a social worker. We therefore wanted to withdraw, but because of the need of an extremely poor family, we decided, in consultation with the leadership of the Swiss children's home in Ghimbav, to continue the material support and share the costs. The course continues to be led by a retired teacher.

With our help, the Mondoc-Motca family's little house was cleaned. The well is extremely helpful, and is also used by the neighbours. The father is working in Italy, and we hope that the family's financial situation will gradually improve. We continue to help provide daily bread and a weekly food package. The children all go to school.

I often wonder what I did to deserve to grow up so privileged? The people here are simply thrown into a world which they have not chosen. How little we can do for them! And yet, even the little that we can do is the seed for a harvest that we cannot yet see. My desire is that God multiplies their gifts and blesses them.

I hope that you and your family had a wonderful Christmas, and wish you a happy and blessed new year for 2008!

In the name of the children and workers and everyone who you help, as well as the Scheytt Foundation, I thank you for your support.



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