

The price of progress

Our expenditure in the year was just over £31,500, leaving us with a somewhat smaller bank balance than when we started the year. Of this around £6,500 went on UK costs, predominantly the rent for our warehouse space alongside Furnistore, but also a bit for insurance, postage and telephones. This is higher than normal because we were paying rent on two storage units whilst we transferred to Furnistore. We spent £4,000 towards an additional vehicle for Asociatia Neemia, reflecting the increase in activities there. All of the rest, some £20,000 in all, went on transport. With Romania joining the EU, we now have to pay VAT on all haulage costs; this has added £3,000 to our costs this past year.

So what are the challenges for the new year? It doesn't sound very exciting, but more of the same is the short-term answer. Many people have been helped and are now able to move forward on their own; others are being helped to achieve similar success. However, the poverty doesn't go away, so we cannot retire just yet. Thank you all for your efforts and support during the last year; please carry on, let's make 2008 an even better year for those who come to us for help.

How you can help ...

We are always in need of clothes, bedding and other items as shown on our priority items list. These can be brought along on Friday afternoons or Saturday mornings in Horley, or by arrangement with the team in Lampeter.

Your financial support is vital, if you are a taxpayer please remember to make a gift-aid declaration which increases the value of your donation.

Your prayers, especially for those working in Romania, are very much appreciated.

To those who live in the Horley area:

We sort and pack at Horley Baptist Church every Friday afternoon starting around 2pm. Having moved into the Furnistore building on the Bridge Industrial Estate (beside the Balcombe Road railway bridge) we have the facilities to sort and pack on a Saturday morning as well. Please come along and help.

To those who live a short car journey from Horley or from Lampeter:

Several supporters collect and pack on a small scale using their own garages as a store, and then bring a complete carload to Horley or Lampeter. It has become quite usual for clothes to arrive by the carload just as the lorries are being loaded.

Horley depot: Unit 10, Bridge Industrial Estate, Balcombe Road. RH6 7HU
South Wales centre: 'Oaklea', Temple Bar, Lampeter. SA48 8BQ

The Romanian Aid Foundation and Asociatia Neemia

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The Romanian Aid Foundation Newsletter

January 2008



Several months have gone by since our last newsletter, for this delay we must apologise. It can be explained, if not justified, by the amount of activity that has occupied our team in other aspects of the work. Rest assured all is well; in fact, better than that, *don't* rest - help us to ensure that everything continues to go well.

Despite a pessimistic start, 2007 was a good year for RoAF, although we have to report that it was not such a good year for the poor in Dorohoi. Membership of the EU has meant increased costs on many basic living items like food and fuel, while the benefits of membership only seem to help those in employment and business. There is a greater sense of wealth and activity in Romania as a whole, and this can be seen in neighbouring towns like Botosani and Suceava, but in Dorohoi any benefits seem to be limited to those with family connections in the west. The town still has high levels of unemployment, still there are many, many single parent families living on just a few pounds a month, still there are complete families living in one room in some tumbledown shack with no power and water, and still there is the sense of hopelessness and despair amongst the poor people.

RoAF is working with Asociatia Neemia, its Romanian partner, and other like-minded charities in the Dorohoi area to bring some relief to such people, by providing clothing, food and some limited help with fuel or medical costs. Reports from Beni and his team in Romania are also encouraging, with the team working well together, the shop doing well with no problems at the warehouse and with 9 full loads going out in the year, this means that the amount of aid distributed has exceeded previous records. The receipts from the shop were also a record this year; this enabled all the employment, property and distribution costs to be funded from locally generated income.

In this newsletter we are concentrating on the UK activities which allow this help to continue. Further details of Asociatia Neemia's achievements will be included in our Spring newsletter, although by that time Beni and Ionela will no doubt be occupied with the new arrival in their family.

The Romanian Aid Foundation and Asociatia Neemia

Working with Romanian people to bring help to the needy,

Hope through the Christian message and co-operation through joint ventures

UK Registered Charity 1060828

A record year

In 2007 we managed to send 9 full loads out, a record number! Thank you for all the hard work from all our many supporters who have packed and loaded their way through nearly 110 tonnes of aid. The aid consisted of some 36 tonnes of clothes and bedding including hundreds of duvets, 40 tonnes of tinned food, 30 wheelchairs, 150 bicycles, 40 prams and pushchairs, 6 tonnes of baby food, over 80 computers and 500 carpet tiles, plus of course, around 2,000 shoeboxes which arrived from many locations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A special mention for Wendy Dando and the team in south Wales who obtained refurbished wheelchairs, bicycles and computers from prisons in Swansea, Cardiff and Stafford respectively - it this a case of inside knowledge? All this adds up to our best achievement in a single year, and we finished the year with enough aid, ready to go, to fill another 2 lorry loads.

2007 was also a good year with our finances, although at times it was challenging. Total income was just over £25,000, of which around £17,000 came directly from gifts from our supporters, just over £4,000 from various fund raising events and the £4,000 balance from gift aid refunds. A big thank-you to all our supporters from around the globe for making it all possible. We finished the year with a small balance and plan to send our first load of the new year out in early February.

A special thank-you to all the organisers and supporters of our fund raising events. As mentioned, we raised just over £4,000 from these, also a record. Look out for the fund raising events planned for 2008, then put the dates in your diary and let your friends and neighbours know. These events are not just for fundraising, they give us an opportunity to meet many of our supporters and give them news firsthand. Another advantage is that these events can also attract corporate sponsorship, such as the £500 from ParcelForce following last year's Harp Concert.

It is with sadness that we report the death of Kathleen Dann aged 84. Kath and her sister Muriel have been ardent supporters of RoAF's work for a long time, and were particularly involved with the Friday packing team. Our picture shows Kath and Muriel checking knitted blankets prior to packing. We extend our condolences to Muriel and Kath's wider family, and give thanks for her contribution to the work in Dorohoi.



Financial Report (UK Activities)

In 2007 over £25,000 was raised for the work of the Romanian Aid Foundation and this is summarised below, together with a comparison with last year:

	2007 Total	2006 Total	Comments
Income from Donations	£ 17,118	£ 16,300	<i>Thank you</i>
Fund-raising Activities	£ 4,263	£ 1,556	
Tax Refund (Gift Aid)	£ 3,598	£ 5,062	<i>The 2006 refund relates to several years' giving</i>
Interest	£ 64	£ 68	
Total Income	£ 25,043	£ 22,987	<i>Please see note below</i>

And how was it all spent, you ask. Well, mainly on transport, each full 40ft lorry to Dorohoi costs around £2,300 (including the Romanian equivalent of VAT).

	2007 Total	2006 Total	Comments
Transport	£ 19,923	£ 15,612	<i>Seven loads in 2006, nine in 2007</i>
UK Warehouse costs, including current rates	£ 6,682	£ 4,225	<i>Costs incurred in moving from Smallfield to Horley.</i>
Needy individuals	nil	£ 660	<i>Funded directly from AN income in 2007.</i>
Special Projects	£ 4,000	nil	<i>Additional vehicle for AN.</i>
Administration	£ 970	£ 816	
Bank charges	Nil	61	
Total Expenditure	£ 31,575	£ 20,505	

The figures for 2006 are taken from the audited accounts for that year, and may differ from the estimates given this time last year. The figures for 2007 are preliminary and are subject to confirmation. In 2006 we had the benefit of a legacy, and although we don't want to lose any of our supporters, please remember RoAF if you plan to rewrite your will in the coming year, this could make so much difference to the work in some future year.

The unexpected opportunity to send more lorries than before resulted in a large increase in transport costs but it has also meant that the normal operations in Romania have been entirely funded locally. Extra storage costs during the transfer from Smallfield to Horley have resulted in higher warehousing costs during this past year. Warehousing and transport are expected to cost about £26,000 this year.