



ANNUAL REVIEW 2024



2023 IMPACT

191

**People received
vocational training**

5,696

**Children attended
summer camps**

2,692

**Families
supported**

8,027

**Children
directly
supported**

133,368

**Soup kitchen
meals served to
those in need**

8,403

**Backpacks given
to school students**

Over the course of 2023, Mission Without Borders has supported families, children and vulnerable adults across Eastern Europe practically, spiritually, and emotionally; enabling them to see change and work towards self-sufficiency.

We do this work through local staff, and church partners in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine.

8,692

**People received
monthly Bible
teaching**

489

**Students
received
scholarships**



FROM OUR INTERNATIONAL CEO

Unfulfilled potential is always devastating – and for people living in poverty, it often seems inevitable. Whether it's the little girl struggling with her schoolwork or the family who can't find work, a lack of opportunities and resources stops so many people from developing their God-given talents and gifts and truly flourishing in life.

The Annual Review is an opportunity to look back over the last year and celebrate the ways in which Mission Without Borders has helped people break out of poverty and make the most of their skills and talents. However, I am also aware that many of the ways we nurture potential – such as sharing God's word, building supportive relationships, providing advice, encouragement, and counselling – cannot be easily measured or evaluated.

As a wise man once said, "Trust in the slow work of God." Change rarely happens overnight or in one simple step. Often, it takes slow, patient work to restore what God made good, to change a mindset, to help people see opportunities and view themselves as God sees them.

We know too that it's not all down to us. Our words and actions act as a catalyst, setting in motion something that's already there. We play our part and we entrust people to God, knowing they are made in His image, trusting that He will bring about the lasting change and the brighter future that only He can bring.

"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." Jeremiah 29:11

The key to nurturing potential is our firm belief in God's promises. We know that he has good plans for each and every person we meet. The child struggling at school, the parent with no qualifications, the isolated elderly person – God has a hope and a future for every one of them. We are honoured to partner with him, in this beautiful work, alongside the local church. We are thankful to all our supporters who join us.

Stephen Young,
CEO of Mission Without Borders



GIVING FAMILIES THE MEANS TO THRIVE

Every year Mission Without Borders provides families with the means to fulfil their dreams. By providing them with financial assistance to start their own businesses or grow their own foods we help them secure their futures.



42 Construction Projects



45 Agriculture Projects



35 Animal Breeding Projects



10 Horticulture Projects



4 Forestry Projects



7 Fashion Projects



3 Food Projects



6 Personal Care Projects



Drilona

A NEW BUSINESS FOR FAMILY ONCE BURDENED BY POVERTY

“Life became darker and darker, and we felt powerless to do anything about it.”

The poverty faced by Drilona, 39, and her family, felt impossible to escape. The family live in a poor community in the outskirts of Durres, Albania. Edison, 46, was working hard and sometimes took on jobs abroad. No matter how hard he tried, however, there was never enough money. Drilona and Edison started fighting more and more, and the atmosphere at home was one of stress and fear.

When Niko from Mission Without Borders first met the family, he quickly saw that while we could help with their material needs, they also needed emotional support. Drilona and Edison’s confidence was at an all-time low and he wanted to help alter their perspective and show them that

things really could change.

Niko said, "I remember our very first visit. We could sense straight away the emotional burdens that the parents were carrying. They were loving and caring, but finding it very hard to meet their children's basic needs."

When we first start working with a family there is often a sign, or a dream of what they would like to be doing, if only they had the opportunity. Niko spotted an old sewing machine in the family home, and as he got to know the family more, he found out how talented Drilona was at sewing.

Enrolled on the Mission's family sponsorship programme, the regular material and emotional support was already helping Drilona and Edison to feel calmer and more hopeful. They began to believe that things could change.

That is when Niko suggested that Drilona could open a small shop that would sell new children's clothes, as well as offering mending services. Mission Without Borders would help her get started by providing a professional sewing machine and other necessities, as well as supporting her with the logistics of opening the shop. We would also give support with navigating the practical needs of running a business.

The shop was a great success and even brought the family closer together. Drilona sews and sells clothes, and Edison purchases goods and supplies for the shop. The family are now in a radically different place from when Niko first met them. Being in a stronger financial position, they have less worries and both parents are able to spend more time with the children, building

a stronger family.

Drilona said, "Without your generosity, I would still be living in poverty and would be stuck in the same emotional state I was in when Niko first met us. Thanks to your kind support with the sewing machine, my husband is more involved in the family, especially with our teenaged boys."

To an outsider, it may look as though the professional sewing machine was what changed this family's life. What we have discovered, however, is that real change happens when someone believes in a family, supports them through highs and lows, and helps them develop the potential they already have.

114 Families received items to start businesses or grow their own food

152 Families found employment and felt they no longer required regular support





**FROM FEAR TO FREEDOM
A SAFE SPACE TO LEARN
AND GROW**

Elenuta, 15, who lives in Cantemir, Moldova, still bears the scars of terrifying episodes from her childhood. Her father's violence shaped her behaviour at home and at school – and it felt like she was never safe.

“I remember doing my homework really fast and packing my things up before my father returned home,” she said. “He was usually drunk and annoyed by everything. He’d be shouting at me and my brother. I was afraid he’d wreck my notebooks or my bag.”

Elenuta’s parents divorced when she was 10 and she hasn’t seen her father since. However, there is still fear in her eyes when she thinks about the difficult times her family went through.

“I used to be surrounded by problems. When I was at school, I spent all my time thinking about my mother. I wanted to get home quickly so that I could protect her by helping her to clean up, so that if my father came back, he wouldn’t cause a scene again.”

“We were very anxious all the time. He mistreated our mother and hurt her.”

The tension caused by her father’s aggression, along with the poor living conditions in which her family lived, made Elenuta feel inadequate and isolated. Often, she was rejected by her peers at school.

She said, “When I went to school, my classmates ignored me. I didn’t have

friends; none of them wanted anything to do with me because I was dressed differently; my hair wasn't done like theirs.”

Everything changed for Elenuta when she was invited along to Mission Without Borders's after school club. Here at the day centre, she found a safe space: somewhere free of bullying, violence, fear, where she instead found acceptance, support, and love.

“It feels like home here and I have lots of new friends.

We spend time together, eat together, do our schoolwork, help each other.”

“It was like a different world,” she said.

“Everyone was very friendly and the kids were ready to help you with whatever they could. My brother and I got to have a warm meal, we did our homework, we played there.”

Viorica and Pavel, MWB staff from the centre, are like spiritual parents to Elenuta. They model wise and caring Christian community to Elenuta and other children, creating a supportive environment where they can flourish.

Over time, the emotional connections at the day centre – along with the material support from MWB – has had a big impact on Elenuta, now a confident and happy teen. Children need a safe space where they can grow and learn, free from fear, if they are to reach their full potential – and fortunately Elenuta found just that.

Elenuta
and classmates





AFTER SCHOOL CLUB HELPS VULNERABLE CHILDREN BLOSSOM

“When I didn't know the answer and I couldn't solve the problems in our assignments, I felt really bad. I cried because I wanted to be doing well.”

When Zina first started at school aged six, she felt lost and overwhelmed. She comes from a small village in Moldova where there is little employment and few amenities, and her family lives in deep poverty.

Often, children like Zina drop out of school early – and end up living in poverty

660 Children supported through our After School programme

themselves as adults. Their parents aren't educated and can't help with homework, and school feels irrelevant to their families' everyday struggles to survive. And yet education is key to breaking that cycle of poor education and poor employment prospects.

An analysis from UNESCO showed that 171 million people could be lifted out of extreme poverty if all children left school with basic reading skills. And the global poverty rate could be more than halved if all adults

completed secondary school.

Factors such as family stress, nutritional deficiencies, and inadequate living conditions mean that children from the poorest homes are less ready for school than their more affluent peers, UNICEF shows, and Zina was no exception.

Valentina, a teacher at Mission Without Borders's after school club, said, "Zina – or Zinica, as everyone calls her – didn't know how to hold a pen in her hand when she first went to school. She had hardly any clothes, and no shoes. She was very shy and reserved.

"She was very disoriented as her father had just died, and her mother and older brothers were abusing alcohol. Nobody had prepared her for school."

Valentina

Valentina supports children like Zina at MWB's after school club by providing the structure, routine and calm environment they don't get at home, as well as crucial practical help in tackling schoolwork.

She added, "After school club helps the children to get into an everyday routine with their education. You know, children need that external discipline; they need someone to say, 'let's do the lessons, let's read', but if

no one does that, it is much harder for them."

Zina, now 12, appreciates the time and space to focus on homework.

She said, "If I didn't do the lessons here, I wouldn't do them at home. At home I feed the cow, the horse, I take care of the goats."

"Last week I got a 7 in maths," she added proudly. "I still find maths and history hard, but that doesn't discourage me, I want to carry on. I like finding out new things so that when someone asks me, I can help them."

Valentina said, "Zina does her homework independently now. I'm very thankful that she'll go to ninth grade and will be able to study a profession at the vocational school afterwards."

Despite the challenges she's faced, Zina is flourishing at school and has a bright future ahead of her. The nurturing and support she receives at the after school programme is what makes all the difference.



FUNDING FUTURES: SCHOLARSHIP & VOCATIONAL SUPPORT

Over the course of 2023, Mission Without Borders has supported a number of individuals across Eastern Europe with scholarships and vocational training courses. Below outlines the variety of courses that scholarship and vocational recipients have completed in 2023.



Law



Automotive



Medicine



Agriculture



Nursing



Food Tech



Pastoral



Accountancy



Cooking



Languages



Fashion



Kinesithery



Education



Admin



Sport



Painting



Tourism



Programming



Veterinary



Biology



High School



Confectionary

80

Scholarship and Vocational Graduates



15

Medical Graduates and Current Students



8

Law Graduates and Current Students



17

Food Tech Graduates and Current Students



27

Nursing Graduates and Current Students



130

High School Graduates and Current Students





**I ALWAYS WANTED TO
PROGRESS AND KEEP
LEARNING**

Ana

For many children in Eastern Europe they are denied the possibility of higher education, even if they do well at school.

At school, Ana excelled at her exams and her teachers spotted how bright she was – and how determined she was to succeed. Unfortunately, Ana’s father had died when she was only two years old, and at age seven she was sent to live in an institution as it was the only way to access better schooling.

“I missed my family so much,” Ana said. “But I was ambitious and determined and I managed to overcome the struggles.”

Now 29, Ana looks back on her childhood and remembers how full of dreams she always was for the future. “I always wanted to progress and keep learning,” she said – and even today, she feels the same way.

While Ana had the potential to succeed in her chosen field of medicine, the financial constraints made it impossible. She received life-changing news when Mission

Without Borders told her we would provide her with a scholarship to study medicine at university.

“When I found out that I would receive a scholarship, I felt relieved and free to dream,” Ana said joyfully. “I started believing that I would be successful, that I must have value if others believe in me.”

Now Ana lives in Chisinau with her husband and her little boy, working as a doctor and immunologist-allergist resident. That scholarship has led to the next generation living free from poverty.

“I don’t know what the future holds for me. But I know that God always sent me the right people at the right time. I’m still dreaming about being able to change the field of medicine in Moldova – and change people’s lives for the better.”

Our scholarship programme has provided the opportunity for individuals to learn and grow; improving both lives, their families’ lives, and society in general.

BEREAVED SISTERS NURTURED AT SUMMER CAMP

In Ukraine, summer camp is a wonderful way to minister to children in the midst of war. Each one of their lives have been affected – from children who no longer go to school and have to do all their lessons online – to those who are traumatised by fleeing home as their town was being destroyed.

Anastasia, 14, and her nine-year-old sister Kateryna have experienced the worst of war: they lost their father when a missile struck his workplace. Enrolled on MWB's family sponsorship programme, the girls were invited to go to summer camp in a beautiful part of western Ukraine.

Kateryna said, "At first, I didn't want to go to summer camp, as I'm a little shy, and after my dad died, I often feel sad. Just before it was time to go, I was so close to refusing."

"Now I'm so happy that I did go! It is totally different from what I expected. I like my group, I like the activities, the Bible lessons, the games, the food, the living facilities. I like everything here."

Kateryna

"I learned to read and understand the Bible more. Even though we go to church at home, I didn't show much interest in it. That has changed here."

"I feel that I've become closer to God," Anastasia added.

"I always have a big need for his care and guidance but trusting him has been difficult for me. I learned that staying in his Word helps you to develop the right mindset."

Mykola Bogdanets, director of MWB Ukraine, said, "As the war continues to devastate Ukraine, the Mission's summer camps remain more vital than ever. Here, children and young people have the chance to experience joy and fun away from all the challenges and hardships of their everyday lives."



Kateryna and
Anastasia

RETURNING TO SUMMER CAMP TO VOLUNTEER

Damir, 17, grew up living in poverty in Moldova. From the age of 10, he had to work long hours doing odd jobs to help his family survive.

Children like Damir very rarely experience life beyond the small village they live in. They don't get the opportunity to try new activities, develop new skills or meet new people. Damir's childhood was filled with responsibility, the hardship of poverty weighing down family life. Growing up in poverty, it can be hard to imagine a different life – or dream of what God has planned for you.

But when Damir was enrolled in Mission Without Borders's child sponsorship programme, going to summer camp changed his life.

Damir said, "Summer camp was one of the best times of my life and I will never forget it. It was ten days of happiness, full of new adventures, new experiences, new ways of having fun. I was so happy to be there, away from my hard work at home and the other struggles."

Damir's life radically changed thanks to summer camp: he became a Christian and came to a deeper understanding of what it means to follow Jesus.

Now Damir is keen to pass on the gift that he was given so that other young people in Moldova, growing up in similarly challenging circumstances, can thrive just as he has.

He was delighted when he had the chance to become a volunteer at summer camp. "I love being involved at this camp – the children's smiles say it all. I also enjoyed the discussions that we had in our group, talking to the children, and answering their questions."

Ion, the MWB coordinator who has worked with Damir since his childhood, said, "I remember that shy, withdrawn little boy Damir used to be. I remember him becoming very serious as he talked about his hardships at home.

"Now I look at this handsome young man who is literally like a burning fire for God. He is the same boy of few words, but he's also always the first one to help, any time help is needed.

"Damir's joy, passion, and enthusiasm were an encouragement and a motivation for me, reminding me powerfully that the Mission's work has an impact and transforms lives."





I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO WORK WITH PEOPLE

At the heart of MWB's work with families and children are our coordinators. 52 coordinators across our six field countries spend time every month, getting to know them, providing advice, encouragement, and material support.

Spaska, 25, is a coordinator who supports sponsored families in a Roma community in Bulgaria.

"I've always wanted to work with people, more specifically people who are living in poverty or are disadvantaged in some way. That's why I chose to study Social Work at university. The fact that I accepted Jesus at 14 also steered my future decisions."

Families in Roma communities, such as the one Spaska works in, face particular challenges. There is the widespread discrimination that Roma people face, including a lack of investment, amenities, and poor access to education.

But Spaska recognises their potential. "Seeing the potential in each person that we

work with is essential because it acknowledges that individuals possess untapped abilities and aspirations that, with proper support and guidance, can be realised. Unfortunately, numerous factors like limited resources, lack of opportunities, and societal barriers hinder people from reaching their full potential."

"By equipping individuals with knowledge and skills, MWB helps them develop self-confidence, become economically independent, and contribute positively to their communities."

"God put people like Spaska in our lives to open our eyes to see that there is light and hope in this dark world"

Nasca, a mother supported by Spaska

COMPASSION AT THE HEART OF COMMUNITIES

From smuggling Bibles behind the Iron Curtain to openly sharing the gospel, for over 60 years Mission Without Borders and churches in Romania have worked together to reach people for Christ. The local church is key to ensuring what we do will have a lasting impact in a community, not just for this generation, but for future generations too.

Alexandru Danilenco, director of MWB Romania, explained, “Partnering with churches is the starting point of MWB’s ministry in a community. People are not always ready to listen to the gospel unless they can see it in action – and that’s what the Mission does through its programmes.

“The churches make their infrastructure, relationships and connections available to the Mission and the Mission regularly helps the church and people in need with material aid such as donated goods, Operation Christmas Love parcels, food and more.”

“The Mission gives church members the opportunity to get involved in volunteering for the programmes and activities we run. Together with the church we are working together to help people know and love God.”

“MWB’s existence in a community might be for the short term, but usually churches remain in the community for decades, helping people create long lasting relationships and be a blessing for the next generations.

“Working together with the church is vital. We wouldn’t be able to do what we do – or even exist at all – if it were not for church partnerships.”

Marius, pastor of a church cluster in Valcea county, added, “It’s not just about the programmes the Mission carries out, it’s also about the relationships that are established.”

469 Churches partnering with Mission Without Borders

Church in Ukraine



FINANCIAL REPORT

\$15.7M Total Cash Income

\$9.9M Total Value of Donated Goods

\$25.6M Combined Total



126 Staff across 12 fundraising countries

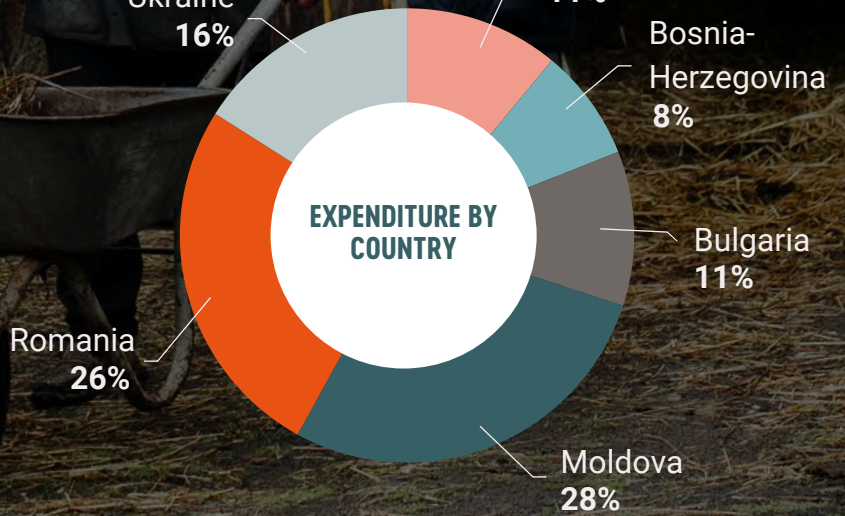
234 Staff making it happen across 6 field countries

1,340 Volunteers supporting us across the 6 field countries

Fundraising 15% Management/ Governance 10%



Ukraine 16% Albania 11% Bosnia-Herzegovina 8%



Figures are all 2023 figures - cash and donated goods



MICHAEL THOMAS, CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERNATIONAL BOARD

“Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done.” 1 Chronicles 16:8

We praise God for His blessings in 2023. There were many!

Those of us working across Eastern Europe every day have the privilege of seeing what God is doing as both you who support – and those who receive – respond in different ways to the Lord’s prompting. It’s a great perspective to have and we share some of it here in the Annual Review.

We have heard many stories from you of how God has blessed you abundantly as you have responded to His leading; we also see God moving in the hearts and lives of those who receive. Those we serve with your assistance have been helped practically and spiritually. Hundreds of people across Eastern Europe have found the peace and joy that Jesus brings and have chosen to follow Him. Thousands have received practical support.

In Sarajevo, we started working with a new community of people who need help to cope. Indeed, across these lands we are able to take opportunities to reach more people.

The Lord has provided additional people to serve with us on our International Board; welcoming our newest members from New Zealand and Germany. They both bring great wisdom from their diverse backgrounds and help us to strengthen the governance of the Mission.

Thank you for sharing the journey to see lives transformed.

Your brother in the task,

**Michael Thomas,
Chairman of Mission Without Borders’s
International Board**





HOPE EVEN IN THE MIDST OF WAR TIME

As the full-scale war in Ukraine hits the two-year mark, the prayer of so many is, “My soul is in deep anguish. How long, Lord, how long?” (Psalm 6:3)

MWB coordinator Lyudmyla said, “The families I work with have become much more stressed and irritable. People are on edge: they are filled with negative emotions and even a little minor thing can make them cry or become very angry.”

Nearly 10 million people in Ukraine are at risk of developing mental health conditions, the UN reports. Children are particularly vulnerable, with 1.5 million requiring some kind of assistance in managing stress and other mental health issues.

In Sarny, western Ukraine, since the first day of the war, MWB has been supplying food parcels and emergency accommodation. We are currently helping 100 displaced families, providing essentials like food, hygiene items, and school supplies; as well as emotional and spiritual support - buffering against stress and anxiety.

We continue to send aid, particularly to areas affected by the conflict and by poverty. 1,800 Operation Christmas Love parcels were distributed across eastern Ukraine, and a further 8,200 were sent to the west.

Summer camps, still being held in Ukraine, are crucial in providing children with a safe space to play. At camp over 1,000 children enjoy a respite from the everyday hardships they experience at home.

Our church partnerships have also strengthened and grown over the past two years; and we are now working with 192 churches as of 2023. The hope is that when the situation starts to stabilise, we will be able to establish new communities.

Whilst the war continues, our staff and volunteers persist in their good work. As Mykola Bogdanets, MWB Ukraine Director, shared: “2023 has been another difficult year. Yet, Christians never lose the hope found in Jesus. They continue doing good deeds, helping those who are suffering.”

SUPPORTING FAMILIES HIT HARD BY WAR

Lesya Biyenko and her family come from Mariupol, Ukraine, the strategic port city that came under siege for over 80 days. She remembers well those early days of war when confusion and terror gripped her family.

“We lived in horror and fear every single day,” she said. “My five boys saw a lot of things that no children – and no human – should ever see or experience.

“We cooked on a woodfire and used melted snow to wash. It is hard for me and my children to even think about this time, so I would rather not talk any more about it...”

Lesya’s husband had joined the military and she and her children finally managed to flee Mariupol. They are now displaced in Sarny, where they came into contact with Mission Without Borders.

“We live in relative safety now. Due to our experiences, we’ve become different people. Something in us has changed forever. The feeling of anxiety never goes. The questions in my head about the future never give me rest.”

MWB has started providing regular support to Lesya’s family and other displaced families in Sarny as they seek to rebuild their lives, traumatised and far from home.

Lesya said, “I was happy to meet such nice people here, Sergiy and Lyudmyla Soroka.

“We receive food parcels, hygiene items, stationery, clothing, and footwear from Mission Without Borders. These are basic necessities and I’m so thankful for them.”

Sergiy, the MWB coordinator who regularly visits Lesya’s family, said, “It’s a difficult situation for this family. Lesya carries the whole family on her shoulders. She is exhausted and out of reserves.

“Our country has already faced a lot of challenges and will face more in the future. I am happy that we as Christians and the Mission are at the forefront to help people.”





Orhan

For Orhan (cover photo) and his family, growing up in poverty in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a constant struggle. However, when he was younger his family was enrolled onto our family sponsorship programme, and things started to change.

From attending our summer camps, youth events, and receiving regular support from our coordinators, Orhan heard about Jesus and chose to commit his life to Him.

Now grown, Orhan recently decided to get baptised in the same place he first felt God's presence, at summer camp, all those years ago. Ten years have passed since Mission Without Borders came into his life, but the long lasting, life-changing impact remains.

Our family sponsorship programme journeys with families who live in poverty, over a five year period.

More than 50,000 individuals have been impacted by the sponsorship programmes and other projects that we were able to run last year, thanks to your support.

WWW.MWBI.ORG