Mission EAST
NUMBER 1 / SPRING 2008

Romania – Learning to live again
Armenia – New centre to help the disabled

FOCUS
Leading a hygiene revolution

Mission East - values in action
In Afghanistan, one in every four children dies before their fifth birthday. One of the main reasons is contaminated drinking water and poor sanitary conditions. Mission East provides poor villages with access to clean drinking water. The villagers receive education in how to protect themselves and their children by using clean water, remembering to wash their hands, and making sure food is prepared and stored using good hygiene practice.

Mission East is a Danish international aid organisation. We exist to deliver relief and development assistance to vulnerable communities with a primary focus on Eastern Europe and Asia. Based on Christian values, Mission East aims to support the most vulnerable, making no racial, political or religious distinction between those in need.

Mission East currently operates in Afghanistan, Armenia and Tajikistan, and we co-operate with local partners in Bulgaria, Romania and Nepal. The assistance offered by Mission East is supported by a range of private and public donors such as the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, EU and the United Nations.

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Armenia

– New childrens’ centre will provide the right treatment for the disabled

“It will pass.”

Too many parents have received this message when bringing their disabled children to the local doctor.

Romania

– Learning to live again

23-year-old Mateiciuc Ioan had no choice but to go to the mine from an early age to earn his living and to support his parents and four brothers. An accident changed his life forever.

Tajikistan

– New project will benefit farmers and the disabled

This month, Mission East will start a new project the main objective of which is to improve life for poor villagers in Tajikistan. 38,000 people will benefit from the help that includes agriculture training and support to women’s enterprise.
Our biggest challenge

In February I attended a meeting at the regional City Hall in Armavir in Armenia. The mayors of all 11 local project communities were present. It was an experience to witness their reaction when I presented our study of how many disabled children live in their area.

I showed them pictures of the many children that we have identified and visited in the mayors’ own local communities, and I appealed to them to take responsibility for this population group.

In just a few years, Mission East has achieved some great results in working for the rights of the disabled in the former Soviet republic, including a brand new law that gives disabled the right to an education. However, our greatest job is to convince the authorities to build on these results so there will come a time when our presence in Armenia isn’t required any more.

In cooperation with our partner organisations, we continue our work with children’s club rooms and the new Child Development and Rehabilitation Centre which you can read more about on pages 12-13. But the challenge is to convince authorities to make a great effort so that they will be able to take care of the country’s disabled long term, so that this large group of people no longer has to live in hiding at home but instead can have access to things like education and medical care, which will lead to acceptance.

You can contribute to creating an Armenia that sees the possibilities of the disabled instead of focusing on the things they can’t do. Your help is of great value.

Thank you for contributing to assisting some of the most vulnerable.

Kind regards,

Dr. Kim Hartzner,
Managing Director of Mission East

“Our greatest job is to convince the authorities to build on these results so there will come a time when our presence in Armenia is no longer required.”
“We had no idea why our children were dying”

Quarban Gul lost her son Omar when he was only three years old.

“We knew nothing about the importance of clean water. We used to bring water from the river, far away from the village and it was dirty. Sometimes, in the flood season we were forced to drink the muddy water. We were not aware of the consequences of drinking polluted water. Our children used to get sick. We had no proper treatment and they...
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Every week, 42,000 people die worldwide because they lack clean water or other sanitary facilities.

“No the situation has changed. With the help of Mission East we have built a water supply system and now we have access to clean water brought from a spring which is three km from the village. The Health Trainers of Mission East gave us knowledge about the importance of safe water, health and hygienic behaviours and how to prevent waterborne and excreta-related diseases. We have safe water and we know how to be healthy and now we are free from such diseases. There has not been a single incident of diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid after the completion of these activities in the village.”

35-year-old Abdul Mazid is happy about the new water system, latrines, and health education. Now his village experiences a lot fewer incidents of waterborne and excreta-related diseases: “Now we no longer suffer from typhoid, cholera and diarrhoea.”

On the next pages you can see examples of the drawings Mission East uses to teach the villagers about hygiene.

2008 is “The International Year of Sanitation”

Today, 2.6 billion people (approximately 40 percent of the world’s population) do not have access to latrines or any sort of basic sanitation facilities. To focus on this issue the UN has declared 2008 “The International Year of Sanitation.”

According to the UN, an estimated 42,000 people die every week from diseases related to poor water quality and an absence of adequate sanitation. Mission East has worked for the last 6 years to provide poor villages in Afghanistan with access to clean water, latrines, and education in the basic rules of good hygiene that many of us often take for granted. In 2008, Mission East will help thousands more families in Afghanistan get access to better sanitation.
These drawings tell the villagers to cover their food to prevent flies from infecting it with harmful bacteria that makes them sick.

“We were inviting common diseases with our unhygienic behaviour”

“We were not aware of proper health and hygienic behaviour, like hand washing, covering food, cleaning our home and surroundings, bathing and cleaning clothes etc. Because of our unhealthy and unhygienic behaviour, we were inviting these diseases. We did not have latrines and defecated around the house or inside the compound. It was a very dirty practice and we had lot of flies because of this. The flies later sat on our food and made us sick when we ate it,” says Quarban Gul.

This picture shows the importance of washing hands before eating.
This drawing tells the villagers the importance of washing hands after going to the toilet.

“We when the flies sit on your food they leave bacteria which make you ill,” is the message in this picture. Flies are one of the major causes of disease transmission as each fly spreads millions of harmful bacteria.

We often take our knowledge of good hygiene for granted. In many villages in countries like Afghanistan the villagers have no idea that contaminated drinking water or eating with dirty hands can make them ill.
Jam and Pickle bring hope to the poor

By Aziz Baig, Health Coordinator, Mission East Afghanistan

“It was extremely difficult to be both mum and dad to seven children.”

When 40-year-old Arab Gul lost her husband, Yusuf, in 2006, she was left alone with their five children and Yusuf’s son and daughter from a previous marriage.

“Being a woman, it was difficult for me to go out, work and earn money. I was really worried about the future, often despairing, helpless, hopeless and powerless,” says Arab Gul with an obviously gloomy expression on her face.

But hopelessness has turned to joy. Exactly one year ago, in March 2007, Mission East provided her with fertilizers, vegetable seeds and assistance to plant her own kitchen garden.

But fresh produce is seasonal in the province of Badakhshan in northern Afghanistan where Arab Gul lives. How was she to earn money during the winter months?

Badakhshan province is home to more than one million people. Here, apricots, apples, peaches, quinces and cherries grow in abundance for a few months of the year. But due to a short shelf life they are unavailable out of season.

Dried fruit production, processing of dried vegetables and jam making have the potential to provide producers...
Families survive winter thanks to dried fruits

With the support of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Mission East has initiated small scale food processing activities in the Baharak, Jurm, Warduj and Shohada districts of Badakshan in Afghanistan. Five hundred women who had already received thirteen types of vegetable seeds from Mission East were provided with one week of fruit drying and processing training. In addition to this training, food processing tools were also distributed among the women. The food processing project aimed to increase the value of crops for poor farmers, thus yielding higher returns, expanding marketing opportunities, improving shelf-life and overcoming seasonal and perishability constraints.

“Because of this training, I am now able to prepare different kinds of jam, tomato pastes, pickles etc., and can make better use of fruit and vegetables that were going to waste. I can now sell these products in the local market and earn an additional amount to support my ten family members,” says Sharifa from the village of Chapchi Yardar.

The girls in this picture are Arab Gul’s two daughters Sameera, 19, and Aziza, 16, who proudly show off the family’s products.
23-year-old Mateiciuc Ioan had no choice but to go to the mine from an early age to earn his living and to support his parents and four brothers.

One day, he had to repair something on a truck serving the mine. The truck was propped up on a piece of stone and a log. Mateiciuc was working underneath. It all happened so quickly. Without knowing or even imagining that somebody could be under the truck, one of his workmates moved the wooden log. In a flash, the truck dropped. Mateiciuc’s body was trapped half under the truck, breaking his pelvis. His piercing scream horrified his mate so much that he instantly fell unconscious.
Mateiciuc yelled for another half hour before somebody heard him. When a team of his colleagues gathered, having finally heard his cries, they found two people on the ground. One caught under the truck, and the other one dead from a heart attack.

**On the brink of suicide**
Six years of surgical operations and physiotherapy followed. The investigations at the company Mateiciuc worked for concluded that he was responsible for not obeying the safety regulations, so he received no financial support. He found himself, a young 23-year-old man, alone without money, with a poor family who could not support his physical disability.

Desperation overwhelmed him. Mateiciuc was on the brink of suicide. But he wouldn’t let the pain get the better of him.

As time passed, he taught himself to walk with crutches, throwing his legs forward. With the help of some friends he managed to build a house for his new family.

**Full of joy despite the situation**
Today, Mateiciuc is 42 years old. 15 years ago, he married Ana who suffers from arthritis in both legs. Together they have six children, between the ages of 1 and 13.

Due to the atrophy of his muscles in his lower body, the wounds are so deep that the bone can be seen. These could not be healed or treated except for at the plastic surgery section of the Clinical Hospital in the town of Cluj.

Marius Rotar from Solia Speranței, Mission East’s local partner in Romania, is a trained doctor and has helped Mateiciuc to get treatment. He has been involved in all the arrangements related to the treatment at the hospital.

“It is so amazing to see a man in this situation and with all the problems that he has being so full of joy and hope in life.” Besides the medical care, Mission East and Solia Speranței are also providing the family with food parcels to help them survive.

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**Messenger of Hope in Romania**
In Romania, Mission East cooperates with Solia Speranței (“Messenger of Hope”) which is led by the married couple Felicia, and Marius Rotar. Besides visiting the sick in the hospitals, they are at present providing care for hundreds of people with food, clothes, medicine, and school materials in Cluj-Napoca in northern Romania. They also offer social, and psychological support. Marius is a trained doctor and is therefore able to offer his help when destitute families need medical care.

It is important to Solia Speranței that the help nourishes the hope for a better future and gives families the necessary encouragement to support themselves long term.
New children’s centre will provide the right treatment for the disabled

“it will pass.”
Too many parents have received this message when bringing their disabled children to the local doctor.

Kim Hartzner, Mission East’s Managing Director, is a trained doctor. Parents have explained to him how they’ve been told that their daughter’s muscular disorder or their son’s heart defect would pass in time, or would be cured if the child just took vitamins. A terrible mistake, that in the worst case scenario could lead to the child’s death because they were not given the right help in time.

That will not happen at the CDRC (Child Development and Rehabilitation Centre) which Mission East helped establish last year. Here 22 doctors have recently received training in identifying a child’s disability – physical or mental – and in how to treat the disability.

In many cases, the cause of poor diagnoses and treatments is the lack of doctor’s necessary knowledge about disability. Since 2006, when Mission East started its largest even development project in Armenia, “A Healthy Start”, we have identified around 850 disabled and socially vulnerable children who have received unsatisfactory or no treatment. Several of these children could have avoided the suffering they have today if their disability had been discovered and treated in time.

With the opening of the CDR Centre and the continuing training of doctors Mission East wants to make sure that fewer children have to go through life with illnesses that easily could have been cured or kept at a distance.

On these pages you can read about three of the children who are now getting exactly the help they need at the CDR Centre.

“He understands much more now”
Seven-year-old Hovannes is finally starting to speak.

He is even able to add more and more words to his vocabulary.

Hovannes is diagnosed with Down’s syndrome.

For the past four months, he has undergone sessions with a speech therapist, a psychologist, a special educator, and an occupational therapist.

Hovannes’s 29-year-old mother, Karine, heard of the centre from a doctor at the local clinic who referred Hovannes there.

“He understands much more now,” she happily says happily.
Tonara shows improvements after only two months

When Tonara was two years old, she developed a high temperature and seizures, and her mother, Narina, took her to several clinics. During Tonara’s stay at the clinics, a pediatrician discovered that Tonara has a speech problem and is slow in her development.

For the past two and a half months, Tonara has been a regular patient at the Child Development and Rehabilitation Center in Armavir, which opened last September as part of the Mission East project “A Healthy Start”.

Tonara has regular sessions with a speech therapist, a special educator, and a psychologist.

According to Tonara’s mother, her daughter has improved over the past months, especially after sessions with the special educator.

Diana didn’t develop like her twin sister

Diana’s problems started when she was eight months old and her mother, Svetlana, noticed a difference between Diana and her twin sister. Both of the girls were cross-eyed, but Diana also seemed to be slow in her development.

Diana’s mother hoped things would get better by themselves, but they did not. When Diana was 12 months old, Svetlana took her to see a doctor, but it was not until she reached the age of three-and-a-half that she received treatment. She was however only given physical therapy, with no focus on her mental needs at all.

When she turned five a doctor told her parents about the CDRC. Today both her physical and mental problems are being addressed. Besides the physical care, she is now receiving help from a special educator and a psychologist.
This month, Mission East will start a new project, the main objective of which is to improve life for poor villagers in Tajikistan. 38,000 people will benefit from the help that includes agricultural training and support to women’s enterprise.

The purpose of the project in Tajikistan is to make the villagers self sufficient by growing their own food or through other forms of livelihood which bring in enough income to cover the basics of life, including food, clothes, medicine and schooling. At the same time, the project will address the issue of stigmatization of disability, with a direct impact on 800 disabled children and their families in the project area. Being disabled is still considered shameful, and disabled persons are often subject to discrimination. Besides trying to change the country’s attitude towards the disabled in Tajikistan, Mission East and local partners will support the establishment of a day care centre to assist families in the care of their disabled children.

Armenia experiences as stepping stone
Mission East has several years of experience in working for the rights of the disabled in another Soviet republic, Armenia. In Armenia, parents are still hiding their disabled children at home. These children don’t get the care and education they deserve. On top of that, a lot of doctors don’t have enough training to give the children the right diagnosis or treatment, which means that the children can suffer for the rest of their lives. Mission East’s work in Armenia, where Managing Director Kim Hartzner has been living since the summer of 2006, has led to improvements in the education of disabled children, and their access to healthcare. We hope that we can soon be making a difference too for the disabled children of Tajikistan.

This project is funded by the European Union via the EuropeAid External Cooperation Office.
Do you remember Saidbibi? Now she has a new home

Do you remember Saidbibi from the Autumn magazine? On a spring night, a rumbling sound on the other side of the door woke her up. Several days of severe rainfall had resulted in the flooding of the nearby river.

The sound was from a wave of mud that shortly after knocked down the door and trapped Saidbibi and her 12 family members in the room. Someone living upstairs came to their rescue and the last child was rescued just before the upper floor collapsed. Saidbibi's house was made of clay and rocks and didn't stand a chance against the massive mudflow. All that was left was a couple of destroyed walls. The family's belongings had been torn away by the mass of mud which left the family of 13 people poorer than ever.

In April and May 2007, massive mudflows devastated two villages in Yori Jamoat in Tajikistan. More than 14,000 people were affected and Mission East immediately decided to help the villagers to get on their feet again. Among other things, 282 families are now receiving help in rebuilding their houses with materials and building techniques better suited to resist floods and mudflows. Masons receive training in safer building techniques, and the villagers are trained in how to react when their village experiences the next natural disaster. Saidbibi and her family are almost ready to move into their new home that is built with a concrete foundation and a wood reinforced structure. Now she no longer has to sleep under a tree in the backyard. But equally important is that fact that she no longer has to live in fear of the next big natural disaster.

The children no longer have to sleep under a tree in the backyard or in the remains of the destroyed house.
Last year Mission East extended urgent relief and long-term development aid to more than 250,000 people in Eastern Europe and Asia. Our work is only possible due to the donations that we receive from private individuals and other donors. You can help us to help the needy by making a donation using the donation slip or via Mission East’s website www.miseast.org. You can donate an amount of your choice online, using Visa or MasterCard.

If you live within Europe, you can also make a donation to us by bank transfer for free, as long as the donation is in Euros and you have some form of electronic banking.

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If you would like to make a donation to Mission East but prefer not to do it online, we would be more than happy to receive a cheque from you. With your support, Mission East can continue to transform lives.

Thank you!