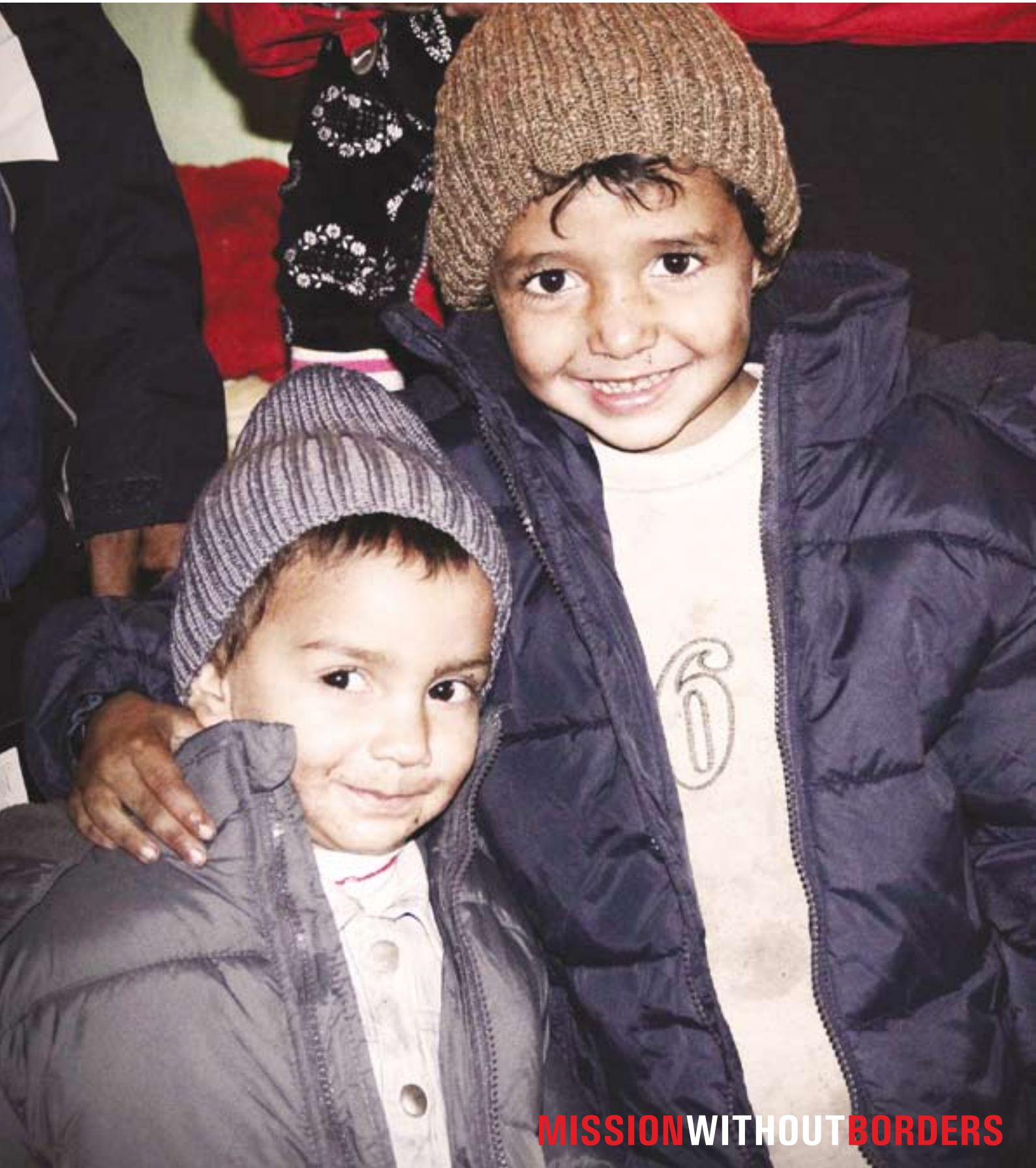


OVERCOMERS 2011

Annual Magazine of Mission Without Borders New Zealand



MISSIONWITHOUTBORDERS

Mission Without Borders is an international Christian organisation, founded in 1960, dedicated to serving the physical, emotional and spiritual needs of those suffering the effects of poverty or persecution.

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Ioan and Constantin, from a sponsored
Romanian family – see pages 3 and 15



A Word From the Editor

“In the Mission, we are in the hope business: passing on the Good News that God is here and active; change is possible; that no one need be alone.”

Dear Reader,

Life is seldom easy. As a nation, we in New Zealand have suffered some tremendous setbacks in recent times, with earthquakes, a mining disaster, a plane crash, and finance company collapses, to mention a few. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones or who are hurting in any way.

Our field countries in Eastern Europe have also suffered, although it rarely makes our NZ news. Floods, huge snows in winter, flu epidemics, financial downturns and high unemployment, price increases of food and fuel, political unrest. But prevalent is one social disease that we do not have to face in New Zealand: despair. Despair leads to personal lives and families falling apart.

In the Mission, we are in the hope business: passing on the Good News that God is here and active; change is possible; that no one need be alone. Hope is the antidote to despair. It comes when people see that change is possible. When Christians show love in practical ways that prove they care – because Someone Bigger cares even more. Enough, in fact, to have paid the price of all human hopelessness in one almighty act at the Cross. And by His resurrection, to have defeated death, the logical outcome of a life lived without hope.

You are part of the solution. You are a vital part of the Mission, giving time, goods, money or prayers. We can only do this work with your help and that of others like you. So thank you for all you give. Please know that this help is hugely appreciated, by the children and the young people like Claudiu (page 16), by the families like the Nacius (page 20) and the Sunjics (page 6), and by the elderly, the disabled, local authorities and State orphanage staff, and by our staff in our field countries (like Nicu in Romania – page 14).

As you read this magazine, you will see more of what you have been a part of by supporting this Mission. Be encouraged – the seeds that you have sown, have been sown into many lives. And the fruit and harvest will be great.

And may God richly reward you.

Andrew Wilks

Director of Mission Without Borders NZ

CAN YOU HELP A FAMILY LIKE THIS ONE?



A monthly payment of \$40 is all it takes to become a sponsor under our Family to Family (F2F) programme.

Your monthly payment will help bring the sponsored family:

- regular visits and support from a Mission coordinator;
- a monthly (at least) parcel of staple foods
- warm clothing, bedding and furniture
- access to medicines, vitamins, eyeglasses, dental treatment
- Bibles and Christian input
- school materials

As a sponsor, you are able to write to your family and to send them gifts (except to Ukraine) and to help with urgent needs. The aim is to help transform from dependency to self sustainability – a hand up, not just hand-outs.

We have several families waiting for NZ sponsors. It takes four sponsors to support one family. We would love to hear from you. Please call our office now on 0800 469 269 or email nzadmin@mwbi.org.

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Eastern Europe Update

Updates from around our six field countries

Here is a snapshot of the wider conditions in each of the countries we work in.



Albania

ECONOMY

Albania's economy continued to grow in 2010 but the country is still one of the poorest in Europe.

POLITICAL SITUATION

There is ongoing conflict over the results of the last elections. Parliament has not functioned properly. The current unrest is very unsettling. Local elections are to be held this year on 8 May. To qualify for EU membership, the country must show stability and satisfy a list of 12 criteria.

RELIGIOUS CLIMATE

Good news! The evangelical community has been given official recognition as a religious community in Albania for the first time since first applying in 1887! This is greatly encouraging for Christians in Albania.

Bosnia

ECONOMY

The fallout of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) has deepened the economic stagnation. A staggering 42% of the workforce is officially unemployed. The conflicts between Serbs, Muslims and Croats and dirty politics from all sides are causing a stranglehold on the economy.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

The 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement put an end to the three and a half year war in Bosnia that took the lives of more than 100,000 people and displaced 1.8 million. Local elections in 2008 confirmed deep ethnic divisions within the Balkan country. Families with three or more children, women, ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons, children with disabilities and the elderly remain particularly vulnerable. It is a difficult environment for the Mission to work in.

Bulgaria

ECONOMY

After three years of EU membership, Bulgaria is still one of the poorest countries in the EU. Only 11% of households bring in sufficient income to meet their living expenses (food, utilities, clothing, health and education). Around 636,000 people i.e. a third of employed citizens, belong to the category of 'working poor' (income insufficient to meet their everyday needs).

RELIGIOUS CONDITIONS

Evangelical denominations have been denounced as cults by the Orthodox Church. But humanitarian projects show the positive contribution of evangelical believers to their local communities. On this basis, our ministry in Bulgaria is effective because, in partnership with local churches, it targets the needs of the most vulnerable.

Moldova

ECONOMY

Moldova continues to be the poorest country in Europe. For tertiary students, tuition fees increased by 33% in 2010. Most students thought this spelled the end of their studies, but MWB was able to provide a scholarship for many that covered their tuition fees, school supplies and a living allowance.

In July, there was widespread flooding in Moldova where houses were inundated and fields decimated. MWB worked closely with the government to provide victims with food, clothing, blankets, shoes, beds etc. This was a great testimony to people of God's care.

The areas of biggest concern for citizens were the prices of food and utilities, compared to static or declining salary and government benefits. Increases included: sugar 20%, cooking oil 17%, petrol 32%, electricity 20% and gas increased a further 15% at the start of 2011.

POLITICAL SITUATION

In 2010, two parliamentary elections were held. The first was declared invalid due to the low voter turn-out. The second election saw an alliance of three democratic parties overthrow the communist party that had held power for ten years.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Many seek to leave the country in desperation to try to find work elsewhere. Most rural areas have lost more than half of their population to migration.

Romania

ECONOMY

Economic "reforms" took place in 2010: salary cuts, a VAT (GST) hike and rising unemployment. Government jobs were cut to try to avoid economic ruin. The first few days of 2011 brought even tougher measures: cuts in child benefits and big cost cuts in the health sector. The price of petrol and diesel rose a staggering 34% in 2010 and has drastically affected the Mission's work as we travel large distances in Romania to carry out our ministry. As of February 2011, staple items have increased dramatically in price once again: such as bread 15%, cooking oil 30%, sugar 10%, milk 10% and all other products a minimum of 5%.

POLITICAL SITUATION

The President has minimal credibility. There is a feeling that the political class in this country has managed to compromise not only the concept of free market capitalism, but even worse, the very idea of democracy and freedom in the eyes of the general public over the last 21 years.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

One reports suggests 80% of Romanians have now come to regret the death of Ceausescu and the fall of Communism. Today, an overwhelming majority of Romanians would happily trade their freedom for a decent, steady predictable livelihood.

Ukraine

ECONOMY

The majority of Ukrainian families spend 60% of their income on utilities and food. World market prices for grains and oilseeds have risen dramatically over the last two years. Ukraine's inflation rate stands at 16.1 percent and the cost of staple items like bread, eggs, meat, buckwheat and vegetables also increased by 20 to 70 percent.

POLITICAL SITUATION

Experts say that if a world food crisis eventuates, Ukraine has huge agricultural potential but has no appropriate agricultural policy framework. The Opposition has urged the government to draft a concrete action plan to protect the country from food shortages and rocketing food prices.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Over recent years, the population of the Ukraine has decreased by three million. Seven million Ukrainians work and earn money abroad. That means abandoned children, split families and despair. In addition, hospitals and prisons are overcrowded. Ukraine also holds the disturbing titles of being number one in the world for child alcoholism and number one in Europe for the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in adults. 500,000 Ukrainians are HIV positive.

RELIGIOUS SITUATION

Unlike most other European countries, our recent Jubilee Bible Project distributions have confirmed that we are free to distribute Children's Bibles in public schools. We are not sure how long this will last.



The Aftermath of War

Although Bosnia's war ended in 1995, its aftermath remains for the people. For some like the Sunjic family, the war still dominates their lives today. The wife and mother of that family tells her story:

"26 October 1998 was the happiest day of my life. On that day, I married the love of my life, Dragan. I was 19. By 2005, God had blessed us with three wonderful children: one daughter and two sons. Throughout those first years, my life was like a fairytale. My husband was employed and had a decent salary, and I stayed home, taking care of my children and looked forward to my husband coming home after work.

On 2 June 2006, my fairytale turned into a nightmare. My husband went to work, but never returned. He was arrested by the special investigation police on suspicion of war crimes. He was just 19 when the war started, but he was accused of something that he did not do. Our whole world collapsed. I struggled to find the words to tell my children why their daddy was not coming home.

Our first visit to Dragan in the prison was so traumatic. We were crying and holding each other with just one simple wish: to be together. When a prison warden came to take Dragan away, my children screamed, "Please don't take our Daddy away! Why can't we take him home?" I wouldn't wish something like that on anyone; not even my worst enemy.

We felt alone and abandoned. Many stood with us in the early days, pledging they would try their best for Dragan and our family. They made many promises, but they simply abandoned us. Before long, our eldest two children started school and my youngest son crawled and then walked. They couldn't share any of this with their daddy, making us feel like we were living at the edge of a chasm.

However, one day I was told there was an organisation that provided help to needy people, regardless of their nationality or religion. The name of the organisation was Mission Without Borders. Back then, I felt hopeless and I had lost faith in people and their promises. I sought out the Mission Without Borders office and spoke with the Family-to-Family (F2F) coordinator, Mira Pandza. She promised she would come to see where and how we lived and she did just that. Mira listened to me and helped me straight away. She was the first person I had trusted for a long time. She actually empathised with me and understood what I was talking about. Finally, my family had a helping hand from someone with a heart full of compassion.

We were offered food, clothes, furniture and other material things, and my children also had the chance to take part in activities such as an educational course for my eldest



“We were crying and holding each other with just one simple wish: to be together.”

daughter, playgroup for our younger children and Christmas parties at which my children received presents. We will remember that very first Christmas party for the rest of our lives. It was the first time since my husband’s absence that my children were able to go to a party and receive Christmas gifts. Mission Without Borders managed to put smiles back on their faces and helped them feel just the same as the other children in the neighbourhood.

The first Christmas parcel of food we received (an ‘Operation Christmas Love’ parcel from MWB) included a Bible and a book about Jesus’ life. To be honest, I didn’t read any of it and put it away in a drawer. Actually, I blamed God for all my problems and constantly asked Him, “What did I do to make You punish me like this?”

One day I was looking for something in the drawer where I had stored the book and the inscription at the front of the book made me pick the book up. I began to read. As I read about Jesus, I became aware of the fact that God is not unkind and uncaring. He is good and loves us. I took a further step. I began reading it carefully. In God’s Word, I found answers to my questions. I found out that we all have to bear our own cross and it’s up to us whether we bear it alone or let Jesus help us.

My life has changed over the past four years. We now go to church every Sunday. After church, we go to Sarajevo to visit Dragan (3 hours away). Every day I pray to God to help me with my burden and to guide me on the right

path. Mira and Mission Without Borders helped me regain my faith in God and to realise that there are good people and goodness in this cruel world.

I don’t have enough words to express my gratefulness to Mission Without Borders for all the support they have been providing to my family. I can only ask God to bless all the good people supporting Mission Without Border’s work, because without them we simply could not survive. I still bear my cross, but it’s a lot easier because I now walk every step with Jesus by my side. I know my problems will continue but I now know that this transitory life is only worth of living if it’s lived with the Lord. I cannot wait for eternity without all of this life’s struggles!

My husband Dragan, my first and only love in this world, is still in prison and waiting for a verdict. We are thankful to God that he is doing well both physically and emotionally. His faith is very strong and he hopes for a better future. He keeps telling us, “God willing, we will leave all of this behind us”. I agree with him. The dear Lord has blessed my family with good health, strong faith and the strength to live on, regardless of what this life throws at us!”

Dragan successfully appealed to the Court of Appeals against his conviction and 21-year prison sentence. A retrial was ordered.

PICTURES (from left): Marijela and her two younger children // Mira (MWB Bosnia) supporting and encouraging the family // Marijela outside her unfinished home



The Oasis of Summer Camp

One young Moldovan boy's experience

Vadim was an unwanted child, never knew his father and was abused by his alcoholic mother and her many boyfriends. The best he could hope for was a loaf of stale bread and to sleep outside in a barrel with the dogs – they were his only friends. Having never experienced love and care from another human being and only knowing eating scraps, his nickname among his neighbours was 'Mowgli', because he was incapable of proper speech, behaviour or manners. Starving, he began to beg. He was found at 5 years of age, hungry and abandoned, with a serious head injury after having been hit by a car.

State Social Services intervened and placed him in Orhei State Orphanage, in central Moldova. Vadim is now 11. The staff of the orphanage have put a huge amount of effort into helping Vadim recover from his tragic upbringing. "It was hard to change him. We needed a lot of patience to support him and to teach him good behaviour, rules, personal hygiene skills, normal eating and resting schedules, as well as having patience with him in the classroom," said Vadim's teacher, Mrs. Olesea Castravet.

When Vadim found out he had been picked to go to the Mission Without Borders Summer Camp, he was very excited! The day of the beginning of Summer Camp arrived. The bus trip seemed so long, he simply could not wait for the experience he had heard so many of his fellow classmates talk about. But it was even more wonderful than he could have ever dreamed of. Vadim and Mrs Natalia (his camp group leader and "Camp Mum") soon became fast friends. "At the start of the summer camp, Vadim seemed to be a shy child, but after a few days, he became friends with all the children in his group and now they are best friends. He openly told us his life story, about all the terrible things he had experienced. I could not find the right words to

encourage him. I just went up to him and hugged him. I started to pray for him and offer him as much of my love as possible," a moved Mrs Natalia recounted.

Summer camps are perfect for children like Vadim. They can forget their past, enjoy the present and hear of a Heavenly Father who will never leave or abandon them. What's more, they enjoy lots of fun, sport, craft and food. "The food is so tasty here. It is certainly tastier than what we receive in the Orphanage and I can't even remember my mum ever cooking me a meal. I love it here at camp and wish I could stay for the whole summer!" said an enthusiastic Vadim.

Mission Without Border's summer camps also offer spiritual food for the children. In the morning chapels they hear Bible stories taught to the children via drama and acting. Vadim says, "I love Jesus very, very much and I know He loves me even more. I know He watches over me and I can see He answers my prayers. Now I have been shown how, I love praying. I love my new Bible and have already reads lot of it. The book of Acts is my favourite."

Vadim's story is not an isolated case. Each year, children who are broken and downtrodden by abuse and neglect come to Summer Camp. Children from poor families join children from State orphanages. They receive love, care and have an amazing time and return home to their orphanage or families, changed. It is wonderful to see them bond together. Many friendships begin at Summer Camp and remain long after camp is over. You may never meet Vadim or many of the summer camp participants, but know they are so thankful for people like you, who have helped make their dreams come true.

PICTURES (from left): Vadim and friend // The food is great! // Praying in public // Reading his new Bible

A MESSAGE TO ALL THE OPERATION COVER UP CONTRIBUTORS FROM THE NATIONAL COORDINATORS...

Greetings Dear Friends,

Firstly, may we pass on our sincere sympathy to those of you who were badly affected by the recent earthquakes. Canterbury will never be the same again and many folk have been and continue to be traumatised by the aftershocks. It certainly is heartwarming to know that even during times of adversity, many still reach out to help and this is evident in the numbers who are joining OCU through the recommendation of others.

2010: Another great year has concluded for OCU. Our tenth year nationwide proved to be very worthwhile. We celebrated the anniversary in Rangiora with a special lunch and presentation from Mission Without Borders. Although nationally the numbers were slightly down in 2010 from 2009, Canterbury we broke all records by increasing its contribution by 4,803 items from the year before. **Total sent nationwide since 2001: Blankets 78,112 // Knitted garments 348,558**

As you can see from the above numbers, Operation Cover Up is truly blessed and has truly blessed thousands of disadvantaged children and poor families in Eastern Europe.

Special Projects: Canterbury also funded a sewing machine project for an orphanage in Moldova last July. The orphanage which received the help is in Moldova and I have now received a lovely thank you letter from the director. A new Special Project for carpentry tools was completed almost entirely from the proceeds of two soft toy sales which Mary Busch and her team held in Rangiora towards the end of last year. These projects are so worthwhile and can have life changing consequences for the children who are the recipients.

God bless you all as you continue to support this work

Maureen Braun – South Island Coordinator
Liz Clarke – National Coordinator



PICTURES (from top): Liz on a mountain of Canterbury blankets // Liz and Maureen cut the OCU 10th Year cake, Rangiora

Results Tally for OCU 2010

For those that like numbers, the quantities of OCU blankets, clothing and goods shipped to Eastern Europe in 2010 are below. This year, we had extra knitting that had to go into a third container with donated company goods the Mission was shipping, so in bulk, we shipped more in 2010 than ever before. Well done to all those involved: knitters, coordinators, counters and sorters, balers and packers, drivers, morning tea makers, shipping logistics – and everyone else who had a hand in this huge exercise.

Clothing - adult	1140
Linen - pcs	863
Clothing - pyjamas	711
Soft toys	995
Linen - pillows	61
Clothing - child	2674
Shoes - adult - pairs	266
Shoes - child - pairs	211
Sewing machine	1
Tools	9
Sewing aids	57
Sewing materials	156
Assorted items	344
Linen / hygiene	35
Bags	0
Toys	3513
Stationery	5296
Hygiene (toothbrushes, soap etc)	1979
TOTAL	88546

Types of Goods packed	Pieces
Knitted blankets	8034
Knitted cot blankets	2916
Knitted hats	14884
Knitted scarves	9540
Knitted pairs of mittens/gloves	2760
Knitted pairs of slippers/socks	7233
Knitted jerseys	9508
Knitted clothing - baby	15360

Getting involved

There is no need to knit by yourself if you don't want to! There are many knit and natter groups as well as annual gatherings and morning teas in many areas. Knitting patterns are now available through several of our knitting coordinators. They will be able to give you advice and ideas. Please contact one of the coordinators below to find out your nearest coordinator's name and phone number.

Funds for shipping costs

The Mission needs help to cover the costs of getting blankets, clothes and other donated goods shipped to Eastern Europe. These costs run to a few thousand dollars per container. As a guide, we ask for a donation of \$4.00 per blanket to help cover shipping and freight costs. Payment can be made in cash to your local coordinator, by direct deposit or online banking payment to one of the accounts of Mission Without Borders below, or by cheque to Mission Without Borders, PO Box 56264, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446.

Mission Without Borders OCU accounts:

North Island 06 0185 0122206 04

South Island 06 0185 0122206 05

Only Mission Without Borders can issue a receipt for tax rebates (for amounts greater than \$5.00). Please ensure that you can be identified from your online payment or provide evidence, such as a deposit slip stamped by the National Bank and your name and address details.

Contact details

North Island Coordinator

Mrs Liz Clarke Phone: 07 378 9171

Email: lizclarke@xtra.co.nz

South Island Coordinator

Mrs Maureen Braun Phone: 03 327 6413

Email: karlbraun@clear.net.nz

What is needed

The following list covers the most important items needed.

- **Knitted, crocheted and handmade items including:**
 - Blankets (see the suggestions box below for what is needed)
 - Jerseys – the older children, teenagers and adults are in greatest need. Patterns with a crew neck are most appropriate for the climate
 - Scarves
 - Bed socks
 - Patchwork quilts
 - Beanies
 - Knitted teddy bears
- **All sorts of items for sewing, embroidery, knitting and craft activities** – fabrics, knitting wool, knitting needles, sewing needles, buttons and fasteners, elastic, cottons and threads, etc. (for the Vocational Training courses as well as poor families and elderly who would love to sew or knit for themselves, but cannot afford the materials).
- **Bed linen, towels, personal hygiene items** like soap, toothbrushes and toothpaste, combs, hairbrushes, etc.

No "Aids Baby" or "Fish 'n' Chip Baby" jumpers, please - in Eastern Europe conditions they have only limited usefulness.

All donated items must be new, please, to comply with shipping and customs regulations. Thank you for your help and interest!

BLANKET SUGGESTIONS:

- 56 squares (8 down and 7 across) or 7 strips make a blanket.
- Squares are knitted on size 8 (4mm) needles. Cast on 40 stitches and knit 80 rows in garter (plain) knitting. This should make a 20cm square.
- Strips which are 160cm long are also a good idea, as this saves time when sewing up.



PICTURE: Some of Palmerston North coordinator Janet Wright's knitters "in stitches"



Visit to a Family Helped through OCU

Esther Paddon, a fit grandmother from South Canterbury, made an intrepid journey to Europe and Finland in 2010, and was keen to follow up on what happens to all the blankets and things that her friends knit for Eastern Europe. We put Esther in contact with our Romania office who, among other things, arranged to take her to see a family in our F2F sponsorship programme.

"I was in Sibiu, a city of about 155,000 in central Romania, in the European summer of 2010. I had made arrangements with folk from Mission Without Borders to visit their children's Summer Camps, but today they were taking me to meet a family who had been given blankets made by people in New Zealand.

I was told the house and the family the Mission took me to visit were typical of many in that town. I met most of the family, the mum and eight of the ten children ranging in age from two to seventeen years. Till recently the home had only two bedrooms but they had been given a special gift that had enabled them to build a third bedroom. The two oldest girls now had a room to themselves. They proudly showed me their room as if it was a palace. They had a grin from ear to ear.

As for the family, they were delightful and the little ones bursting with fun, happiness and smiles. I felt so privileged to meet them. And the blankets: they had about six of them all spread out on the back of the seats for me to see. I said the temps were high, it was the mid-summer. In winter, it is the reverse with temps sometimes down to -20 degrees! They would certainly be able to use those blankets. I don't know what kind of heating they have for the winter, but as I was going out, I saw the oldest boy, 17, was helping his dad to attach the insulation to the outside of the house and then do a rough plaster over it. This was paid for by another gift by their sponsors.

They are one of the lucky families. The dad brings home a basic wage and they get a small monthly allowance for each child from the government (US\$15.00 a month). Often in the last week before the government money falls due, the family purse is empty! They make do with basic supplies such as flour or rice, but there are no extras to add. It is not poor budgeting: they simply do not have enough money to last the month. You can live cheaply in Romania compared to New Zealand, but not that cheaply! One of the most important things I was able to see was how rigorous and careful the Mission is about aid going to the right people.

Maria (mum) had baked a cake especially for my visit and I felt guilty that they had used some of their precious money on me, but I know it was their way of saying thank-you to the Mission."

For more about Esther's trip to Romania and Bulgaria, please see page 19.

PICTURES (top): The two lively youngsters // Saying goodbye at the gate

A thank you letter from Romania



"Dear Sponsor,

My name is Anghel Cristina and I am at Beethoven school (a special School for the deaf) in Craiova.

Thank you for the blanket with dolls on it received from you! I like it very much. Every time that I see the blanket I think of you. I wish you lots of good health and the fulfilment of all your desires!

I love you!

Anghel Cristina"

PICTURE: Anghel's letter in Romania