

Moldova News

We want to see vibrant communities of Jesus followers among the least reached



Reaching their own country (p.2-3)

When international teams were prevented from coming to Moldova, national believers stepped up to go and share Jesus where there are no churches yet.

Playing “the Game” (p.7)

A team travelling from Moldova encountered a reality of life they had not known, by serving in a refugee camp in Serbia.



editorial

As field leader of this amazing team, I am so proud of all of them. The way each one of them contributes to accomplish the vision we have is just remarkable: All together working to mobilise, equip and support the planting of churches in any way possible. People who live their lives knowing its purpose. Living sacrificially while being on these outreaches, going the extra mile in order to mobilise and equip the Church. Living among the unreached people and sharing God's love with them.

Why am I saying all of this? How is this connected to all the stories in this edition of Moldova News? Because, while I observe them, and hear and read stories like these, my heart rejoices to see how we, all together, are reaching this nation for Christ.

Yes, all together! It means a lot to us as a team to have you all praying and supporting this ministry of reaching Moldova and sending Moldovans to serve abroad. All together also means the Church in Moldova that we partner with. It's so amazing to see (even despite all the emigration) the young generation in this country being mobilised and inspired for the cause of the gospel.

Let us all continue to stay together in this cause, to see more Moldovans coming to know the Lord, to see more Moldovans being mobilised and equipped for God's mission, either here in Moldova or to the ends of the earth!



Eugen Ciumac
Field Leader, Moldova



Reaching their own country

During a usual summer we would always receive many short-term outreach teams from abroad, coming to Moldova for 1-2 weeks throughout June, July and August.

This year - although more activities had again become possible within Moldova - international travel restrictions still made this impossible.

At the same time, this situation was also an opportunity, as it pushed and freed us to focus on involving local believers. We decided to still plan short-term outreaches, inviting youth groups from Moldovan churches to join us in going to other areas of the country that have few or no churches.

Throughout the summer about 80 Moldovans (besides our OM team members) joined these outreaches. Trekking or cycling from village to village and sleeping in tents, running children's programmes or doing home visits, these teams shared Jesus in many Moldovan locations that have no or only few local believers.

"No-one has ever given us this chance before," some of the young people said, "but we saw that we can give something to the people around us. The Word of God, which we know and study - we can pass that on."

When Vlad, the leader of our Mobilising ministries, took a team from his home church on a trekking outreach, most of them had never before gone to a village to share the gospel. Even though their church was being active in some mission activities, there was a set group of always the same people that would go, so this outreach was a new experience for these participants. Vlad challenged them to think about what they can give to people, thus helping the young people to discover and use their gifts, or to become aware of resources they might not have realised they had, like the value of giving time to someone. At the end, many of them described their outreach as a true highlight and impactful experience, and some shared concrete plans of how they want to continue applying what they practised. Two girls decided that on one day each week they will go to a busy boulevard in Chișinău together, simply to talk to people about God. "They were really enthusiastic about it!" Vlad remembers with a smile.

Throughout the summer, we witnessed the same thing again and again: We saw young people who love God, but did not know how to share their faith or use their life for Him, who lacked confidence, did not believe mission is possible for them, or simply had never been given the opportunity to try - and they returned home full of excitement and passion, because they had experienced that it's not just their church's mission team that can do God's work in the world, but that God can use them, and has put something valuable into each of them, which He wants them to share: their gifts, their time, their story, Himself!



short-term outreaches for Moldovan church groups

Going where God leads

"I have nothing to eat!" was one of the first things the old lady told the team. She did not know that they had come with a bag full of food as a gift for her...

Arriving in this village, knowing that there was not even one single believer there, had been quite daunting for the young participants of the team. Ion, who was leading this group, encouraged them to first of all spend time in prayer about what they should do in that place. As they had come equipped with food packages, which they could give away to people in need, they prayed that God would show them the right people - people who truly needed this help, as well as the gospel - and then set off on a walk through the village. Having seen an old woman working in the garden of a very small house earlier on, they wanted to go there, but found nobody was at home. Walking on, they saw another lady in her yard and called her to the gate. "We have just arrived in this village and want to get to know some people," they explained. "Can we come here?" The lady was very happy to receive visitors and invited them in. While the team was talking to her, she told them it was her birthday. "We have a gift for you!" they replied, presenting the food package they had brought. The lady was amazed and said that she had never received anything like this. The team told her that this was a gift from God. Talking further to her, they saw she was very open to God and found out that she knows a believer from a nearby village who visits her from time to time. After praying for her, they left with the assurance that someone

else was going to follow up on what they had shared, and with the hope that their visit had been one step in this lady's journey towards truly finding God.



After this, they decided to return to the first house they had approached, and this time really found the old woman there. When she told them that she had nothing to eat, they were encouraged to see that God had sent them where there was a real need they could meet. Even before they gave her the food package, they shared the gospel with her and - feeling that she had understood this message - asked her if she wanted to make a decision for God that day. Her reply was a clear YES, and they led her in a prayer of repentance. The old lady was so happy, and the young people were very much encouraged. They had experienced that God can use them, and that He leads and acts in response to their prayers.

Looking for God



One woman, who was visited by our teams this summer, had a special table in her home, on which she had arranged a big number of icons, pamphlets, Christian art, crosses and other religious items.

Although it can often make one sad that in Moldova many people revere such objects without having any understanding of the gospel, on the other hand it was very clear that here was a woman who was seeking God in whatever way she knew.

We pray that our visit and the conversation we had about God provided some answers and helped her draw a step closer towards God and true faith in Him.



Passionate, equipped, transformed

"I am going home a different person."
"The 'Impact' course has completely transformed the way I look at life."
"My thinking has changed, the way I read my Bible and how I pray - all these have changed by 180 degrees."

"The testimonies of the missionaries [we worked with] motivated me to be involved more on a local level."

"I want to start getting involved in ministry in my neighbouring village, which has no church."

These were just a few of the statements written down by the participants at the end of our first 'Impact' training. This new 25-day course for Moldovan participants, offering teaching and a practical taste of missions, took place twice this summer. Study topics included spiritual foundations and discipleship, as well as practical tools for sharing the gospel, or learning how to work together despite differences in personality, opinion or church tradition. Participants could immediately put all of this into practice, as they also went on outreaches to Moldovan villages where church planting ministries had recently been started, and there practically supported the church planters by running children's programmes, doing home visits, or leading Bible studies.

At the end of each course, many of the participants shared that this time had completely transformed their own relationship with God. They also described many plans and ideas how they want to continue being involved in God's work - whether visiting people in need, starting a football club in a village that has no church, or gathering the young people of their home church to pass on the newly acquired skills and resources.

At the end of each course, many of the participants shared that this time had completely transformed their own relationship with God.



Although he had been involved before, there was a visible difference in his life and level of commitment.

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impact



A child's faith

One of the *Impact* participants shared the following experience from one of their outreaches:

After our children's programme I talked to six-year-old Iulian. He and his family live in Poland, but for the summer holidays had returned to their native village in Moldova. Iulian had been eagerly listening to what we shared, and when I asked him if he wanted to receive God into his heart, he did this full of joy. As I said goodbye to Iulian, he desperately begged me to wait, so he could go and get his older brother, because he wanted me to tell him about Jesus, too. I was surprised and really impressed by this little boy's attitude - his love for his brother and his passion to share Jesus. Although we could not stay right then, it was possible to return in the afternoon, when I met both boys and could tell them more about Jesus. Our return there had not been planned, so it was a great joy for me to have this opportunity.

It's amazing to think that God had sent the team back to this place, in order to share Jesus with these two boys, whom God had also sent there, all the way from Poland.



First steps in a new place

One of their outreaches led the *Impact* participants to Criuleni, a small town situated by the river Nistru in the central part of Moldova. Although this is a larger location, there is no evangelical church in Criuleni, and the *Impact* team found that many people did not want to hear about God. They decided to go on a prayer walk, bringing this town before God and asking Him to show them people they should visit with a food package the next day. The youngest member of the team was 15-year-old Eliza, whom we had accepted to the course because of her church leaders' recommendation, although we thought her quite young. During that walk through Criuleni, Eliza saw a lady in the distance and felt that she had to run after her. She did, and exchanged a few words with this lady, Tatiana, who agreed for the team to visit her the next day. During their visit they found out that Tatiana suffers from epilepsy, which occasionally caused her to faint on the streets. She has four children to take care of and they live in a house that is quite big but needs many repairs. The team shared the gospel with her and prayed for her. After that, Tatiana told them that during the prayer she had felt something like a current going through her arms. After some more conversation they prayed again, and this time Tatiana knelt and asked God for forgiveness in a very sincere prayer.

On that day, the team had been joined by Vasea, a Moldovan OM worker who was preparing to move to Criuleni with his wife and another family, to start a church planting ministry in this small town. Vasea was also present when they visited Tatiana, and after her prayer he suggested that he and his wife could visit her again and start studying the Bible with her - an offer which Tatiana was very open to accept.

Despite the general indifference to the gospel the team had experienced in this place, this was an encouraging day: for Tatiana, who made peace with God; for the team, who saw their work bring fruit; for Eliza, whose boldness and obedience to the prompting of the Spirit had opened this door; and for Vasea, who made a first acquaintance with someone he can follow up on in his future ministry.



They prayed again, and this time Tatiana knelt and asked God for forgiveness in a very sincere prayer.



Please pray for our new Local Ministry Team - one young couple and one family - who will be working in Criuleni with the aim of seeing the first church planted in that town. Pray that they can build good relationships with the local people, and that God will prepare hearts for the gospel. Pray especially for Vasea, who is leading this team and, besides coordinating this ministry, is also going through some theological training at the moment, as he will be responsible for any group of believers/church forming there.

We are excited about how well this new programme was received, and very thankful for God's work in the young participants. Join us in praying for them, that they can keep alive their passion for God and His work, and be able to live out what they learned, even while being back in their old, usual circumstances.

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Strangers united through Jesus

In July, two of our Moldovan team members took part in a mission trip to Armenia. One of them, Radu, shares about the impact this experience had on him:

When our leaders returned from a vision trip to Armenia in March, I was really touched by what they shared about the needs in that country and how God is working there. It created the desire to go there myself, so I was excited when in July the opportunity came for me to join a ten-day outreach to Armenia, together with another Moldovan team member, as well as six others from the OM teams in Russia and the Ukraine.

From the very start I was impressed by the generosity and sacrificial love we experienced through the believers there. We spent the first few days with a small church of about 30 members (plus about as many children), who were a great example of humility, kindness and generosity. For three days we helped them run a day-camp for the children of their village. On the last day several of the children's parents came as well and were eager to express their thankfulness for the joy that had been offered to their families. In the evenings we joined the pastor in visiting different families. Again I was amazed at the hospitality people showed: the food they generously provided and the time they invested - staying up late because they so much enjoyed the fellowship, talking and singing together. One lady even accepted Christ during our visit, which was a big encouragement for our team and for the pastor.

After these three days we moved on and joined a youth camp, where over 100 youth and young families were taking part. The camp was organised with the purpose of encouraging people to put their trust in God even in times of crisis. Only the year before, the war concerning the region of Karabakh, between Azerbaijan and Armenia, had taken place. Several thousand young Armenian soldiers had died, and this had affected the hearts of many young people, and the nation as a whole. One 17-year-old at the camp told me that he is living in fear. Soon about to turn 18, he expects the call to serve in the army and is afraid of being sent to this disputed region. Many like him live with fear and seek to leave the country, hoping for a better life in Europe or the USA. At the camp these young people heard the stories of pastors as well as businessmen, sharing that is it

"From the very start I was impressed by the generosity and sacrificial love we experienced through the believers there."



possible to be people of God and people of success even in these seemingly unfavourable circumstances. One evening I, too, could share my personal testimony, and after that another member of our team talked about the work OM is involved in all over the world. Many of the young people and pastors afterwards expressed a desire to work together with OM, which so far is not present in their country.

Towards the end of our trip, we visited a pastor who is responsible for 12 locations with a population of Yazidi Kurds and has planted two churches there. We could offer food packages to 30 families in need, pray for them and share the gospel. These people are descendants of refugees, as the Kurds were often persecuted and scattered and do not have their own country. The temples of the Yazidi religion show the symbol of the sun, but people who had come to faith in Jesus from a Yazidi background, told us they had experienced a dark religion being connected with evil powers. It was encouraging to see and hear about God's work among this people group.

Armenia has remained deeply in my heart and this trip had an extraordinary impact on me. I feel a strong love for my brothers and sisters in Christ there, who served us with all their heart and offered the best they had. Saying goodbye was difficult for me, but I hope that one day we will meet again, joining together in the work of God.

Please join me in carrying this wonderful country and these precious churches before God in prayer!



The young men are thankful for any occupation - drinking tea, playing table games, painting pictures...



Playing "the Game"

Young people whose lives are put on hold:

When joining a team that left Moldova to help a refugee camp in Serbia, Christine (USA) was touched by the reality of life for a group of people she had known only from the news.

In early August, I was part of a team that set out from Moldova to volunteer at a refugee camp in Šid, Serbia. There were six of us, but only one had worked at this camp before. We knew that the primary camp which OM was involved in housed single men, and that we'd be working in the tea tent and the laundry room. So we set out early one morning to road-trip out of Moldova, through the whole of Romania and into Serbia to the border of Croatia, where the camp is located.

Over the next six days, life took on a pattern. Both shifts at the camp made and served tea and played games with the men. Sometimes we helped in the laundry room. A few days we played with kids at a nearby family camp. These tasks are simple and common. But somehow, in that week, they weren't.

Most of the men were young, under the age of 25, and most of them were from Afghanistan. These men carried not only their own hopes and dreams, but those of their families who had borrowed great sums of money to get them to Europe. Many had been in camps in Turkey and Greece before coming to Serbia. Most had played "the game" before, their term for trying to cross the border into Croatia, and therefore into the European Union and prosperity. Life in a refugee camp is boring. There is nothing to hope for but another chance at "the game" and nothing to do until it is time to try again.

I met a young man, perhaps 19 years old, whose English was excellent. His dream was to get to Belgium and enrol in business school. He was clearly very bright, and I wished him well, secretly wondering if he would ever make it. Although he seemed very educated, his complete confusion about my being unmarried in my thirties was almost entertaining. I could tell that he was trying so hard to understand, but he had no paradigm to compare it to from his village in Afghanistan.

OM can't offer much - doing their laundry once a week and providing tea every day except Sunday - but even this little is appreciated. We made and served three or four forty-litre carafes of tea a day during each of our two shifts at the camp, and we could have served more. We got roped into playing games of Uno, Memory, Connect 4 and Ligretto, with English and Pashto and Farsi. We poured tea. We wondered how a week's worth of laundry was contained in three pieces of clothing. We poured tea. We played "hit the other person with the football" with the kids. We poured tea. We had conversations with men whose English abilities ranged from fluent to barely beginner. We poured tea.

It can be hard to know where and when to introduce the gospel in situations like this. We were allowed to talk about Jesus, so long as He came up in conversation, and some men were rather receptive. It may be hard to imagine how much serving tea has to do with missionary work, but it's notable that the only organisation still working at the camp is Christian, and the workers are very open about their faith. We gain nothing from serving the refugees; indeed, we are volunteers and have paid with our own money to serve them.

This, too, causes people to think...

We are thankful that after the extended period of being more restricted, these international trips were possible this summer. Short term mission trips to other countries provide a unique experience for the participants, helping them grow in their own faith and understanding of God's heart for the world, as they are active in cross-cultural ministry and experience some of the circumstances and situations other people in the world are facing.

At the same time, we are happy that in this way we can provide support for ministries that need it. The ministry in the Serbian refugee camp has just one permanent worker; while in Armenia - where so far there is no OM team - churches seek partners and help in learning how they can work together to reach their nation for God and to send workers.

Get involved:

PRAY for our ministries
or
GIVE towards a project
or
GO - join a programme:
Love Moldova (2 weeks)
REACH (5 months)

We are also constantly looking for people to join us mid- & long-term.

Please contact us for more information about current needs and opportunities!

Bring them to Jesus

First house visit: Knock, knock.

Will someone open the door? What kind of person will be behind the door?

Nataşa opened the door. She said that we could come in. I was again so impressed by the Moldovan hospitality. It still felt unnatural for me to sit down in the house of a person that I didn't know. But I wanted to learn to appreciate it by accepting it.

Nataşa then told us a bit about her life. She was really open. She has health problems. When she goes out in the summer or winter her hands and eyes dry out because of an autoimmune disease. She earns 600 Lei (30€) a month. Winters are especially difficult because wood is really expensive. There are also many other hardships in her life.

What could we do? When people tell us about their suffering in life, how can we respond? We can either stay stuck in the feeling of being overwhelmed OR bring the person to Jesus, like the friends of the paralysed man in the Bible.

So we did.

We talked about our God who created all people, and this encouraged her to look it up for herself in the Bible. I also gave her one of the "four-point bracelets" and explained it to her. At the very end we prayed.

A moment when heaven kissed earth. A moment when God's Kingdom came a bit closer. Goose bumps.

This was written by one of the participants of our last international Discipleship Training earlier this year. Living, learning and reaching out to people in a different culture brings new challenges, surprises - and the chance to experience God in a completely new way.

We would love to have YOU join us for this experience!

Our Mission Discipleship Trainings are now called REACH.
REACH in Moldova and Romania (formerly MDT³) will take place from
01 Feb - 09 July 2022

Cross-Cultural Adventure | Spiritual Growth & Leadership | Missions & Evangelism | Mentoring & Discipleship

Join REACH in Moldova and Romania for an adventure that WILL transform your life!

For more information contact your local OM office or write to reach.md@om.org

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