



Newsletter of the Epiphany Trust

Issue No.14

May 2007



On-the-ground  
Reports from Sri  
Lanka & Romania



## Micro-Credit

*Revitalising business in Sri Lanka*

“Fill the gaps” we were told by Mr Ariff, Mayor of Galle, when just six weeks after the Indian Ocean tsunami, we asked how we could help. World Vision, Save the Children and others had already started massive house building programmes in the region. We took the Mayor’s advice and channelled funds into education, repairing and re-equipping the city’s primary schools.



In a departure from anything we have ever done before, we joined forces with Sri Lankan charity *International Volunteer Friendship Association* to provide a micro-credit programme in the villages of Galle County.

*Continued overleaf*

**Romania - D.R.C. - Sri Lanka - Burma - Pakistan - India - U.K.**

For a very small amount, in many cases as little as £25, a family business can be started. So far we have helped start around 500, which seems a lot until it's compared with the number of applicants wanting to join the programme - currently exceeding 8000.



Mrs Gamage grows vegetables and flowers which she sells for a living. The vegetables are sold in the market by her husband and the flowers are sold both in the market and at the local temple. It is a Buddhist tradition to take offerings of flowers to the temple. The business was set up 4 months ago with just £40 and is doing well. Under the scheme half of the initial capital is a grant, recognising the exceptional need

of people who in many cases lost everything they had in the tsunami. The other half is a loan, re-payable to the Ruhana Development Bank which is the facilitator of the programme. Mrs Gamage is pleased that so far she has re-paid £2.20, which will go to helping start another family business.

To most people the thought of getting up for work at 2am is a nightmare. To Aurin, it's an opportunity... an opportunity she has never had before! Each day she works through the night



making "string hoppers" a Sri Lankan dish particularly popular for breakfast and by 6am she is delivering them to cafés and tea houses where local people will buy breakfast on their way to work. Aurin's business is proving



*"Microfinance stands as one of the most promising and cost-effective tools in the fight against global poverty."*

*Jonathan Morduch  
U.N. Expert on Poverty*

to be very successful and is making a real difference for her family.

With so many wanting to join the programme it is necessary to have some criteria for deciding who should be accepted. Present criteria requires families to have at least one child under five years old and only women can apply to join.

Each member of the scheme undertakes to repay their loan within 18 months and have an IVFA pass book which records their payments.

The Trust's Sri Lankan projects continue to provide us with real encouragement, none more so than our first involvement in micro-

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### **A message from our Patron - Graham Gooch OBE**



*"The people of Sri Lanka have given me much encouragement during my cricketing career. I am pleased to have become a patron of The Epiphany Trust and to give my support as they spearhead many initiatives in that troubled, but most beautiful part of the world."*

## Chrysalis Broaden Horizons



One of the biggest attractions of Chrysalis Holidays is the opportunity it gives customers to escape their daily routine. Everyday life for these adults with learning disability is safe and caring, but devoid of challenge. Without this, nobody is able to flourish or reach their full potential. We hope to go part way to filling that need by providing excitement, fun, new experiences and the opportunity to make new friends.

This year for the first time, Chrysalis Holidays are going to Romania! Sinaia - in the heart of the Carpathians - to be specific. Holiday makers will visit local tourist spots like Peles Castle and will experience the unique Romanian culture & cuisine. All this will be combined with spending time with the young adults living in the Arc (see page 9), and taking Day trips in the beautiful mountainous countryside together.

For 12 years Chrysalis have been running themed holidays within the UK - only recently have the horizons been broadened. Destinations for this summer include Lanzarote, Granada and Ireland. For many of the 60 travelling abroad with us this year, it will be their first experience of using a passport or of flying.

Each holiday provides plenty of new experiences from camel riding & canoeing to line dancing and pottery. Hopefully our passion for challenge and adventure will give people lots to talk about a long time after the holiday is over.



## Ken Hargreaves MBE



Epiphany Trust trustee Ken Hargreaves has received royal recognition for his 'outstanding dedication to the people of Lancashire'. The former Conservative MP for Hyndburn has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year's honours list after spending five decades knee-deep in both community and charity work.

As well as overseeing the work of Epiphany, Ken is president of *Accrington & District Blind Society*, president of *Hyndburn Arthritis Care*, chairman of *Maundy Relief*, co-founder of the *Centre for Christian Democracy*, chairman of *Right to Life*, and is associated with countless other organisations.

Matter-of-factly, he comments: "I have always been involved in charity things, even before I was in Parliament. I enjoy it."

## Cold Mountain Challenge 2007



**2nd - 9th June & 20th - 27th October**

The 'Challenge' is being set once more. You can help raise funds for Epiphany's 'Arc' project by being sponsored to pit your hiking skills and stamina against the best the Carpathian Mountains have to offer. Based in Sinaia, participants will be surrounded by some of Europe's most stunning scenery whilst scaling the summits of 'Omu Peak' and the 'Caraiman' that

stand at an impressive 2500m high.

The 'Cold Mountain Challenge', named after the Hollywood film set in the same dramatic landscape, will incorporate visits to the Trust's Arc project and some of the famous sights of this much-loved part of Romania.

No prior mountaineering experience is required. Please contact Gill at the office for more details.

## The Second Half-way House

Since their visit to Romania last summer, the *Rejoice Gospel Choir* of Western Ireland has raised a staggering €32,000 towards the purchase of a 2000 sq. metre plot of land and construction of a second 'Arc'; to be modelled on our facility in Sinaia. (See back page)

Seamus O'Gorman is one of the choir's founding members and has been instrumental in forging the bond with Epiphany. The following is an excerpt from his article published earlier this year in Ireland's *The Western People*:

'Before leaving Ireland it had been suggested to Rejoice that if they could raise the money, they

might consider purchasing a plot of land that could be used to build a small residential unit to house 8-10 former orphans.

Rejoice was eager to investigate the feasibility of such a proposal with orphanage director Ion Vlasici. Initially it seemed as though other forces were conspiring against them when it was revealed that the Town Council had increased the size of the plots for sale and the cost had risen to €26,500. Nevertheless the group travelled out to see the stunning hillside site, overlooking the village of Stuica. The site could easily hold 4 units. Furthermore, it could provide self sufficiency as

the residents could have their own chickens, grow their own produce and weave rugs to sell. They would no longer be dependent on the State.

On returning to the orphanage at Lugoj the choir members met to carefully consider the security and merits of the proposed

investment. Following discussions with the Town Mayor, Rejoice shocked everyone by immediately pledging the money to secure the plot of land. But there was more to come. Rejoice donated a further €3,000 in cash towards the cost of repairing a treadmill used by the children in the Lugoj orphanage and to purchase additional sensory equipment. On departing for Romania, Rejoice had donated/pledged €32,000.

Overall the trip proved a most happy and rewarding experience for the members of the choir. A number of the 50-strong chorus are now planning to return to Lugoj this year to help repair and extend the playgrounds in the orphanage.

Rejoice accomplished a lot during their stay in Romania, thanks to the generosity of all those who contributed to their fund. The choir

*Seamus O'Gorman*



*Site for the new Half-way House*



*Presenting the funds to Ion Vlasici*

## On the Streets of Kandy

by Charlotte Riaz, March 2007

The children living on the streets of Kandy have it tough. Scavenging through rubbish for food and clothes, and being on constant lookout for those who would abuse and exploit. Many attend school and are expected to do a full days study whilst under the crushing shadow of being abused, be it physically, emotionally, sexually, or is often the case, all of the above. Their situation is both desperate and delicate. Long term support - offering shelter and encouraging education - is the only solution.

With this in mind, Furrukh and I are running a training programme for the staff of *Child Action Sri Lanka's* Centre for street children. These training programmes focus on facilitating workshops that will provide physical and emotional support for over 60 children and young adults. The overall aim of the sessions is to help the children gain awareness of their emotions and then learn how to manage them. We look at what makes them sad, angry, scared, and we provide practical ways to help them work through these feelings so that they are not simply suppressed or acted out violently. We also take the older boys out to play sports where they are learning to follow rules (the first 'match' was rather chaotic and violent!) We have lots of fun – they are great kids! The children's biggest dream and desire is to be like other 'normal' kids. Our aspiration is to make this a reality.



Life in the sub-continent has taken some adjusting to. Things can move very slowly here, so trying to get things done takes a lot of patience. It is, though, very rewarding, and thanks to your funding and the support of Epiphany we can continue to tackle the challenges faced by these underprivileged yet inspiring young people.

## Home from Home - The Arc

The Arc in Sinaia was my home from home for 5 months. There I had the pleasure of caring for Ana Maria, Simileana, Adam and Codruta.

Though at times extremely challenging, these four young people provided me with so much enjoyment and never failed to amaze and amuse me! All have been through more than most of us can even imagine, however their sunny and bright personalities were always enough to make me smile.



Vicky (far left) with the Arc team

One of the biggest challenges for them is employment and we are all so pleased and proud that since last October, Adam has held down a job with a construction company. Working five days a week isn't easy for a young man who up until 2 years ago never did anything for himself, but I was pleasantly surprised by Adam's enthusiastic



A Rug made by Maria

approach to work which has given him a new group of friends, heaps more self confidence and an income which he is extremely proud of. He truly has become the man of the house!

The girls are also working very hard with weaving, handicrafts and keeping the house running smoothly. They have their studies and at present are learning arithmetic, reading and telling the time. The more they learn, the more they want to learn.

It can be a tough and demanding job to give four young adults care and attention 24/7, but it is also very rewarding and the high points most definitely outweigh the low. I am so grateful for my time at the Arc and for the relationships I made there. I have taken away some fantastic memories and can't wait to go back.

Vicky Hardman

## Thank You!!

In response to our 'Appeal for Burma' that accompanied the November newsletter you donated a staggering £8,500!

Thanks to this generosity we have been able to commit ourselves to supporting the education of 700 children for another full academic year.

Later this month Micah Hampson will visit Kaw Law Gaw and our other 5 schools within the region. Their report will be in the next issue of *Epiphany News*.



*Karen children at the school in Kaw Law Gaw on the Burmese side of the Thailand/Burma border. Photographed last December.*

## Sign up to our E-Letter

This issue of *Epiphany News* is the first to be available via e-mail or online. As part of our commitment to reducing administration costs, all of our newsletters will now be available in HTML or PDF format and can be delivered direct to your 'inbox' instead of your doorstep. If you would like to receive your *Epiphany News* electronically instead of (or as well as) the paper copy please e-mail [gill@epiphany.org.uk](mailto:gill@epiphany.org.uk).

## Ways to Support the Trust:

### Online

*Go to our website [www.epiphany.org.uk](http://www.epiphany.org.uk), and click on the "Just Giving" secure payment icon.*

### Credit Card

*We can process credit card donations over the phone. Ring the office on: 01925 220999*

### Cheque

*Please make cheques payable to "Epiphany Trust" and send to the address listed on the back of this newsletter.*

### Standing Order

*Still the most effective way of supporting the Trust as it helps with advance planning of projects. Ask the office for a 'Standing Order Mandate'.*

### Legacies

*Please consider remembering the projects of the Epiphany Trust by leaving a legacy. Leaflets with guidance are available on request from the office.*

### Volunteer

*There's lots of opportunity for you to get involved! Spend time at The Arc in Romania, with street children in Sri Lanka, or join the 2 week fund-raising 'challenge' hiking across the Carpathians. Camp Romania '07 also has places available. We can tailor your time with us around personal preference and other commitments you may have. For students we can also put together a full, or part, Gap Year experience. Contact the office for more details.*

**The Trust can claim a further 28% on any of the above donation methods if you sign a gift aid declaration form.**

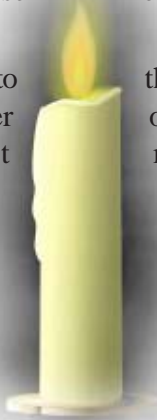
# Candles of Hope

Images of neglected infants raised in overcrowded, unsanitary dormitories were purged from our minds during the late 1990's, as other disaster areas like Bosnia or Iraq loomed larger on our TV screens.

Recently, however, the media has returned to Romania's orphanages and discovered that for many youngsters the problem remains. Today there are as many orphans being abandoned as at the time of Ceaucescu's death in 1989 and the provision for those leaving the institutions at 18 is still no better than when his regime fell.

Since Romania's accession to the concept of homes for former orphans is more apparent. This most recent effort has been closing down all orphanages.

In 2006 a group of Irish Gospel Choir") visited Romania including one at the orphanage including the plight of the older teenagers agreed to fund the purchase of land to compliment our first half-



the EU, the need to develop the orphanages has never been so apparent. The member has been charged with

Christians (members of "Rejoice and undertake a series of concerts in Lugoj. Moved in particular by and their uncertain future, they land needed for a second "Arc" way house in Sinaia.

To bring this about, Epiphany has registered a trading company in Romania and purchased land close to the orphanage. Within a year we hope that 6 learning disabled young adults, sadly rejected by their families **and** their society, will be given the opportunity to develop their abilities to the full potential.

Whilst thousands of abandoned children live in the darkness of neglect and abuse "*it's surely better to light a small candle than to curse the darkness*".

## Contact Details



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