

GOOD NEWS FOR ROMANIA



WHO WENT?

Lynda & Andrew Reid

Neil Prendergast (Youth Worker)

Mick Czajkowski (Builder)

David & Kath Richardson

VISIT TO BARLAD, ROMANIA – OCTOBER 2007

We arrived in a very wet and cool Barlad around 8am on October 23rd, tired and ready for a sleep, but eager to get on with the work we had gone to do. After a couple of hours sleep, we began sorting the goods kindly donated by GNFR supporters that had gone overland. We managed to sort things out into 'families' and were all ready for the off the next morning. Neil and Mick had come with us to see if they could help with the repairs on some of the poor families' homes. If they felt they could help, they would return next year with a group of young people, to 'do the work'

Our first call was to the **BAGU** family in Ghicani. Mum came out to greet us with a sad and worried expression on her face. We knew that her husband was very ill, but she told us that he had had a stroke, he had liver and kidney problems, and had now, because of his illness, sometimes turned violent. She told us that they had recently had to borrow over £400 to install electricity in the house so that, particularly during the night, they could put the light on if he got out of bed. They have tried to raise some of this money by selling their winter stock of food that they have grown, so they are now short of food for the winter months! We entered the small room where all the family lived and slept, which, although it was a grey day, was very dark. Four members of the family were just sitting looking very sad. **Oana**, who is 15, looked dejected, her head low. Mum switched the light on for us (they only use it when they have to because of the cost), and Dad, who is 50 and looks well over 70, was sat up in bed. Mum (who is 46 and also looks very old), told us that Oana was sad as she couldn't go to school now as she was too old for the village school. The high school is in Barlad and it would cost them £20 a month for transport by bus and she would need uniform and books. The small room was warm, but conditions could only be described as 'grim'. The roof of this room was repaired last year, but the roof on the rest of the house is virtually none existent. Mick and Neil felt the job of repairing this roof was too big a task for them and also, taking young people to that environment was a definite 'no go'. We just pray that money can be raised to help this family to hopefully make their living conditions better, we estimate around £1500 would be needed to repair the roof. Praise the Lord though, £20 a month has been given for Oana's bus pass and GNFR is providing the uniform and books for her. Claudiu is going to go into the school to make sure there will be a place for her this year; we pray this will happen as psychologically, Oana needs to be out of that environment as much as possible. **Simona** (12) was at school, so we went and collected her, she was delighted to see us and we were delighted to see her, still wearing clothes that GNFR had previously provided for her.

The home of **PANTEA** family in Miclesti was next. **Romica** (8) ran to greet us with a big smile on his face. What a joy it was to see him looking so well. Earlier this year, his mother, who had lost all her parental rights, went to the house when she knew Dad wouldn't be there and tied Romica to a bed, set fire to clothing on the floor, and left him to die. Fortunately, an elderly neighbour who helps the family, saw the smoke and rescued him. Shortly after this, he was seriously ill in hospital with a bad infection, but thankfully he recovered with medical help through GNFR. Dad now has a new wife and **Mihaela (7)** Romica's 'new sister', was really excited to see us too. Romica ran to get his father from his place of work and Dad told us how grateful he was for our visit. A number of improvements had been made on his home but again, part of the roof was a problem. Neil and Mick are optimistic that they will be able to help with repairs there, so next year, all being well, will see even better conditions for the family. Unfortunately, this family have no electricity now as it has been cut off and £250 is needed to have it reconnected a ridiculous amount of money that Mr Pantea cannot afford.

The two girls **Anna-Maria & Profira PANTEA**, were snatched by their mother earlier this year and they are still living in a gypsy camp, which is a definite no-go area; even the local policeman told Mr Pantea he should not go there as it's too dangerous. Their mother is in prison now for not paying debts and Dad is determined to try and get his daughters' back somehow, please pray!

It was also good to see **Andreea DURA** who is now 12, when she was 6 years old. GNFR paid for a bad turn in her eye to be corrected. Her sister **Georgiana** (9) was delighted to see us too as was her Mum. Their living conditions are 'ok' as they have a small apartment in the town, but life is still a struggle.

We went to see **Maria, Bogdan & Oana VICOL** in their tiny apartment. **Bogdan** (17) had been ill recently with a growth in his stomach but has recovered well. **Oana** (13) looked well and was delighted to see us. **Maria**, (Mum) was just coming back from town and was thrilled to see us. Again, life is still a struggle but they keep going as best they can.

Our next visit was to the village of **DEALU MARE**. We had been concerned about getting to the village as when it rains, the access road becomes very muddy and becomes inaccessible, and this was the case. We set off with a van full of goods for the families, only to find that we couldn't get up by car so we had to walk the last mile or so, what a walk! We carried as much as we could including a bike, and trudged through the mud. For us it was a 'one off', but for those poor families, this is a regular occurrence. On the way up, we saw **Madalina GUNCEANU** (12) who lives with her grandmother; she was on her way to school but was delighted when we showed her the gifts we had brought for her.

First of all, we went to see the **MUNTEANU** family and the **NEW CHURCH** built in the grounds of their home. All the family looked well and were thrilled to show us the new Church building which GNFR provided funds for, it is beautiful. The Church is finished outside now but they still need money for a small kitchen and toilet. The building is used not only for Church services, but for local community events as well. They told us that the Rosca children all come each Sunday now and other new people are coming too.

Next was the **ROSCA** family. They still struggle to survive in their tumble down home, how they survive there, we don't know. It still rains in and if it's possible to say, it looks worse than last time we were there. They were delighted to see us, we met **Oana**(8) coming with water from the well. They were thrilled with all the help given and now have the support of a sponsor each month through GNFR which helps them a lot. They were delighted to tell us that with the financial help from GNFR, they have now got the birth certificates for the children, so each month they have a small amount of money from the government to help with basic food needs, but life is still very hard. It has been a difficult year for them all, in May, Mr Rosca was knocked down by a car which didn't stop so he was ill for some time, and then in August, he asked a neighbour if he could borrow his horse and cart to go to the next village for something. When he got there, a man saw the cart and thought it had been used the week before in a robbery (maybe it had), so he got an axe, and hit Mr Rosca on the head twice, almost killing him. That man is now in prison for attempted murder, but Mr Rosca was in hospital for a few weeks recovering, his scars are horrendous, but he is fortunate to be alive! Claudiu talked to Mr & Mrs Rosca about the need to get a piece of land and get 'their own space,' hopefully making better living conditions for themselves. Mrs Rosca's mother and father live right next to their tumble down 'shack' and won't have anything to do for them at all. We found it really hard to accept that they can watch their grandchildren living in such 'dire, grim' conditions and do nothing, so we pray that the Rosca family can get some land. Under new EU legislation, poor people can go and ask for a small piece of land, there is no running water, electricity or anything, but at least it would be 'their' land. Claudiu is going to help Dad to hopefully sort this out.

Going to see **Margareta** who regularly helps the Rosca family with a hot meal was very sad. Her young grandson, **Andre**, (14 months old), who she cares for, has been diagnosed with leukaemia, and she herself has a growth on her spine so is in a lot of pain. It was hard to see her very upset as generally she is a strong lady; please pray for her and Andre at this difficult time.

We then called to see the **LUPU** family. **Viorica** (20) is a young single Mum with a baby of 11 months, and her Mum, **Victorita** also has a baby of 6 months. Their living conditions are not good either; it seems everywhere we go needs major repairs on their homes. Claudiu told us that he provides them with help which is made possible by GNFR.

Two of our 'nicer' visits were visiting one of the local high schools, **IORGURADU SCHOOL. NO: 1** where we were able to give the PE teacher a full set of football strips and a new football. The class he was taking at the time were all girls and they were more than delighted to put the strips on for a photograph, everyone was delighted and the teacher told us that this donation would be a great help and thanked us very much.

We also visited a local orphanage called **BETANIA** run by a German group. Claudiu works there in the workshops where they make metal fencing and other metal goods which they sell to help fund the running of the orphanage. It was a lovely place which is a number of small homes, with each home housing around 6 children and one member of staff to care for them. The children were all happy and were very obviously well cared for, it was lovely to see!

Overall this visit to Romania was quite difficult as you have probably realised by now and we all came back physically and emotionally drained. It is not easy putting into few words everything that happened, but we can say that every family was extremely grateful for the help we gave them. We were able to give each family, clothing, soaps, vitamins, shoes and money to help them, thanks to your wonderful support. When we asked the children who went on camp if they had a good time, without exception, they all smiled and said 'yes' and asked if they would be able to go next year. We will of course try to raise the money to ensure that they can. For these children, getting away into the country once a year, enjoying the fresh air, good food and lots of fun and laughter is vital, thank you to everyone who made this possible.

Claudiu & Ada ROSCA continue to be a wonderful help to us, any financial help given to GNFR is sent regularly to Claudiu so that he can buy food and goods needed for these poor families, the all year round help is very important, so thank you again to all of you that support us on a regular basis, it really is very much appreciated.

There are many changes in Romania now that they are in the EU, the roads and buildings are improving greatly, especially in the towns and cities, but for the poor families that we support, help is a long way off. One good thing is that hopefully next year, there are going to be a large number of school buses provided to give free transport to school for children like Oana who live in a village, this would help a lot.

Neil and Mick are now entering discussions about what practical help they can give to any of these families, but I think we can safely say that what they saw touched their hearts deeply and they want to help if they possibly can. We are very grateful to them for all their help and encouragement, if they can help only one family, then it will be worth it.

If you feel that you can help in any way at all, or you would like to ask any more questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you all very much; GNFR could not help these families and their children without YOU!

God bless you all.

David & Kath Richardson

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