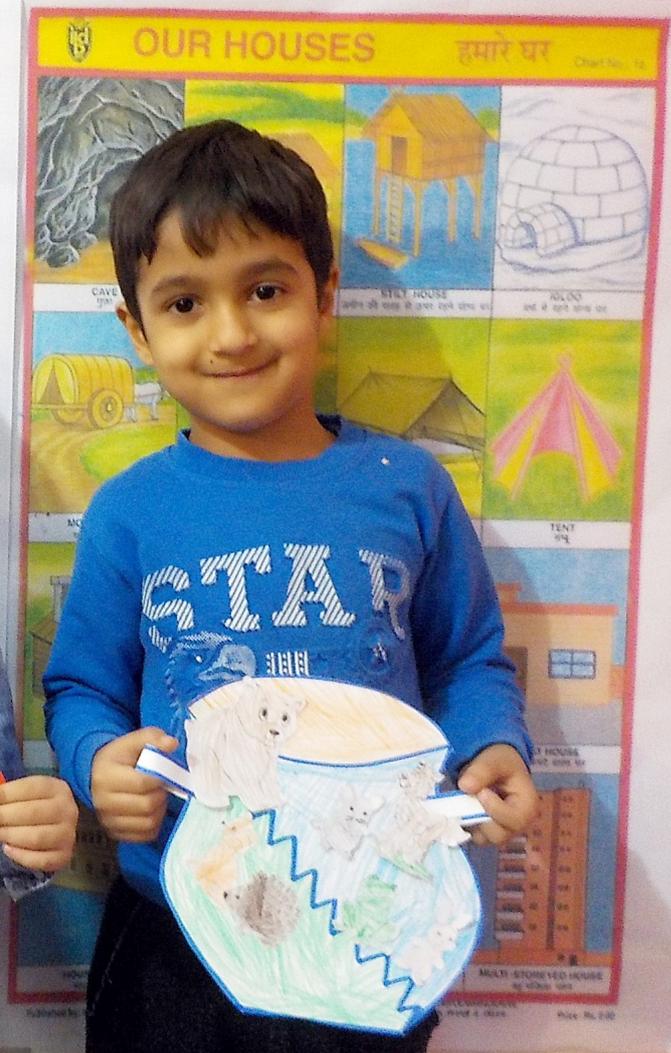




**NEWSLINK**  
2019/2020

Rebuilding Lives  
and Communities  
in Eastern Europe





# A Christian Charity Rebuilding Lives & Communities in Eastern Europe through Education and Social Care

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Find us on:



## Welcome



Hello! We have a question for you: What's the best Christmas present for someone who has nothing? Hope!

It's what we've been bringing to tens of thousands of individuals and families across the poorest parts of Eastern Europe – with the fantastic contributions from our donors, volunteers and partners – for nearly 30 years now. What started as a small idea, has blossomed into a vital social service that operates not just at Christmas but every day of the year in Romania, Moldova, Ukraine and Bulgaria.

And we have no plans to stop. The people who receive our annual shoeboxes, join our regular community meals or get pencils and paper so that they can keep going to school still need our support, and our love. As you will see in the pages of this edition of Newslink we are having an impact in the places that you help us invest our time and money in.

Our ambition is limited only by funds and our own imaginations! It's why we depend on people like you, our friends, with your continuing and frequently breath-taking generosity, as well as your challenging new ideas! Last year it was Superhubs... keep reading to find out just some of the new ideas we're grappling with this year but which we are determined to deliver on. You can find out more on the website at <https://linktohope.co.uk>

All of this means that we are still increasing our impact year on year, transforming lives, and building our 2020 Vision so we can be in better shape than ever!

Thank you for sharing the journey.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lisa Hector – General Manager



# CHILDRENS PROJECTS

## EMMAUS CLUB MOLDOVA

The Emmaus Club in Dancu, Moldova is a fantastic example of where a little intervention can make a massive difference. The teachers and volunteers work with a wide range of children – 30 in all, from those who have been left behind at school, and who without help would never catch up with their classmates and would likely drop out, to others with formal special educational, social and behavioural needs.

30 children with special educational needs come to the Emmaus Club

6 Teachers and 1 cook are employed to teach them.

Children given extra lessons in core subjects plus emotional support

School drop out has decreased dramatically and social skills and trust are built

Children keep up with their peers and enjoy and respond to education.

Some of these children have very challenging needs that have never been addressed by the state educational system, but with support can still make progress. The love and care they receive at the Emmaus Club shows these children that they are special in a good way.



VADIM – is 7 years old and is in first grade. His mother Maria is 27 and severely disabled. His Grandfather has just died and his father works abroad but sends very little support. They are very poor and his childhood isn't easy. Vadim loves coming to the Emmaus Club where he has found love, warmth and friendship.

**INSPIRE  
ENCOURAGE  
EQUIP**

# CHILDRENS PROJECTS

## ANGEL OF LIGHT UKRAINE

## CONNECT SUPPORT TRANSFORM

The Angel of Light based in Eastern Ukraine is in the 'grey zone' and supports children whose parents have died, been misplaced or gone missing on the war border between the Ukraine and Russia. With the war in the East continuing more and more families are being broken apart. Angel of Light is a centre where the children are looked after and more importantly 'known about'. In the last few months 146 children have been killed in the conflict area known as the 'grey zone'.

*(Source: Human Rights Report – Nov 2018 – Feb 2019)*

There have been cases of children living feral, being rounded up by well-meaning authorities and put in children's homes. Unfortunately children have been known to 'disappear' from these places where trafficking is unfortunately rife. The Angel of Light centre knows all of its children and feeds, clothes and supports them as well as try to help them be children with games and other activities, and if funds allow to take them away on summer camps. It also helps any remaining families who are struggling to survive.



Andrei is 13 and has a mum and two siblings. His father's gone. The family are displaced because of the war. They live in a shack with no running water or heating. They are permanently hungry and dirty. Andrei tries to collect scrap metal to earn an income for the family. He now goes to the Angel of Light centre and has discovered a new life. He is learning to play guitar and the family are helped with food, clothing and medicine. Their lives are slowly changing.

# ELDERLY PROJECTS

## INN OF LOVE MOLDOVA

## CONNECT SUPPORT TRANSFORM

The United Nations reports that for **every working age adult who dies in Moldova, 12 leave the country**. In addition, each year many more adults move to the big towns and cities in their home region in search of work. And this people movement has a real impact on two key groups:

**The children** – while many families do stay together when they relocate, many of the children we come into contact with live with grandparents.

**The grandparents and other elderly dependents** - if the children have left with their parents, the senior citizens are left completely alone and habitually isolated. Many have also developed disabilities and mobility issues over the years.

For both groups, the money doesn't always make it back to the grandparents to invest in the children or even just support themselves. It's a parlous state of affairs, and so even our small efforts can make a massive difference – as witnessed by our **two and hopefully soon to be 3 Inns of Love** in Dancu, Pervomaiscoe and next year in Dubovca.

Each Inn caters for between 40 and 60 Elderly people, where they can come to meet old (as in long-standing) friends and old (as in old!) neighbours over a hot meal. Each Inn offers a real lifeline to its guests, and in Dancu the 4x4 delivery car that Link to Hope supporters funded means that even in the worst weather conditions (imagine a bad winter day here, then add 24 inches of snow laying on top of churned up mud tracks) food can get to the guests even if they can't get to the Inn. As you can imagine, a hot meal on a bitterly cold day can literally save a life.



# ELDERLY PROJECTS

## COMMUNITY CENTRE MOLDOVA

### INSPIRE ENCOURAGE EQUIP

### Community Centre Kitchen & Roof

Thanks to the appeal we placed in our last edition of Newslink our supporters have been amazing yet again. We asked for people to help us raise funds to build a kitchen in the community centre at Dubovca to help fulfil our long term dream of setting up an Inn of Love 3. This will help and serve the elderly, lonely and isolated people that live there.

We have some other good news. A dutch charity Youth for Christ, have joined forces with Link to Hope to rebuild the roof of the community centre plus our wonderful and generous supporters have raised enough funds for the new kitchen. Mihail the project leader there is delighted “ Dear sister, I cannot find the right words to thank you and your supporters for you very kind offer to help us to put in this new kitchen which will a great blessing for our community. I am so looking forward to see the kitchen finished and in operation.”

Here are the latest photos from the roof being replaced. They are currently working on the floor of the building to put in reinforced pillars. The plan is also to have rooms in the roof for when groups go to stay and for emergency accommodation for those in need.



# FAMILY PROJECTS

## GOOD HOMES FOR ALL

## HELP US HELP THEM

At Christmas while delivering shoeboxes near Brasov, Romania our project manger Otto came across a family whose four month old baby had just died due to the cold and their inability to heat their home. This combined with the death of another infant and Otto and his team stepped forward. The helpless family had no one to turn to and Otto organised the funerals, helped with expenses and notified the relevant authorities e.g. ambulance, hospital etc.

Fast forward a few months and Otto and his team ended up helping three families who had been living in desperate housing and helped with short term accommodation, jobs and kindergarten places being found for the children. Astonishingly Link to Hope supporters raised over £6,000 to buy two containers for two of the families to move into. This is an excellent short term solution to an otherwise terrible situation.

However long term we would love to see those containers become emergency accommodation rather than permanent homes. There is also the long running issue of some Mayors of the villages not wanting these containers in their villages where there is electricity and sewerage pipes but keeping them on the outskirts of town where they don't have access to these facilities.



# FAMILY PROJECTS

## GOOD HOMES FOR ALL

## HELP US HELP THEM

Houses and small pieces of land can be purchased for reasonable sums of money ie between £5,000 – £10,000 where families can finally have a home for good. Where the children can go to school and where a new life can be started. Also there are many houses that can be renovated and linked up to basic facilities.

The other area that we would like to support is house rebuilding. So many of the people we support, live in dilapidated and dangerous housing. one recent example is Inna's and her 6 children who live in a hut that looks more like a barn.



It hasn't been repaired for a long time and has collapsed. The house is crooked with falling off pieces of plaster and a leaking roof. On the floor, Inna cooks food for all her family.

There is no water in the house or in the yard. In order to cook and drink, every day Inna or her eldest son walks a long way to the well in order to bring a couple of buckets of water. Sadly we have many cases like this. It is difficult to improve your life when you live in damp and dangerous conditions and your health is suffering because of it.

**Good Homes for All Appeal** – We have a list of families and elderly people that most need our help and we want to work with them to make their living conditions and therefore their lives more bearable. Can you help us? Even a small donation added together with other donations would make a difference – Thank you.



# DISABILITY PROJECTS

## SUPPORTING CEREBRAL PALSY

## CONNECT SUPPORT TRANSFORM

Link to Hope is now supporting an amazing project just outside Kiev, Ukraine. Ludmilla has for many years been involved with helping families and individuals with cerebral palsy. Her son was born with the condition and she has spent her whole life helping others. Ludmilla works for free in a government kindergarten all week and in exchange they allow her to have the community centre on a Saturday afternoon to hold a party for people and families with Cerebral Palsy. The sheer logistics of getting everyone together once a week is difficult enough but her and her team manage it. It's a wonderful time of people being valued and loved and is the only programme in the whole of Kiev for this group.

In addition to this, Ludmilla walks up and down the old communist style flats each night of the week to visit people with Cerebral Palsy who just can't get out of their apartments. They are often living in the grimmest of circumstances as well as living with the stigma of being disabled. Many families are just not coping with adult disabled children and domestic violence and alcoholism is rife. Ludmilla visits as many families as she and her team can, to bring love and attention to otherwise bleak lives. Link to Hope supports Ludmilla and her team with medicine, home visits, food and baby items.



Nadia is disabled and can't walk or talk. Her mother is elderly and her brother is an alcoholic. Her father works away. Due to Nadia's disability she never leaves the flat and stays in the same position on the couch. The family are very poor and the smell and living conditions are terrible. Through Ludmilla and her team, Nadia regularly receives food parcels and home visits.

# WORK PROJECTS

## WOOD WORKSHOP MOLDOVA

## CONNECT SUPPORT TRANSFORM

### Woodwork Success

In Dancu, Moldova a wood workshop was built by a Link to Hope working party from the UK led by Camilla Johnson. This was to provide employment and give training to local people in carpentry, to either help them with their own homes or to give them the skills to go and find work outside the village.



Victor who has been deaf since birth (see photo) got involved and has gradually become the creator of many beautiful and amazing wood products. Some products he has scoured books for and others he has created from his own imagination. This has given him a role in the community where disability was seen as something to be ashamed of. There are now several young men making products now. Link to Hope did have a vision to bring these products to the UK and sell them here in one of our 6 charity shops. However red tape struck again, shipping them into the UK was extremely difficult and this option was closed to us.

However a market has opened up in Moldova itself. Victor is now being invited to exhibitions to promote the Wood workshop and to sell the items that he and the team make. This would never have happened several years back, so we are delighted that they are now generating an income selling local products to local people – well the ones with money anyway.

**A God given vision  
shall be fulfilled, His  
plans are better than  
our dreams.**

# HOW YOU CAN HELP

TIME

TALENT

TOKEN

HELP US

HELP THEM

There are countless ways you can help us to help others, and they will all be one of the 3 Ts: **Time, Talent, Token**. Here are some ideas that people have already shared with us:

## **Time**

Volunteer – in one of our six shops across the year, or at a Shoebox Superhub from November. Great conversation and drinkable tea are promised!

Sign up to drive to a Superhub to collect Shoeboxes.

Become an Area Receiver and store shoeboxes for us in your home or business! For the months of October/November.

## **Talent**

Work out how to share a skill e.g. knitting, crafting, teaching.

Do a sponsored 5k or a 10k run – even if you do it at walking speed. The sense of achievement might even boost you to go faster or further (the next time!

Organise a fundraiser event – and raise awareness at the same time.

Give a talk at your local Church or WI etc – sow the seed and spread the word.

## **Token**

Keep a penny jar for us!

Sign up to be a monthly sponsor of one of our projects – see our website

Or make a one-off donation or perhaps do your legacy planning now.

Don't forget Gift Aid! We claim back an extra 25p free from the government for every £1 you give to Link to Hope.

We hope you'll now be inspired too! And if you need to spread the word, we'll be happy to publicise your event or activity on the Facebook page or via Twitter.

More Ideas at: <https://linktohope.co.uk>

HOW YOU  
CAN HELP

3 CHALLENGES  
SIGN UP  
NOW

HELP US  
HELP THEM

## Downslink Cycle Challenge – Saturday 7th September 2019

We will be riding between Shoreham by Sea and Guildford (West Sussex) – **37 miles (60km)** and for those hardened cyclists – back again **74 miles (120km)**. You choose which option you want to do. Register now for **£20** to reserve your place. Cyclists are then aiming to raise a minimum sponsorship of **£150 one way and £250 for two ways**. Full support will be given to help with the fundraising. To sign up go to [www.linktohope.co.uk/events](http://www.linktohope.co.uk/events) or e-mail us at [info@linktohope.co.uk](mailto:info@linktohope.co.uk)

**Working Parties – Summer 2020** – In the summer of 2020 we are looking to send two separate working parties out to Eastern Europe to help rebuild homes and get involved with community projects. If you think you would be interested in being part of either of these groups please do get in touch with us. They are usually up to a week long and you will be staying with local families and will become part of the community while you are there.

**Bulgaria Trek – September 2020** – We are planning to do a 7/8 day trek in Northern Bulgaria in September 2020. If anyone is interested in hearing more then please get in contact with us. We are looking to recruit at least 10 people and aim to visit our Bulgarian projects as part of the trip.



**FAMILY &  
ELDERLY  
SHOEBOX  
APPEAL**

**WAYS TO  
HELP**

Each year we deliver over **40,000** Christmas Shoeboxes to families and seniors in all four countries: Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

To read the Shoebox Delivery Diary and see the Shoebox photos please go to:  
<https://linktohope.co.uk/shoebox-delivery-diary-2018>

We are delighted that so many people across the UK still want to give so much to make this a success year after year. People come up with great ideas to make it better too – we've had Superhubs, and the decision to stop sticking coins on the boxes (or weighing down drivers with a ton of coins). Now we're responding to requests to reduce our environmental impact.

Those who see our photos from the frontline, or see the videos on our website, on Facebook or on Twitter can't fail to notice that we work in some of the most deprived parts of Eastern Europe. To put it bluntly, they don't have access to weekly recycling collections. So we want to respectfully ask that for our future Shoebox appeals we make two small but significantly impactful changes:

**REDUCE** plastic bottles of shower gel and **INCREASE** bars of soap – they last much longer, can be used to clean people and clothes, and the (usually paper) wrapping can be more easily disposed of.

**REDUCE** felt pens and **INCREASE** pencils – if you do gift pencils then don't forget a pencil sharpener! Felt pens tend to run out quickly and the plastic carcasses can't be recycled.

Of course, if you have already started collecting then please don't feel you need to change – its just a suggestion. Hopefully though, if we move to more environmentally friendly gifts then nothing will go to waste.

**FAMILY &  
ELDERLY  
SHOEBOX  
APPEAL**

**SHOEBOX  
DONATION**

**Why has the Shoebox Donation increased to £3?**

When we started the Shoebox Appeal in 1991 it was £1 a shoebox. In 2000 we increased it to £2 a shoebox. In 2019 we have increased it to £3 a shoebox.

Where to begin? Difficult to believe but Shoeboxes is a year round task with year round costs. We are still a small organisation – still just Wendy and Lisa plus lots of lovely volunteers – however everything has gone up in cost since 2000.

However there is another reason. It has become more obvious to us that as the project managers give out the shoeboxes, they are entering the homes of people living in truly terrible circumstances. Link to Hope runs education and social care projects all year round that support many hundreds of people. However the shoebox appeal impacts thousands of people lives.

**Faith and Works – James 2 v 15** “Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food v 16 If one of you tells him ” Go in peace; stay warm and well fed” but does not provide for his physical needs, what good is that?”

Or for the non-religious amongst you – although it is great to give someone a shoebox – amazing in fact – if the room is freezing, there is no food, children are hungry and that brief flick of hope just died in the persons eyes when you turn to leave – you realise that if you had the resources perhaps that hope could continue to live?

We know we cannot change everyone's lives but certain cases this year have really made us realise we need to do more. We hope you agree with us decision and we will feedback what we have been able to do with the extra donations.



- Romania
- Moldova
- Ukraine
- Bulgaria

## FAMILY & ELDERLY **SHOEBOX APPEAL**



**JOIN US**  
HELP US, HELP THEM

Before the **5th November 2019**  
[www.linktohope.co.uk](http://www.linktohope.co.uk)

## Register now for our 2019 Shoebox Appeal

<https://linktohope.co.uk/shoebox-appeal-2019/shoebox-registration-2019>

Follow us on



## Watch the 2019/2020 Shoebox Video on YouTube

Please contact us at:

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