

November 2008

19th Report on our work with abandoned children in Romania

The organisation "Samariteanul Milos" (Good Samaritans) in Ghimbav near Brasov in Romania is home to three groups in two houses. There are currently twenty one children there, some of whom came from the streets, others who were abandoned by their parents.

Dear friends and supporters of our work!

"We must be patient!" This is written in large letters on sheets hanging all around our house David, aged 16, dedicatedly put this message onto one sheet. There is a lot of truth in this notice, because the work here requires patience from us and from the children. It is very rare that success comes quickly, so we have to work with long term goals in mind. The children entrusted to us, some of whom have a very traumatised past, need healing. This can only happen through devotion, stable relationships and through God's work in their lives, and these things usually take time. We are prepared to take this time and continue to work patiently.

Picture right:

Some of the children in the garden.

Below: a woman from the neighbourhood teaches the children to paint beautiful pictures.



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A summary of the situation

The economic situation in Romania continues to be dominated by many foreign investments and the emigration of Romanian nationals. Only certain sections of the population are benefiting from the slowly improving economic situation. The difference between rich and poor with regard to material wealth is getting bigger and bigger. Utility prices have risen further and are now approaching similar levels to prices in Western Europe, without any significant increase in salaries. Families with lots of children, the elderly and unskilled workers who have badly paid jobs often live in very difficult conditions. We sometimes find it difficult to imagine how they make ends meet. The number of abandoned children is by no means decreasing; we are still receiving requests to take in children.

There have been several changes to ASM in Romania:

We now have 21 children in three groups.

Sanda's group initially became smaller when Alex and Traian left to live with relatives, but has now grown thanks to the arrival of five new children. The group moved into the newly converted attic in the yard this summer.

One boy joined *Noemi's group* with the five siblings.

After almost 13 years as mother of our very first group, *Emma* has now given this role up in order to live privately with her husband and three children. Our caretaker, Alois Bogdan, now lives on the ground floor of this house (Casa Noua). On the first floor, there are currently three boys living in a sort of supervised flat share.

Our carpenter, *Relu*, moved to another firm after finishing the work in the upper floor. Thomas Kirch, a very versatile Peace Corps volunteer, was a valuable colleague and a friend for the children. *Lukas van Husen* has joined us this year and has similar qualities. He has already become indispensable. Our heartfelt thanks to all three!

In *Caty*, we have a very capable office worker who has expertise in legal, financial and bureaucratic matters and who can deal confidently with the authorities. She has now become director so that *Maja* can concentrate more on the management of the home.

The *school project in Codlea* has finished. The government have started their own development programme, meaning that we could pull out of the food and homework programme.

The work with the *Roma in Dumbravita* has, in contrast, grown in size. Together with another children's home in Ghimbav, we now provide up to 150 people with bread and help to meet their most pressing needs.

We also continue to support needy families and individuals in Ghimbav.

Our Children



Sanda's Group

The conversion work in the attic of the yard is finished, and the flat looks great, with five children's rooms, two bathrooms, a living room and a big kitchen. We are delighted that the work is finally finished after over four years and that everything went well. Many, many helpers supported us with practical help, and finances – *many thanks to you all!*

Sanda has now moved into the attic with her group Alex and Traian have left the group and live with relatives. Radu has temporarily moved to Sanda's group from Emma's group. He is not quite ready to move into the supervised flat share in Casa Noua. After a long wait, we have now taken in new children.

Picture left: Sanda's Group.

*Picture right:
four of the "newcomers" (l – r): Oana, 11,
Lenutsa, 9, Ionuts, 9, Casandra, 12. Not
pictured are Alexandru, 13, and Cristian, 8.*



Lenutsa is one good example. *Lenutsa's* father abandoned the family and her mother got together with a new man. Both are unemployed and without a place to live. *Lenutsa* was therefore their most precious possession because she could beg, thus bringing in the family's only income. The police picked her up and she ended up in hospital, where she was treated for severe skin complaints and parasites. She had also been abused and was afraid of her mother and her boyfriend. *Lenutsa* is very reserved, shy and nervous. If you stroke her when she's not expecting it, she flinches away. Most of the time, she remains in the background and waits until its her turn. Change makes her nervous. She is slowly coming to trust us and beginning to seek affection. Recently, she came over to me (*Maja*) of her own accord and gave me a kiss. She then ran away quickly and smiled at me from a safe distance. Some time ago, she visited her friends in the transition home and told them how nice it is in Samari-teanul. All of them wanted to come to join us too!



Noemi's group:

Cristina, aged 12, is the oldest, and *Reli*, aged 8, the youngest of the five siblings. They are developing well and have become quieter on the whole. *Cristina* and *Reli* are doing very well at school, but the twins, *Andrej* and *Ildiko*, continue to have problems. *Stefan* turned 10 this year and is still a happy and lively boy. After a complicated start at school last year, he seems to be more settled there this year. At the end of October, *Alexandru* (aged 13) joined the five siblings.



Noemi's group, here with Ramona

Emma's Group – now an external group for older youngsters:



Emma's „old“ group

Emma, who has been the mother of our first group since 1995, has now finished working with us. She now lives with her husband, *Dan*, and their three sons in *Codlea*. She has wanted to live separately with her family for years, and this year was the right time for this. *Roxana* (aged 15) stayed with her. The older boys who are not yet adults have moved to our yard and have joined *Sanda's* group. *We want to say a big thank you to Emma and her family.* For many years she has loyally offered a home to the children here. The *Casa Noua*, the house where *Emma's* group lived, is now occupied by our caretaker and his family. The three older boys, *Ionuts*, *Marian* and *Banu*, who are all still at school or in training, are now living on the first floor. They receive money for living costs, pay a small amount of rent and thus have the opportunity to become more independent, step by step, in this supervised flat share project.

The Project in Dumbravita

“Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again.”

This verse from Ecclesiastes 11:1 is very fitting for our work among the Roma. We believe that by serving these people, we are not only giving them help in the short term, but also with long term consequences for the children, that they can lead a better life. Together with another team from *Ghimbav*, we are currently supporting 32 of the poorest families with approx. 100 children. *Mrs Serbanescu*, a retired teacher, coordinates the work on site together with the local social worker and school. The hall of her house looks like a charity bring-and-buy sale. There are clothes, shoes, games and bed linen stored there. In special cases we offer our help too, for instance with used furniture or building material. We pay the court costs for missing documents and even run a family planning programme. We give cautiously and for specific cases, always where the family is also prepared to help. It is important for us that they are also prepared to do their share of work.

Four families were able to leave the programme because they are now able to support themselves.

The best idea is our *bread adoption* scheme. Every family can pick up their daily bread from a local shop. In this way, we gave out 5000 loaves of bread in the last year. The condition is that the children go to school or kindergarten every day. If a child is absent without good reason, there is no more bread. This has an immediate effect, and we therefore have a high rate of success.

Mrs Serbanescu was recently able to organise a kindergarten group for 25 of our Roma children. Teachers and a room were financed by the school authorities. We helped with the necessary materials. 25 children came to the opening day, with more nerves than excitement. The biggest highlight for most of them was the toilets, because some of them had never seen one before. One child even washed their hands in the toilet bowl!



Mrs Serbanescu in the midst of some of the children

Family and Social Help

Our help is directed specifically at the ill, the elderly and families with lots of children. For example, an 84 year old man comes to our yard every day and receives a warm meal and daily groceries. We also pay for medicine and heating, because he receives a pitifully small pension. Another example is a 30 year old woman with two children. She is suffering from breast cancer. Her husband divorced her and took the two children. He doesn't have to pay her any money at all. We help her by talking to her and praying for her, and by paying treatment costs and her electricity and gas bills from time to time.

We could write a lot more; we could do a lot more. I would like to close with excerpts from a poem by Archbishop Oscar Romero from El Salvador that gives me comfort in my imperfection:

*"The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts,
It is beyond our vision
We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of
The magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
We plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,
Knowing that they hold future promise.
We lay foundations that will need further development.
We cannot do everything
And there is a sense of liberation realizing that.
This enables us to do something,
And to do it very well.
It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way,
An opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest."*

On that note I want to express my heartfelt thanks to you all for your help in many ways in working on "God's new world". Your thoughts and support in the form of prayer, practical help, visits and finances help and encourage us every day. May God bless you for this.

With best wishes on behalf of all those working for the foundation and the team, the children and those in need,

Thise M. Scheytt

P.S. Information material

We now have our own website with comprehensive information about the work of the Scheytt Foundation and the ASM. The address is www.scheytt-stiftung.de. If you wish to present our work to other people you know, we can provide you with a Powerpoint presentation free of charge. We would also be happy to come to present the work in person, but this is only really possible in Northrhine Westfalia, Germany.