



LOVE IS THE MAIN INGREDIENT

This will be Viorel's third winter living on the streets of Chisinau, Moldova. A well-educated man, Viorel (pictured above) was once a respected farmer in his home village. He had a beautiful family but now he is alone.

"My wife died. I had a daughter, but she's gone abroad. I haven't heard from her in 18 years," he said. "At night I am filled with tears because of the mess that my life has become. I don't want to go back to my native village – I'm ashamed of what will people say."

Viorel tried to rebuild his life after his wife's passing and began a new relationship with a woman. However, she was aggressive, cheated on him repeatedly, and as a result, he was broken emotionally and physically. He became homeless when she drove him out of the apartment they had lived in.

"When I came home one day, she'd put all my stuff in bags and threw them out of the window. As you see me now, that's how I remained," he said.

Viorel was also hit by a car a few years ago. His bones were fractured, his spine injured, and as his wounds did not heal fully, he walks with a limp.

Viorel now lives outdoors. Throughout the winter, he searches for shelter in basements or in the entrances to apartment buildings. At the moment he has found shelter in the ruins of a derelict pavilion in a poor neighborhood.

"Here is where I live. That's what I call my wardrobe," he says, pointing to a cardboard box. "And that's the bed," he added, gesturing towards a pile of unwashed blankets. "Over there, the roof leaks when it rains," he says, pointing to a corner of the ceiling. "It leaks in the middle, too, but here, where it's leak-free, there's my place."

The sky is still bright and the weather mild – but harsh winter is on its way. It is the time of year that brings the most fear and despair to vulnerable people in Moldova ... no heater to turn on, no hot water to wash with, and no cozy home to return to.

In his distress, Viorel began to seek support. *"I heard that here they offer a meal,"* he said, talking about a nearby StreetMercy project run by the Mission, in partnership with a local church.

StreetMercy provides regular hot meals to the homeless and vulnerable on the streets of Chisinau, as well as emotional and spiritual support, warm clothes and blankets, and other practical help.

Since Viorel began receiving our support, he has gained strength in his daily struggle for survival. Eating a nutritious meal each day, forming friendships, and benefiting from spiritual guidance – these things are bringing hope to his heart.

"Here I am respected. Here I find humanity," he said. "This hot meal, this care – this is God."



Your Donation of \$100 will Help People in Need



Statistics on homelessness in Moldova, the poorest country in Eastern Europe:

- Prime reasons for homelessness include lack of work (51.6%), harmful practices such as alcohol (49.0%) and drug abuse, or life tragedies such as loss of relatives (42.5%) and divorce (17%). Ex-prisoners represent a high-risk group, 20.9% of respondents mentioned detention in prison as cause of their homeless status;
- Majority of respondents (93.5%) currently do not have a home, while 83.9% previously owned a home. The house was either sold at the initiative of the homeless person (37.5%) or by coercion to repay a debt (7.5%). However, there are also a high loss of ownership by dispossession (37.5%). Dispossession of housing is usually enforced by relatives (36.0%) or strangers (52.0%);
- Every second respondent has been homeless for a period of over 3 years (47.1%);
- TB infection is associated with a longer presence in homeless status. Over half of respondents in the experimental group have had this status for over three years (56.6%) compared with 37.7% in the control group.

[Source: AFI, 'Operational study on the prevalence and profile of comorbidities among homeless people with active tuberculosis and without tuberculosis in Chisinau (Republic of Moldova)', by Doltu Svetlana and others, 2016]

Every day about 20 people come to the StreetMercy project to be served a hot meal. Nicolae, a volunteer and caretaker from the church, says a prayer of thanksgiving before the meal begins. The crowd of people, faces weathered, eyes full of the sad stories they could tell, gather round the table to eat.

A Gift of \$50 can bring Hope and Healing!

Nicolae said, "People here have no one in their lives or have lost contact with relatives. Many of them feel wounded, they don't want to forgive. Here we teach them to be humble, to let go of their pride. We have many homeless who have become church members and surrendered their lives to God."

At the end of the meal, Nicolae reads a Psalm and shares a word of encouragement with the group. After a satisfying meal, their faces are relaxed as they listen and contemplate. The care they receive here makes it easier for them to meet the harshness of winter, especially when they have a chance to receive some warm clothing afterwards.

StreetMercy meets not only the practical needs of the homeless, but demonstrates God's love, care and consideration towards them.

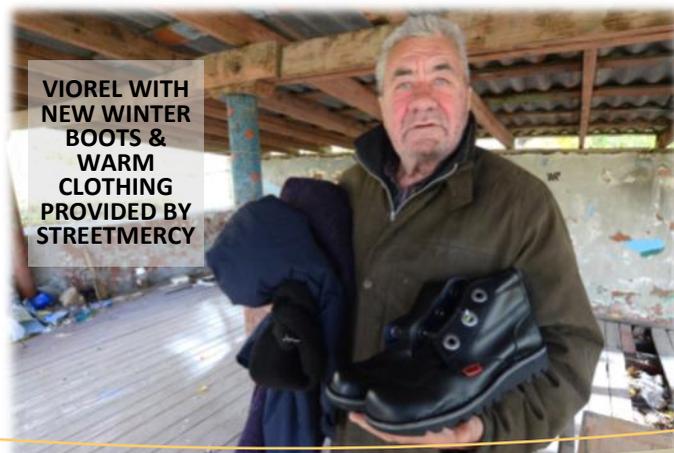
That love softens their hearts and brings healing to their lives. They begin to have hope again, as they are treated with dignity and as they are introduced to the gospel.

Together with our supporters, we can change the destiny of these dear homeless individuals in Moldova – and steer them away from the hopelessness of their situation, towards the love and provision found in God.

May their hearts find a home in Him, even as they find refuge from the harsh winter at StreetMercy. And as always, your generous financial support is so gratefully appreciated, as we continue our ministry to those less fortunate in Eastern Europe.

Sincerely,

Bonnie Borowetz
SPONSORSHIP COORDINATOR
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All donations will be used for MWB-approved programs and projects; remaining funds will be used to fund other programs in areas of greatest need.