

The Romanian Aid Foundation  
UK Registered Charity Nr 1060828



## Newsletter, Spring 2005

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### Springtime and Harvest

As I write this, Easter in the UK is a fading memory. As you read it, Easter in Romania is still an event to look forward to, accompanying the start of Spring. This may be a season of warmer weather and lengthening days but Spring is not harvest - the crops will not be ready for a few more months. There are still bills to pay and reading the facts and figures below shows that the need for help is still there.

Last year RoAF sent seven lorries, amounting to some 130 tons of aid. As you read this, the third lorry for the current year is about to be sent, with another close behind. One of the major problems that RoAF has faced recently has been that the generosity of our supporters has exceeded our ability to prepare and store the amount of aid that has been offered to us. Our packing and sorting team is working overtime to prepare clothing and household items for dispatch, and we appreciate those who send in items already sorted and boxed. Some people have suggested that our facilities in the UK are too small, but the objective is to dispatch the aid as soon as possible to those who need it and we prefer to spend money on transport rather than additional storage here.

With your help last year we were able to complete the new roof on the Dorohoi warehouse before the severe weather began. Now we not only have a new roof but in due course there will also a lot more space on the upper floor, where the aid consignments can be sorted and prepared more efficiently. This upper room still needs to be insulated and fitted out with shelving but already the warehouse is a much more pleasant place in which to work. In addition to this first phase of the refurbishment of the warehouse. last year we were able to provide central heating for the office, providing a warmer welcome for our visitors and staff.

In November last year two concerts helped to raise funds for RoAF. Given by Priscilla Nobbs and Sarah Whitehead in Reigate and Keziah Thomas with Alex Gayle in Horley, these concerts allowed us to send an extra lorry just before Christmas. The timing of this lorry was a new venture for us and very much appreciated in Romania. In addition to an extra consignment of winter clothing the lorry also carried the final batch of Christmas gift boxes (although some more boxes missed that lorry by less than an hour!).



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### Joy is not just for Christmas!

Some of last year's Christmas gift boxes were given to children at a children's home in Dorohoi. After playing with the toys for a while they refilled the boxes with some of their previous toys and took them to poorer families in the town.



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Several families that we give aid to are already in the habit of cascading previous items to other families or needy individuals, but this may be the first instance of the children themselves being Santa Claus. This not only encourages friendship and co-operation between the families concerned but it also doubles the value of the items that we give them.



Would you like to make up a gift box for this Christmas? Look out for the launch of the 2005 Gift Box scheme in the early summer. Of course,

you don't have to wait until Christmas. There are needy people all year round and an unexpected gift box will bring joy on birthdays or special family occasions.

Schools too need stationery and equipment throughout the term-times. The pictures below show children at Havirna Kindergarten, about 15 miles east of Dorohoi. When we first visited there in 1994 the only paper in the school was the class register. Things are much better now, but there are still needs in this village, and there are other villages too.

In one London school, the children collect wool for the older ladies living in a home nearby to knit into jumpers and blankets. Elsewhere, we supply wool for knitting groups to indulge their hobby and they return completed garments such as hats, scarves and blankets to be included in the gift boxes.



Christmas boxes bring smiles to Havirna Kindergarten



Our next concert is on 14th May at St Paul's Church, Dorking, when Steven Crocker (counter-tenor) accompanied by Gill Briers (piano) will be presenting an evening of classical song. Thank you all for your interest and support.

### **The Cost of Living**

For your further information, Peter and Lesley in Dorohoi have put together some monthly costings for a 2 room apartment (Lobby, Kitchen, Bathroom, Living & Bedroom). These costs have risen tremendously during the past couple of years and mainly in the last year, with rents and rates costs doubling in the last 12 months. Gas will continue to rise until it is on a par with EU prices, as will electricity. We have heard that the gas price is due to rise by 30% in the next quarter!

These are the costs based on family of 4 living in a 2 room apartment. Remember as you read this that the minimum (ie typical) wage in this area is around £60 per month but the unemployment level is around 70% and there are no significant social security benefits.

*Housing costs:*

	costs in Romanian Lei	£ equivalent	% minimum wage
Rent	600,000	12	19%
Electricity, average over 12 months	500,000	10	16%
Gas	270,000	5	8.5%
Rates, per person inc. children over 3 yrs	250,000	20	32% (four people)
Rubbish collection	200,000	4	6.5%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>2,570,000</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>82%</b>

(March 2005: Conversion rate £1 = 51,000ROL: Minimum wage is 3,100,000ROL per month)

*Add to this:*

-- **Food:** e.g. Bread for a month is £13, based on 1 small bread (300grms) per person per day @ 10p each (this is the cheapest, which is not always available).

-- **Medicine:** No free or subsidised medicine at the moment for anyone including children. Doctors need to be paid for consultation (eg £6 quoted for twins). Hospitals are not free for the unemployed - children pay for first 3 days only approximately £7. Drugs, syringes etc and food have to be bought in by the patient.

-- **Clothes:** Clothes can be bought in the market quite cheaply, eg. a child's track suit for approximately £5 but these are very poor quality. Shoes and boots can be bought for about £6 but often fall apart after 4-6 weeks.

-- **School:** Children have to buy books pens etc. and pay for cleaning and fuel in winter, plus things such as curtains at windows, presents for teachers. On finishing school they have to pay for their diplomas.

When we started here 3 years ago we suggested to people who wished to sponsor families that £20-25 per month would cover basic costs. Thus we estimate for a family of four to live very frugally it costs over £90 per month.

You don't need a degree in home economics to work out the rest of the story.



