

# Food Parcels & Bibles

Covid-19 special project 2020

Moldova



Ever since the start of the pandemic, people in Moldova have become more and more anxious and afraid that they will not be able to put food on the table for their children the following day. From one day to the next, many could not go to work and didn't receive a salary. Not just the many poor suffered lack, but also a significant part of the population who had been able to make ends meet before, suddenly could no longer provide for themselves. Many elderly, who had been surviving on money sent to them by their children working in other countries, could no longer afford medication, firewood or other necessities, because their children lost their work abroad, ending up in need themselves and unable to send money home to their parents.

In the summer, when fruit and vegetables are in season, these are usually cheaper, but this year there was a serious drought, resulting in a reduced harvest and increased prices for fruit and vegetables. Maize - the main fodder used for poultry and farm animals - was also heavily affected, drying up when still small, and thus meat and eggs became more expensive as well.

In many places, people turned to the local evangelical churches for help, saying they have nothing left to offer their families - families with children did not have enough food, elderly were not allowed to leave their houses, and for a while people were not allowed to work their fields, either. Since OM is in partnership with most evangelical churches in the country, many of the pastors and church workers in turn contacted OM to ask about possibilities to receive relief for their suffering communities.

**With your help, OM was able to offer food parcels to more than 6.000 socially vulnerable families in Moldova throughout this year of crisis.** This aid was a great encouragement for these people in need, but also for the local churches, who coordinated the distribution and through these visits could build better relationships with the people in their communities. People were also offered a Bible with each food package - a gift many received as enthusiastically as the much-needed food. Through this project, many people received hope; others saw that they are not alone and forgotten; the poor felt that they, too, are heard and loved.

**“This food package will last me for more than a month!” Raisa told us with tears in her eyes.**



“No, nobody comes to visit me, because I am poor. Only the rich get visited, but not I.” When we met **Raisa** on the road and asked her if we could visit her home, she thought there must be a mistake. She obviously had nothing to offer, so why would anyone want to come to her?

For 30 years Raisa had been living in the Ukraine, her husband's home, but after his death she had no-one left there and had decided to return to her own country, Moldova, moving back into the village she had been born and grown up in. As their house in the Ukraine had burnt down a few years before, Raisa had hardly any possessions and also no property in the village, but she was offered a house to live in by someone in the village. Raisa is thankful for having a place to stay, but the house is not in a very good state: it is old and does not really heat up; besides this, there is no well nearby. Bringing water to the house is the most burdensome activity for this 78-year-old lady, and washing her clothes becomes an almost impossible task. In addition to her difficult circumstances, Raisa carries the burden of loneliness. Since her husband's death, she has been living alone. She has a son, but he does not keep in touch with his mother - he never comes to visit her, has not contacted her for a long time, and Raisa does not even know where he is.

Considering herself poor, forgotten and not valued, Raisa was surprised by our visit, but she very much appreciated that we came to her humble home and shared with her about Jesus Christ, as well as bringing her a gift of food. Not having worked in Moldova, Raisa does not receive a pension from the state, but only a very small social support - barely enough to live on. “This food package will last me for more than a month!” Raisa told us with tears in her eyes and a smile on her face.

When we came to Mideleni, it was obvious that there are many needs in this small village, forgotten by the world. We met many elderly people who have nobody to take care of them. When they received a food package, they were looking at us with surprise and amazement, while tears filled their eyes. It was clear that for a long time they had not really had any occasions for joy.

Another person we met there was 14-year-old **Petru**, who had not seen his mother for more than a year, not even knowing where she was. Petru lives together with his grandmother, Elena, in a house that belonged to his great-grandparents and is in a terrible state: broken windows, a front door that does not really shut any more, cracked walls and no electricity. Elena used to work at a bank during the time of the Soviet Union, but after its fall she lost her job, and in the pain and hardships of that period she started drinking alcohol. Now, at age 65, she tries to take care of Petru as best as she can, but often does not have the means or the knowledge. When the pandemic started and schools closed, Petru was supposed to attend lessons online on a computer or phone. Wanting to help her grandson, Elena decided to buy him a phone on credit, but without understanding what this means - so after a few months, the credit company put hands on her only source of income, her small pension. To make things worse, Petru - not knowing how to properly use the phone - broke it, and so they were left without phone and without food.

What a different world this boy lives in! While we may think about changing our phone because it's already a bit older, Petru worries about what he will eat today, and his biggest dream is that maybe one day he will have a bicycle.

**Petru (14) worries about what he will eat today, and his biggest dream is that maybe one day he will have a bicycle.**





**Maria and her son Ruslan** live in the village of Cosăuți, in the region of Soroca. This is a region with approximately 100.000 inhabitants, but very few believers - only about 1 in 800 people.

When Maria was younger, she was working in a local stone quarry. It was usual that different truck drivers coming to the quarry would stay in the village for a month or two, and one of these was housed in Maria's home and started a relationship with her. When - due to his work - his time came to leave again, he promised he would return to Maria, who by then was pregnant. When Ruslan was born, he was a great joy and comfort for Maria, who was living alone as her parents had died a long time before and Ruslan's father had not returned. The boy grew and Maria continued working at the quarry, until one day someone came to her from the local school, telling her Ruslan had been taken to hospital by ambulance, having been seized by convulsions while being at school. Ruslan was then diagnosed with epilepsy and Maria quit her job to be able to be with her son and look after him, earning some money through occasional day jobs where she could take Ruslan along with her. The stress she went through contributed to Maria developing diabetes and obesity, so both mother and son need medication. Now Maria is getting a minor pension, and they receive a small disability compensation for Ruslan, but it is not enough to cover their medication, let alone food and other necessities. When asked how they manage to make ends meet, Maria said that they eat whatever God gives them. Living next to a river, they occasionally gather some wood which the water washes up when it's in flood.

They were very grateful for the gift of food provided by OM, and expressed great joy at the prospect of being able to buy additional medication that month - a luxury usually denied to them, as the money never stretches that far.

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**Leonid** has been bound to his bed already for ten years, not being able to walk at all. He was never married and only has one younger brother, who lives in the same village, but also has problems with his legs himself and needs support. The social worker visits Leonid from time to time to see how he is doing and maybe go and buy some food for him from the small pension he receives. But there is nobody who really takes regular care of Leonid, and his pension is not sufficient for his basic needs, especially during the cold season. The house he lives in is old, shabby and without electricity. Dima, a church worker who visits this village to do ministry there, has also started visiting Leonid. Dima found a car battery which he connected to a light bulb next to Leonid's window, above his bed, which lights the house at least a little bit.

Dima told us that Leonid loves to listen to Christian songs, and whenever believers visit him, his eyes always fill with tears. When we visited, Leonid was very happy about the gift of food he received, but also just as much about our presence. It was obvious that he has a very open heart for God, and he asked us for a Bible. Leonid showed much gratitude, but there was one thing he expressed regret about: Now, more than ever, he very much wished for electricity in the house, so he could have proper light and thus be better able to read his new Bible.



**Elena and Ion**, aged 63, live in a village in central Moldova. They have no children or close relatives. They never had official jobs but made their living through day labour wherever they found opportunities to work. As a result, neither of them now receives a pension. They own a horse, which provides some income, as they use it to help people with occasional requests - e.g. when they need to transport their grain to the mill, take out bulky waste, or move big items that are too heavy to carry - and in return get paid a little by those people. Elena and Ion are hard-working people, but they did not have many opportunities in life and were also hit by some misfortunes. About ten years ago the house they owned and lived in - a good house in the centre of the village - burned down completely. Now they live in a simple shed, without electricity or heating and not really any furniture besides two beds. They dream of being able to build a stove inside their shed, to provide some heating when it is cold. When we arrived at their place, Elena was preparing food outside on two stones. We started talking to her outside, and a bit later her husband also arrived. He seemed excited, and - though at first he was a bit hesitant because of our presence - he could not wait to share his joy with his wife: He had managed to earn 50 lei (about 2,5 Euros) in just one hour!



We could see that the food and Bible were very welcome gifts. Elena and Ion listened attentively to the Word of God we shared with them. It went to their heart and they expressed their desire to give their lives to Jesus and accept His forgiveness and salvation. We invited them to a meeting taking place in the home of a local believer the next day, but probably they were ashamed to go, as they had no nicer clothes to wear. We pray that they will continue to seek God in His Word and find the courage to join a fellowship of other believers.

## Thank you,

for your participation in this project, bringing relief and hope to the most vulnerable in Moldova!

More impact stories from the Covid-19 food parcel project can also be found in the recent editions of our field newsletter: [Moldova News 2020 \(autumn\)](#) and [Moldova News 2021 \(winter\)](#)

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