

# Hands of Hope Spring 2011

## Christmas 2010

We were out most days in the run up to Christmas, distributing firewood, food parcels & shoe boxes. Some of the boxes we took to schools on behalf of the Dorohoi based charity "Hope for Children International". The joy & smiles of children opening shoe boxes and taking delight in the contents, was a gift in itself to us. Tooth paste and toiletries welcomed with as much excitement as toys and sweets. We know that for many, they would be the only presents the children would receive.

Many of the families we visit live in remote villages and often are at the end of the line for aid. Some of these families are still living in temporary modular containers after losing their homes in the floods of June 2010.

In one village school we visited every child in a class of 20 had either one or both of the parents working or trying to find work abroad. For some families this works and they are able to gain a regular income. For others it is a disaster. Can you imagine how it would feel to get a job but at the end of the first month of hard work you are given the sack and told that they cannot pay you for the work you have done. People are then left with no cash to send home or get home!



## Cobila Families



share these people's lives.

Cobila is the village where 6 of the 15 homes either built or funded since 2003 are situated. These 6 houses are homes for 38 people. A good sense of community has developed within these families, especially apparent after the floods last summer when they all worked together. They work together to farm the land behind the charity houses, growing food for themselves and their animals and sharing the crops between the families. The cow and goat also give milk which is shared.

As a community they joined together in December (the day before we left to come back to IOM for Christmas), to plan a surprise for us. As we were about to start one of the children's activity sessions they came to sing carols and recite poems for us. It is such a joy and privilege to

Employment is scarce and many of the families only have their child allowance for income (approx £12 a month per child). Food and Fuel prices in Dorohoi are rising all the time, with many basic items costing the same as in the Isle of Man. We encourage the families to try and make a budget but it is so hard for them.

IF you only had money to buy ONE of these which would you choose.

- Fuel to keep your family warm when it is snowing and minus 10 C outside
- Food for your family of 7 (the cupboard is bare and for the past few days all you have eaten is mamaliga/polenta- corn meal cooked with water)
- New school exercise books (if the children do not have the right type of book they cannot do the lessons)
- New shoes as your oldest son is going to school with holes in the sole of his shoes
- Medication for your teenager daughter who has extremely bad acne and is being teased at school.
- Pay bus fare (60p a day return) for your child to get to school, so they do not have to walk over 2 miles in the dark and snow.

Thank you for your support & generous donations we have been able to fill some of these gaps for the people at Cobila and other families we help around the county of Botosani.

## Children's Centre

Over the past 7 years we have built a strong relationship with the Star of Hope foundation and in particular the group which is based in Dorohoi. The day centre for children with special needs has enabled children to develop and in some cases be integrated into main stream schools. Without this facility the children (aged 2-22) would probably be kept at home all day or given up into institutions. We have seen the children transformed over the years, progressing from being unable to sit at a table and take part in the simplest activity to being able interact with the other children and undertake a wide variety of activities.



The parents have also benefitted and have formed a parents association. They support each other; provide a united voice when trying to improve conditions for their children.

Ruth has been invited by the mothers to join with them for the group support sessions which have set up. They meet regularly and the social worker who manages the children's centre leads the group. It has been a joy to see how this group has developed and how much they support and encourage each other. Recently another sponsor from UK has provided Romanian translation of a Christian study resource "Calm my anxious heart" by Linda Dillow. The parents are all finding this book an inspiration and it is helping them to cope with the situations they face daily.

## House builds

The foundations are ready and the house build will start in May when James and the team arrive. They will be with us for a week and in that time it is hoped that we will have a watertight structure (walls, roof, windows and a wood burning stove-soba). The rest of the build will be finished over the summer ready for a new family.

## Flooding

In June 2010, many people lost their homes due to the flood which swept through Dorohoi and the surrounding area. 8 months later, a few have moved into new homes but over 100 families are still living in the container modules either in the town or surrounding villages. Signs of spring are here in the Isle of Man but in Dorohoi there is still thick snow on the ground and night time temperatures of -12C forecast. Many of the families who have moved into new homes are struggling to afford the higher rents and heating costs in the new homes.



*Thank you for your support from fundraising, prayer and encouragement without which the work of Hands of Hope could not continue.*

Hands of Hope is a Manx registered charity (no. 938) helping the poor and needy in Romania.

Trustees are Selina & James Vickers based in the Isle of Man and Ruth & Chris Baker home share between Romania & the Isle of Man.

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